



Preparing for Moments.

No one likes to be caught off guard. Prepare yourself to capture a memorable moment with your child when you discuss underage drinking. It's important to know your facts because the conversation will change as your children move through middle school and high school. Starting with the basics and evolving into "what if" scenarios is perfectly logical.

- Let's say your teen is at the driving age. Make sure they know that alcohol-related deaths and injuries are a major risk of underage drinking.

As your child gets older, realize they probably already have their ideas about alcohol or may have been exposed to it at some point. Be open to hearing their experiences and build trust with your teen through listening.

- What-if, what-if, you've heard this from your child at one point or another. Discuss the what-ifs of underage drinking. What if they are in a situation that makes them feel uncomfortable? Discuss an exit plan. Also, tell them that standing up to underage drinking can make their friends strong enough to do it, too. There is strength in numbers.



Identifying a Moment.

What makes a memorable moment? Taking the leap, opening the box, and trying the conversation – that’s a memorable moment! Once you do it, you can’t turn back. You may never feel as confident as you want to feel, but you can take steps to prepare for discussing underage drinking with your teen.

- Know a few facts. Teens who drink can have memory issues and may misuse other substances, too.
- School disruptions like dropping grades, social consequences like strained relationships, and legal situations are all on the list of what can happen when underage drinking occurs.
- Be ready to really listen, too. We need to listen to understand where they’re coming from, instead of listening to respond.
- As adults, we usually want to feel in control of our kids. Realize this is a topic they might already know something about, either from health class at school or witnessing it firsthand. Underage drinking can have poor outcomes, and the more often we send a consistent no-use message to our teens about it, the better.



How do I Follow Up?

Congratulations! Your child has reached another milestone, and you discussed the risks of underage drinking with them. Now, it's time to follow up on that initial encounter.

- You know what your child is passionate about. Have a discussion featuring how drinking alcohol underage could put that in jeopardy. Are your kids athletes or musicians? Are they working on their mental health or looking forward to the future? Find what hits home and discuss together what alcohol use could mean.

Parenting doesn't get easier; it's a rollercoaster of change! Parents today have more accurate information and scientific research to share when it comes to underage drinking and youth. Underage drinking is preventable.

- Keep in mind that your drinking can influence your teen's choice to drink. "Studies show a relationship between underage drinking behaviors and the drinking behaviors of adult relatives, adults in the same household, and adults in the same community and state."
- Alcohol use impacts good decision-making, and that can mean a variety of consequences.
- Next time you chat with your child about underage drinking, share a few new facts. Also, communicate that you will follow through with repercussions if they are caught using alcohol.