



How to Be a Parent Not a Pal Tool-Kit

DO YOU....

Monitor teens while they are in your home?

When your child wants to entertain either in your own home, or at another location, set firm ground rules by discussing them with your child and encourage their input and opinion.

- ✓ Establish with your child whether friends are allowed inside your home or anywhere on your property if you are not present, and outline the details including times, names, purpose of visit, etc. Make sure your teen knows he or she is never to have a party while you are away.
- ✓ Let your teen know that alcohol, tobacco and other drugs will not be permitted by any of his guests while at your home.
- ✓ Get the names of those visiting and introduce yourself when they arrive. If you are hosting a party, agree on a guest list and do not admit party crashers. Do not allow guests to leave the party and return.
- ✓ Provide snacks and non-alcoholic beverages for your teen's guests.
- ✓ Restrict guests to a certain part of your house. Do not allow roaming.
- ✓ Be present and monitor the situations without joining the gathering or party.
- ✓ Put away your supply of alcohol and consider locking it up. Alcohol which is easily accessible provides temptation.
- ✓ Be alert to signs of alcohol, tobacco and other drug use. If a guest arrives in an impaired condition, be willing to call his or her parents for safe transportation home.
- ✓ Get to know your teen's friends' parents and suggest shared chaperoning.
- ✓ Establish ways to monitor activity at your home through neighbors, friends and law enforcement.

DO YOU....

Set a curfew and consistently enforce house rules?

Having curfews and enforcing them sometimes feels like it puts barriers between you and your teenager, but curfews are very important. Teens with curfews have a greater sense of accountability. They know that parents who wait up will be much more likely to figure out what condition they are in when they come in home. In addition, if an adolescent knows that curfews are serious business and he or she will be more likely to tell you where he is going if he is lobbying for an extension. Kids without curfews are less accountable and less connected to their parents. Curfews provide the structural support for good decision making. The key is to set limits and consequences clearly for your teens with regards to curfew as well as other house rules. By setting limits and enforcing the consequences ahead of time, you can avoid power struggles and ugly confrontations later on. There used to be an old saying that nothing good happens after.... fill in the time and set a curfew for your teen.

DO YOU.... Set a curfew, cont.

- ✓ Sit down and talk to your teen and other family members about a reasonable time for a curfew.
- ✓ Get some feedback from other adults including parents and teachers on what a reasonable curfew is for your child's age range.
- ✓ Check the local ordinances and state laws for curfew restrictions and violations.
- ✓ Do not base your decision on what "all the other kids are doing".
- ✓ After you have established an appropriate curfew time, put it in writing, by making it part of a "house rules" contract, which your child as well as you must sign. (Keep your "house rules" contract concise and simple so as not to overwhelm your child.)
- ✓ Establish clear consequences for violating a curfew, and make the consequences reasonable and enforceable.
- ✓ Once the rules have been set and agreed upon, avoid argumentation and negotiating, but revisit the rules on a regular basis, possibly every 6 months or more frequently if necessary. Know when to be flexible and when to stand your ground.
- ✓ Be clear and consistent and be sure to be in agreement with your spouse or other adult in the home who shares parenting responsibility.
- ✓ Be sure to talk about values and attitudes like respect, cooperation, honesty, service and compassion with your kids which can be more important than setting curfews and clear cut house rules.
- ✓ Be sure to tell your child that the rules exist because you love them and care what happens to them and their friends. The issue of "trust" is not the primary reason for rules.

DO YOU.....

Inquire of another parent about a gathering or party to verify safe situations and supervised homes?

Make the call. Many parents welcome the call; it shows that they have an ally as an engaged and caring parent. It also shows your teen that you care. This could be the first time the parent knew about the gathering.

Remember that this applies to after school too. Many teenagers get into trouble with drugs and alcohol between 3 pm and 6 pm.

