

Parents urged to talk with teens about alcohol and drug temptations during summer

Summertime is here and so is the season when many teens with time on their hands turn to experimenting with alcohol and drugs. SATUCI Youth Partners recommends parents take a minute to consider how important and influential their roles are to their children.

Conversations between parents and children should start from early childhood through adolescence and the teen years. It's the best thing parents can do to keep teens away from alcohol and drugs – this summer and anytime of the year.

“Conversations can start at a family meal or by checking in during the day using texting, a quick phone call or instant message,” said Vickie Lewis, director of professional services at SATUCI. “Family meals can be used to discuss what everyone did today and what plans are for tomorrow and later on in the week.”

SATUCI Youth Partners, a coalition of organizations and agencies in the community, suggest these ways parents can help their teens keep drug and alcohol free this summer:

Interact with your teens - the more natural and comfortable this way of communicating will feel the more you do it. The overarching impression is that you care about your kids and want to ensure that their teen years are filled with opportunities to learn and grow, and to build their core sense of values and increase personal responsibility.

Be involved -The best way to be in the know about what your children are doing is to be involved in their daily lives. Engage in ongoing conversation about their likes, their friends, new activities and interests, what's bothering them, any peer pressure, struggles with skills or learning ability, and what they want to get out of summer.

Be a good role model - Parents should model good behavior by their own actions. This means that parents have to know that their teenage son and daughter will be watching how they behave when others are around at a party where alcohol is served, at a restaurant when the parents order wine or cocktails and then get in the car and drive, even casual comments made about alcohol or drug use shown in movies and on television.

Be aware of risk factors - Being a responsible and loving parent means that you take the time to familiarize yourself with risk factors that may propel your teen toward alcohol and drug use, including any significant social transition such as moving from middle school to high school, any history of alcoholism, drug use, depression or other serious emotional problems and any contact with peers involved in troubling or suspicious activities.

Be consistent and loving, but firm - It isn't possible for parents to be with their teens 24/7 but parents can and should do the best they can to prepare their teens to be able to handle pressure and temptations to use alcohol and drugs. It is a big part of parental responsibility. In fact, parents have the best chance of helping shape their teens' attitudes and beliefs about alcohol and drugs by virtue of their own behavior.

"Parents can make a difference by having proactive strategies in place to ensure their teens learn to live by the family's rules and moral values, to appreciate that there are healthier ways to enjoy their summer months, and that responsibility is something that needs to be practiced," Lewis said.