

# PARENT TOOL KIT NEWSLETTER

BROUGHT TO YOU BY:



## OVERVIEW FOR THIS NEWSLETTER:

### Parents and Caregivers

It's never too early to talk with your children about the risks of underage drinking and other drug use. Research suggests that one of the most influential factors in healthy childhood development is a strong, open relationship with a parent. Though it may not seem like it, children really hear your concerns, and it's important that you discuss the risks of using alcohol and other drugs with them.



- Helping Youth Avoid Substance Abuse
- Talking to your Child About Substance Use
- Why Small Conversations Make a Big Impression
- Addiction: What is it? How can I stop it?

This newsletter is a three part series to provide parents with background information on Substance use and abuse , Addiction, Conversation starters around drug use, Youth Well Being, and how to properly dispose of unused, unwanted and expired medications, as well as sharps needles.

## Talking to Your Child About Substance Use

### How do I start the conversation around substance use?

- Pose a hypothetical question: "What would you do if a friend offered you something to drink or smoke?"
- Ask your child what he or she knows about drugs; this will help you gain insight on their perception.
- Use a story from the media or a personal experience as a reason to open the conversation.
- End the conversation with an open-door comment: "If you have questions, you can ask me at any time or if you are concerned about a friend(s) you can tell me and I can help."

### How do I prepare myself for this kind of conversation?

- Keep conversations open and frequent, having regular conversations about your child's daily life in early stages is an important first step to a relationship that will allow for more serious conversations when needed.

### Red Flags and Warning Signs of drug use

- EXTREME CHANGE IN FRIENDS, EATING HABITS, SLEEP PATTERNS, APPEARANCE
- WITHDRAWING FROM THE FAMILY
- IRRESPONSIBLE BEHAVIOR
- MEDICINE CONTAINERS IN TEENS ROOM

- Find resources with information that you can bring into the conversation to help empower good decisions.
- Avoid "fear-based" conversations, i.e. "scaring" kids away from drugs has not shown to be effective. It is more useful to provide facts.
- Once your child hears both the facts and your beliefs about substances, it will be easier for you to make rules and enforce them.
- Parental disapproval is a big factor in preventing substance use. If they believe that you disapprove of it, they are going to be less likely to use.
- Educate yourself so you can explain how alcohol/drugs affects youth differently than adults.
- Be ready to listen. If kids feel heard they will be more likely to return to you for questions in the future. (continue.....)



## Helping Youth Avoid Substance Abuse

### Talk to your youth

Being able to talk to your youth about drugs is an important step in the process. Discuss, with them, reasons not to use drugs as well as strategies to avoid peer pressure. Know your child's activities and pay attention to their whereabouts. It is important to set rules and consequences for your youth and to set a good example. Providing support for your youth is essential.

### Consequences of Drug Use

- Drug Dependence
- Poor judgement
- Risky sexual behavior
- Impaired driving
- Mental health disorders

### Risk Factors

- Family history of substance abuse
- Behavioral/Mental health condition
- History of trauma
- Low self-esteem

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## Talking to Your Child About Substance Use

When is the appropriate time to start the conversation around drugs?

- It is best and most effective that the conversation begins well before the pressures of adolescence.
- Ages 9 to 11 are ideal for talking about substance use; it is more difficult to start discussions during the teen years. Although, it is never too late for parents to open the dialogue.

If I suspect they are already using, how do I start the conversation?

- Voice your concerns in a calm but open manner. Keep the focus on their use.
- Use "I" statements, such as "I am worried about you. I've noticed you're acting differently."
- If they admit to using or experimenting, ask them how much and how often they are using. Ask about their reason for using substances.

- Explain the consequences of their behaviors: health risks, safety concerns, legal issues, as well as where this could lead them.
- Offer and reach out for support: seek out a professional counselor or speak to your family doctor.



**"WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF A FRIEND OFFERED YOU SOMETHING TO DRINK OR SMOKE."**

**"Conversations are one of the most powerful tools parents can use to connect with – and protect – their kids."**

**~~Parents have a significant influence in their children's decisions to experiment with alcohol and other drugs~~**

### WHY YOUR CHILD MIGHT START DRINKING ALCOHOL

#### Environment

If children grow up in an environment where their parents or peers drink a lot and/or view drinking favorably, they may be more likely to drink themselves.

*What can you do: If you choose to drink, set a good example by drinking in moderation, and make sure your child knows that underage drinking is not acceptable.*

#### Genetics

Children who come from a family with a history of alcoholism are at an increased risk for becoming an alcoholic.

*What can you do: If alcoholism runs in your family, have an honest discussion with your child to make sure he or she understands the seriousness of the disease.*

**80%**

of La Crosse County youth agree or strongly agree that their family loves and give them help and support. -Youth Risk Behavior Survey for La Crosse County, 2017

## Why Small Conversations Make a Big Impression

Information taken from SAMHSA - "Talk They Hear You"

**Short, frequent discussions can have a real impact on your child's decisions about alcohol.** Talking to your child at an early age about drinking is the first step toward keeping them alcohol-free. But as they enter junior high and high school, the pressure to try alcohol increases. It's important to continue the conversation throughout adolescence.

**Talking often builds an open, trusting relationship with your child.**

Children are more likely to avoid drinking when they have a strong, trusting relationship with their parents. Get into the habit of chatting with your child every day. It will make it easier to have serious conversations about things like alcohol, and will make your child more comfortable coming to you for advice.