- ✓ Ask your child the names of all the friends who will be at the home. A parent you already know may be able to assist you in approaching the parent.
- ✓ Let your child know that you will be calling the parent who is hosting.
- ✓ Stress that your concern is strictly about the kids.
- ✓ Offer to bring snacks.
- ✓ If they admit that the kids will be unsupervised, offer to host the gathering at your own home.
- ✓ Avoid judgmental terms and tones.
- ✓ Offer to help supervise.
- ✓ Ask the parent's opinion on alcohol and underage drinking.

DO YOU....

Welcome telephone calls at your home verifying supervision of gatherings at your own home?

Instead of looking at a phone call from another parent as questioning your parenting; realize that you have most likely found another parent who thinks like you do. A parent who calls you will probably welcome calls from you.

- ✓ Invite other parents into your home.
- ✓ Don't be defensive, you have just found an ally!
- ✓ Be honest with other parents about the number of teens in your home and who is supervising them.
- ✓ Be clear about start and end times of gatherings in your home.
- ✓ If it is a large gathering, enlist the help of other parents.
- ✓ Do not allow your child's friends to bring in backpacks or their own water bottles (which may have alcohol.)

DO YOU....

Check amount and levels of open alcohol beverages in your home?

- ✓ If possible, lock up all alcoholic beverages in your home.
- ✓ Keep beer in its packaging so it is easier to tell when it is missing.
- ✓ Do not leave alcohol in the garage. Teens sneak into open garages to find beer.
- ✓ Remain aware of the levels of any open bottles of alcohol, and the number of bottles.
- ✓ Remain aware of number of bottles of wine in your home, especially if they are stored in a cellar.
- ✓ Never leave opened bottles of vodka around. This is the easiest alcohol for teens to obtain. If they replace the removed vodka with water, you may never know.
- ✓ Immediately put away any gifts of alcohol.

DO YOU.....

Talk to your teen daily?

Talking with your teen is one of the most important ways that you can support them during their adolescence. It is not always easy. Use these tips to help you talk to your teens about anything.

Create an open environment **Consider your teen's temperament** **Respect your child's feelings, ask their opinion**

Understand the question

Always be honest

If you don't know something, admit it

Don't leave big information gaps

Use age-appropriate language

Get feedback

Be patient, don't interrupt

Give them your undivided attention

Speak separately to kids of different ages

Most importantly... Listen. Listen to the little stuff. Listen between the lines.

Avoid dialogue busters:

"When you live under my roof, you abide by my rules."
"When I was your age . . ."
"When you're 18 you can do whatever you want"
"Your father (mother) is going to be disappointed in you."
"Do as I say, not as I do." (With regards to smoking and drinking)
"Money doesn't grow on trees"
"Life's not fair. Get used to it."

Use Dialogue Builders:

"What do you think . . .?"
"How else could you . . ."
"Tell me about it . . ."
"Sounds like you are saying . . ."
"Do you mean that . . ."
"When that happens to me I feel like . . ."
"That must make you feel . . ."
"I am worried about you. You look ... or You sound . . ."

Source: "Talking with Kids about Tough Issues", www.talkingwithkids.org for the 2007 Parenting Awareness Month Organizers' Packet and "Communication Tips for Parents" by Lawrence Kutner, PhD found in "What Every Parent Should Know: A Resource Guide" published by the Greater West Bloomfield Community Coalition and the West Bloomfield Library. Also see "How to Talk so Kids will Listen and Listen so Kids will Talk" by Adele Faber & Elaine Mazlish.

DO YOU.....

Attempt to meet your child's friends and their parents as their environment changes?

Knowing your child's friends and their parents was relatively easy in elementary school but as your child moves to middle school and on to high school it is increasingly difficult to know your teen's friends. You are no longer driving them everywhere, they have more independence. However, knowing your children's friends is even more important. Peers have a large influence on your teens and are a major contributing factor to their behavior. Do you know if it is a good influence?

