



Empowering Parents To Raise Their Children To Be Substance-Free

Talk early and often about alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. Even when it gets tough.

Start Talking!
Building a Drug-Free Future



Click here to print a PDF of this article so you can start a conversation with your child

Talking regularly with youth about the dangers of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs reduces their risk of using in the first place.

Know! encourages you to share this Parent Tip with friends and family.

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Know! To Arm Them with Education, Motivation, Expectations and the X-Plan

In the previous tip, [Know! April is Alcohol Awareness Month](#), we discussed the prevalence of underage drinking and the many negative consequences that can go along with it. We also shared an important fact; *young people who begin drinking before the age of 15 are six times more likely to develop alcoholism or have problems with alcohol later in life, compared to those who wait until turning 21.*

Communication is key to prevention and essential in building and sustaining a positive relationship with our children, students, youth group members, athletes, etc. While it is vital to have ongoing conversations on the topic of alcohol and other drugs with them, it is equally important to talk about the everyday things happening in their lives. They need to know that we genuinely care about them, respect their feelings and opinions, and that we are looking out for their best interest. That way, when it comes time to talk about the heavier stuff, the foundation of trust is already there.

When sharing information with your child (student, athlete, etc.) on underage drinking, it is important to be clear on where you stand on the issue. Make sure they are aware of your expectations for them not to drink before turning the legal age of 21, and be sure they know the consequences of making the wrong choice.

It is also valuable to help your child find his/her motivation to say NO to alcohol – be it school, sports, spiritual reasons or simply to comply with house rules. And then help them practice saying NO. It may feel a little silly, but it will better prepare them for a real-life scenario.

Even with all this, there may be times where a simple NO may not feel like enough, or the pressure is too overwhelming. For circumstances like this, whether it be about alcohol or other drugs, or any other uncomfortable situation a child may find him or herself in, there is the X-Plan. Developed by Bert Fulks (dad/teacher/youth minister, who works with teens in addiction recovery), the X-Plan is an excellent exit strategy that helps a teen save face in front of peers, but gets them out of a sticky situation quickly and safely.

Here's an example of how it works:

Taylor, a high school freshman, goes to a gathering at a friend's house. Once there, he sees his underage peers drinking and smoking. He is feeling tremendously uncomfortable and is getting extreme pressure from his buddies to join them. He discretely sends a text to his brother that simply includes the letter, "x," nothing more.



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But actually, it is more. And it sets in motion a plan that is designed to get Taylor out of situations just like this...

Mom, dad and brother know what to do if they receive this text from Taylor. They promptly call him and the conversation goes something like this:

"Hello"

"Taylor, something has come up and I need to get you right now."

"What happened?"

"I'll tell you about it when I get there. Be ready to leave in five minutes. I'm on my way."

Here's the tricky part of the deal...when Taylor gets in the car, there is a "no questions asked policy." It is up to him how much or how little he chooses to share. And in order for this plan to work, this piece must be made known to the child and respected by the parents. This is not to say that a conversation cannot take place later, but if you force your child to spill the beans, you should know that you're likely going to ruin the chance of your son or daughter reaching out to you again in a similar scenario.

The bottom line is this; we cannot be physically present with our child at all times, but our influence can. Our voices can be heard by them even when we are not there. We can promote prevention by arming our youth with education, motivation, expectations and when needed, the X-Plan.

For the full article on the X-Plan by Bert Fulks, [click here](#).

Sources: [Bert Fulks, X-Plan: Giving your kids a way out \(#xplan\)](#), March 3, 2017. [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Alcohol Fact Sheets – Underage Drinking](#). [National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc. \(NCADD\): 30th Annual Alcohol Awareness Month – Organizer's Guide](#).

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