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English 10

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How to Stop Underaged Drinking

While the legal age of alcohol consumption in the United States is 21, it was reported back in 2022 that more than 5 million youth (ages 12-20) drank more than “just a few sips” within a month’s time. This percentage of teens see this act as tempting, as they are maturing and wanting to branch off into new, more eventful experiences. However, drinking is never the answer to fun. As these ages are a critical time of mental and physical growth, drinking habits can significantly damage the individual’s health. There is a reason the legal drinking age is 21: to keep our children healthy and safe. I believe we, as a society, should educate, influence, and communicate with the younger generations, in hopes of preventing this number from drastically increasing in the future.

Education is key in more aspects than just drinking. Knowing the effects of underage alcohol consumption will not only help the teen to understand, but also the educator. For example, as your brain is still developing in your teenage years, alcohol can cause permanent damage to the growth of the brain. Underage drinking can also make teens more likely to make out of mind and body decisions without considering the consequences. Kids may think underage drinking is no big deal, because it’s a common sight in our society. But in teaching the consequences and risks to a teen’s understanding, we can help prevent them from starting or continuing.

There is a famous anonymous quote that is very relevant to this matter: “Show me your friends and I will show you your future”. This infers that the people you spend most your time with will determine who you are or become. Not only will you start thinking like them, but your actions and manners will mirror theirs as well. Whether it is their friends or family members, teens are easily influenced by the people they are around. If they are surrounded by people who consume large amounts of alcohol, the minor is most likely to do the same. Setting a good example for your friends, or your child, can help put a stop to any intrusive thoughts of illegal drinking.

And what is something that plays a key role in both steps? Communication! Talking about this touchy subject should not be a time of judgement, but a time of growth and bonding. A teenager is most likely to take a lecture defensively. Not only does this hurt the initial cause of the conversation, but also hurts the relationship between you and the person you are engaging with.  Having lots of small conversations lets them know they can come to you if they have a problem with alcohol now or in the future.

Preventing underaged drinking is crucial for the well-being and safety of the American youth. It is important to educate them about the risks and consequences, provide support, and become a positive influence. Prevention also starts with open communication, encouraging teens to get involved in activities that do not involve alcohol. Create a positive environment where they feel empowered to make healthy choices. By working together as a community, we can protect the young people of America and ensure a brighter future for everyone.

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