

CASA's 2000 Teen Survey revealed that being a "hands-on" parent who is involved in a teen's life can significantly lower the teen's substance abuse risk, regardless of family structure.



The power of positive parenting



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How an investment of time with your young family now can help your children avoid common teenage pitfalls later in life



¹ Teen Survey conducted by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University, February 2001.

² Teen Survey conducted by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University, September 1998.

³ From CASA's report, Teen Tipplers: America's Underage Drinking Epidemic, February 2002.





Teens who eat dinner with their parents fewer than three times a week are four times likelier to smoke cigarettes, three times likelier to smoke marijuana, and nearly twice as likely to drink as those who eat dinner with their parents six or seven times a week.²

As parents, you have the power to positively influence your children and keep them free from the dangers they face. How? By spending time with your children each day.

Easier said than done? In today's busy society, it seems there's never enough time. But even a simple act like eating dinner together each night could have a major impact on whether your children try cigarettes, alcohol, or illegal drugs as teens. Consider these facts:

- A survey¹ of 1,000 teenagers revealed that those who never eat dinner with their families are 61 percent more likely to smoke, drink, or use illegal drugs.
- The same survey found that teenagers who eat family dinners seven nights a week are 20 percent less likely than the average teen to engage in these activities.

Individuals who begin drinking before the age of 15 are four times more likely to become alcohol dependent than those who begin drinking at age 21.³

What power do I have to fight peer pressure?

It's true—teenagers care what their friends think about them. But they also care what their parents think about them. According to the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University, 42 percent of teens who said they'd never used marijuana credit their parents with influencing the decision.

Showing your young children you care more about their welfare than their friends do can be a powerful weapon against peer pressure later. And gaining that principal place in your child's life usually is not difficult to do, especially with young children, who want to please their parents.

Here are some things you can do:

- Gather your family for dinner regularly. This routine provides daily "check-in" time with your children.
- Talk honestly with your kids.
- Praise your children and set clear limits for them.
- Attend your children's sports and school activities.
- Help your kids with their homework and meet with their teachers.

- Supervise your children. Make sure you know where they are after school and on weekends.



How do I fight media images idealizing drugs and alcohol?

With many alcohol advertisers making commercials using animal characters that appeal to children, it's no wonder underage drinking is a growing problem. According to CASA research, nearly 50 percent of 81 G-rated animated films showed characters using alcohol, often without consequences. What can you do?

- Limit what television shows/movies your children watch.
- Listen to the music they buy.
- Keep track of your kids' Internet use.
- Finally, talk to your kids about the images they see and the lyrics they hear, especially those with negative messages.

How can I tell if my child needs help?

Here are some signs that your child may be in need of help:

- Low school grades.
- Withdrawal from family activities.
- Aggressive, rebellious behavior.
- Missing school.
- Strongly influenced by peers.
- New group of friends.
- Hostility and lack of cooperation.
- Failing relationships with family.
- Loss of interest in personal appearance.
- Loss of interest in hobbies and sports.
- Changes in sleeping and eating habits.
- Evidence of drugs and paraphernalia.
- Physical changes such as red eyes, runny nose, frequent sore throats, rapid weight loss, bruises from falls. If a cold or other explainable medical condition is not causing these symptoms, they could be signs that your child is using drugs.

I have a teen who is already rebelling... could it be too late?

It's never too late to reach out and help your children. For advice on how to talk to your teen about issues they may be facing, such as drugs, alcohol, tobacco use, or depression, contact your medical practitioner, a school social worker, or a family counselor. Several good books are available on these subjects, and you can also search the Internet. CASA's Web site at www.casacolumbia.org has some helpful information; click on "FYI—Family and Youth Information" and then "Parent Power."

One of the most important things is to reach out to your children and stay in touch. It's an investment of time that can reap big rewards in the long run.