**Lots of little talks are more effective than one "big talk."** "Sitting down for the "big talk" about alcohol can be intimidating for both you and your child. Try using everyday opportunities to talk— in the car, during dinner, or while you and your child are watching TV. Having lots of little talks takes the pressure off trying to get all of the information out in one

lengthy discussion, and your child will be less likely to tune you out.

**When you do talk about alcohol, make your views and rules clear.**

Take the time to discuss your beliefs and opinions about alcohol with your child. Be honest and express a clear, consistent message that



underage drinking is unacceptable. When they feel that you're being real and honest with them, they'll be more likely to respect your rules about underage drinking.

**As children get older, the conversation changes.**

What you say to a 9-year-old about alcohol is different from what you say to a 15-year-old. Children also can't learn all they need to know from a single discussion. Make sure that the information you offer your child fits their age. As they get older, you can give them more information and reinforce your rules.

**Remember that the conversation goes both ways.** Although talking to your child about your thoughts about alcohol is essential, it's also important to hear their point of view. (continue to page 5)

### WHY YOUR CHILD MIGHT START DRINKING ALCOHOL

#### Stress

When children worry about things like grades, fitting in, and physical appearance, they may use alcohol as a way to escape their problems.

*What can you do:* Encourage your child to get involved in sports or other extracurricular activities as a healthier way to cope with his or her problems.

#### Peer Pressure

The age range between 11 and 18 is an impressionable period when youth are especially susceptible to outside influences such as peers, family members, and the media.

*What can you do:* Help boost your child's confidence by helping him or her learn different ways to say "no" and reminding him or her that real friends would not pressure him or her to drink.

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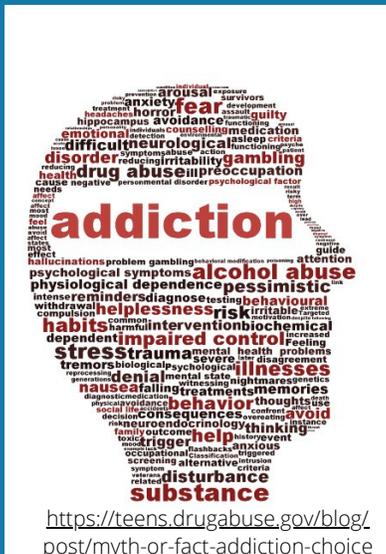
## Why Small Conversations Make a Big Impression

Give your child the opportunity to ask you questions, and listen to what they have to say. Children who have parents who listen to their feelings and concerns are more likely to say "no" to alcohol.

### What you do is just as important as what you say.

In addition to talking often with your child about alcohol, it's

important to set a good example. If you choose to drink, you can positively influence your child by drinking in moderation and NEVER driving when you've been drinking. Be aware of where you keep your alcohol, and always remind your child that the alcohol in your house is off-limits.



<https://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/myth-or-fact-addiction-choice>

overrides other needs, including the need to care for your self, your infant, or your relationships with others. Addiction changes how you think and behave. Addiction is a disease. Like other diseases, it has symptoms.

### Symptoms of Addiction

People may take drugs to feel good, to relieve stress, to perform better or because of curiosity or peer pressure. But repeated use can lead to addiction and being unable to stop. There are four categories of symptoms of addiction:

- Impaired control: a craving to use the substance; desire or inability to reduce or control substance use.
- Social problems: failure to complete major tasks at work, school, or home; social, work, or leisure activities are given up or cut back because of substance use.

- Risky use: the substance is used in risky settings; use continues despite known problems.
- Drug effects: tolerance (need for larger amounts to get the same effect); withdrawal symptoms (different for each substance).

If you're concerned about you or someone else, get help at [findtreatment.gov](http://findtreatment.gov)

### Preventing Addiction

Addiction is a powerful disease, but it is preventable. In fact, the National Institute on Drug Abuse says preventing drug misuse and addiction during adolescence is the best strategy for tackling addiction.

And everyone has a role to play in prevention, whether you're a parent, teacher, community leader, health professional, volunteer, student, or a family grieving the loss of a loved one. At Prevention Action Alliance, we're building a world where every community has access to high-quality prevention resources and where everyone knows the role they play. If you want to become part of building that world, join us at [preventionactionalliance.org/join](http://preventionactionalliance.org/join).

## Addiction - What is it? How can I Stop it?

Information taken from "A Prevention Action Alliance Fact Sheet"

### Addiction Impacts Millions

Addiction, or substance use disorder, is a chronic, complex brain disease affecting about 21 million (1 in 7) Americans. Addiction compels people to seek drugs despite negative consequences and creates intense cravings for the addictive drug. This craving



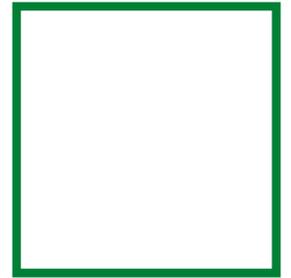
<https://www.health.harvard.edu>

BROUGHT TO YOU BY COULEE RECOVERY CENTER, LA CROSSE COUNTY PREVENTION NETWORK AND ALLIANCE 2 HEAL WORK GROUP #4 - YOUTH AND COMMUNITY PREVENTION EDUCATION

# PARENT TOOLKIT NEWSLETTER - VOL 1

**COULEE RECOVERY CENTER**  
**(COULEE COUNCIL ON ADDICTION)**

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***TO:***