Here are some tips to help you navigate this tricky world:

- ✓ Try and meet all of your teen's friends (host them at your house);
- ✓ Get to know their names and faces;
- ✓ Keep a list of their friends;
- ✓ Always get their home and cell number, parents name and address; and
- ✓ Do not allow your teen to go over to anyone's house to hang-out unless you have met that teen, have seen the house, know the address, know how to get there, and have met or called the other parents.
- ✓ Remember, a change in a sport team, club or other group can mean a new group of friends. Your involvement will let your teen know you care and stress the importance of having friends that are a good influence.

DO YOU.....

Call authorities or other parents to report unsafe situations, parties or gatherings?

You wouldn't watch a house burn down without calling the fire department, why would you watch a child self-destruct without calling for help?

- ✓ Attempt to contact the child's parents first.
- ✓ Attempt to enlist the help of other parents in the vicinity.
- ✓ Do not let any teens drive away intoxicated.
- ✓ Compliment and assist any teens you see trying to resolve the situation.
- ✓ Be prepared for negative comments.
- ✓ Prepare your child for any negative comments they may hear. Explain how you did what you thought was the safest thing for everyone involved.

DO YOU.....

Help your child figure out how to handle risky situations with a plan of action?

Often times teens "go along" with behavior that they are not comfortable with because they are afraid of losing friends, being left out or looking un-cool. Knowing how to say no assertively requires training. Practice situations with your teens. Help them develop refusal skills.

Use these tips as a guide:

- ✓ Make a joke. Sometimes humor is the best way to respond to a situation, as it can lighten a serious mood. It can also divert attention away from you and onto something else.
- ✓ Give a reason why it's a bad idea. Maybe you can't smoke because you want to be able to run the mile for the track team. Maybe you don't want to drink because you know someone who is an alcoholic and you can see how drinking has messed up their life. Backing up your refusal with evidence gives it more power.
- ✓ Make an excuse why you can't. Maybe you have something else to do that will interfere. Or you have to be somewhere at a specific time. Or your mom will kill you. Whatever. But say it and stick to it.
- ✓ Just say no, plainly and firmly. In some situations, just saying no without a lot of arguing and explaining is the best response. Just make sure you're "no" is a strong and determined one.

DO YOU.....

Help your child figure out how to handle risky situations with a plan of action?

- ✓ Suggest an alternative activity. Lots of kids wind up doing stuff they shouldn't because they lack other options. They're bored. By thinking of something better to do, you're offering everyone an "out." You just might be surprised who might take you up on it.
- ✓ Ignore the suggestion. Pretend you didn't hear it, and change the topic to something else. Act like you don't think the idea was even worth discussing.
- ✓ Repeat yourself if necessary. Sometimes it takes more than once, on more than one occasion. Just because someone asks more than once, that doesn't mean you have to cave.
- ✓ Leave the situation. If you don't like where things are headed, you can take off. It might seem risky, but with you leading the way, other kids who really don't want to do it either just may follow you.
- ✓ Thanks, but no thanks. You can be polite, but you still aren't interested. It just isn't something you're into.
- ✓ The power of numbers. Make a pact with your friends to stick to your guns. Often, knowing that your friends will back you up can help you feel more comfortable being assertive. Sometimes "we" feels stronger than "I".

Source: Susan Carney, Suite 101.com (http://at-riskyouthsupport.suite101.com/article.cfm/top_ten_refusal_skills_for_teens)

**Remember: BE STRONG AND BE THERE FOR YOUR TEEN!
PARENTS ARE POWERFUL!**

Be a Parent - not a Pal is a concept taken from a program directed at minimizing catastrophic injuries and damages that result from illicit alcohol use by underage drinkers at social gatherings founded by Attorney Richard P. Campbell of Boston.

The Birmingham Bloomfield Community Coalition is a 501(c)(3), non-profit community prevention organization whose mission is to raise awareness and mobilize the entire community to prevent the abuse of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs, with a primary focus on our youth.

The Parents Who Host Committee helps promote and engage parents in our prevention efforts throughout our schools and community.

If you believe in our mission and want to be a part of our prevention efforts, contact us today!