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Theme: How to Stop Underage Drinking

### Improving our future

Do you enjoy having an alcoholic drink occasionally? Maybe a glass of wine at your friend's wedding. Or perhaps a Margarita when you're out having a girls night. Sometimes even a cold beer for the football game. All of that is fine and fun. But are you underage? Underage drinking is extremely dangerous. You might be thinking, "Well adults drink, why can't we?" That's because when you are a teenager, your brain and body are still developing. Alcohol and drug abuse can have a negative impact on these developments and that can result in struggles later in life. Research has even shown that kids who start drinking in their early teens are more likely to develop Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD).

AUD is a pretty common disease and an estimated 14.5 million people in the United States have suffered from it. Along with that, it has been proved that AUD has led to over 95,000 deaths in the United States. This isn't simply due to the fact that too much alcohol can be unhealthy for the human body, it's what humans do when there's alcohol in their system that gets them killed.

It is no secret that many teenagers enjoy partying on the weekends and going out with their friends. More than 39% of teenagers who have consumed alcohol admitted that it was the result of a party they went to. A lot of these teenagers end up driving drunk to and/or from the party. Their actions don't just affect them, it affects those with them or around them. 31% of deaths in car accidents resulted from drunk drivers. Underage drinking is a crisis that has gotten our kids, family, friends, and so many more killed and it must be stopped.

Teenagers start drinking as a result of peer pressure, stress, environment, and so much more. Parents should start taking action early in a child's life to hopefully prevent them from drinking when they get older. Ways to take action include, talking with them calmly to explain the situation, create a safe environment for them to feel comfortable, and set a good example and establish an understanding.

It can be hard to talk to a teenager about such serious issues, even if it is done in a calm and reasonable way. They will have already been exposed to the situation and therefore it will be harder for them to stop even if they know it is wrong. This is why it is important to establish good communication early on. Even if a child is too young to entirely understand the importance of what they're being told, they will have a basic understanding for when they are older. This can help set a healthy foundation to make things easier in the future. It is also good to remember that a safe, comfortable environment can make a difference for the greater good.

The environment that a child is raised in is a very important part of their development as a person. If you are constantly drinking, cussing, yelling, and not caring for your child properly then they will see these bad things and two things can happen. One, they might resent the things being done at home and vow to not do the same thing. Two, they might become like their guardians and use that as an excuse to do the hurtful things mentioned earlier in the passage. Even in a toxic environment, it is good to establish an understanding and a relationship with good communication.

Teenagers use the excuse all the time saying that, "You were young once too, I'm sure you did this." While they might not be wrong, some parents try to act like they didn't do any of that. That's not really the most healthy option because not only are you setting an example of lying, you are setting an unreal expectation. If people drank when they were young, they wouldn't need to lie to their kids about it. Tell them the truth and that you learned later on that it wasn't the best decision. This won't stop kids from

drinking but at least honesty was chosen. Honesty is important but so is trust. If a child has been drinking, don't get too angry and blow up at them. All that will do is make them mad and in some scenarios, stir up some more defiance. Let them know that someone is there for them and if something happens, they will pick them up no questions asked. Consequences will have to happen but at least be there for them first. Don't set too high of a standard that even you couldn't meet as a kid.

Underage drinking will always be an issue. There will always be that one party, that one sip, that one car ride, that one fight. But that's all it takes to kill the people we care about. Stopping underage drinking for good is impossible but we do what we can to help. Talk to your kids, spread awareness, set a good example and, most importantly, be there for your kids and let them know they aren't alone!

- <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/teen/substance-abuse/Pages/Why-to-Have-the-Alcohol-Talk-Early.aspx>
- <https://www.yalemedicine.org/conditions/alcohol-use-disorder#:~:text=%E2%80%A2Chronic%20brain%20disease%20characterized,medicati on%2C%20counseling%2C%20and%20behavioral%20therapy>
- <https://www.sandstonecare.com/blog/teens-and-alcohol#:~:text=The%20National%20Institute%20on%20Alcohol,number%20increases%20to%20over%20half.>