



**RELATIONSHIPS AND GROWING UP GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT
FOR PARENTS**

OCTOBER 2021

TEENAGE PARTIES

Letting your teenager have a party

When your teen asks to have friends to sleep over – maybe after a party – or asks to sleep over at a friend's with a group of other teens, your first response may be a downright NO. Visions of out-of-control drinking, drug taking or unprotected sex probably flash through your mind.

But the fact is, at some point you are going to have to take a risk and leave your teenager on their own with others. Says Paula Hall, Relate counsellor, psychotherapist and mum of two teenage daughters: "If you feel you always need to be there to supervise, you need to ask yourself: what is it you are worried about that might go on – and what really are the chances of that happening?"

"If we don't give teenagers responsibility then they won't ever take it. Unfortunately, at times, you are going to get it wrong – but you are going to have to get them to take responsibility for things at some point." Paula adds that if you're going to allow teens to be home with friends alone, set boundaries beforehand such as: no deliberate damage to property; no smoking in the house; no taking your things; don't touch the alcohol; don't help themselves to food without checking with you first.

If you've said yes to a party or sleepover

- decide on numbers – and stick to it
- agree your house rules with your teen in advance
- insist on separate rooms for different sexes
- put away your alcohol

Decide what your rules are. What will you absolutely not accept? Tell your child what they are and stick to them. Speak to other parents about

what they feel is appropriate for a sleepover and make it clear what your rules are, whether it's no alcohol, no music after a certain time and so on.

Impose a very heavy penalty if any of these rules are broken. You have to make sure it's something that your child will be really anxious to avoid and you must be prepared to carry it out. Says Paula: "I once put a nine-week ban on my daughter having friends round, which was very effective as she adores having friends to stay."

Tell your child's friends what the penalty for bad behaviour will be. That way you are making everyone responsible for behaving well, not just your child. Decide beforehand where you're going to be when the sleepover takes place. Don't leave parties completely unsupervised – stay out of the way by all means, but be there for any unforeseen emergencies or gate-crashers.

Remember, it's your child's home too – and this is better than them being out on the streets till all hours. They've got to socialise somewhere – so why not at home? Make sure you've spoken to your child about responsible attitudes towards sex – not just contraception, but about appropriate behaviour. Make it clear that underage sex is illegal.

Saying no

Don't give in to pestering: "So and so's mum lets her have sleepovers/everyone else goes to them," etc. Kids only nag and pester when they are rewarded by winning.

It's perfectly ok to say no if you aren't comfortable and don't feel you have to justify it. Don't leave the idea there is a 'maybe' possible if you really aren't happy. Say something like: "Yes, I'm sure it does seem unreasonable to you, and I'm really sorry I can't give you an explanation you're happy with, but the answer is still no."

If your child is under 16, then you have a legal responsibility for other people's kids if they are under your roof. You can even blame the law and tell your child that you're not willing to risk breaking it if under-age children might end up sleeping together under your roof. When under 16's are involved, morality doesn't even come into it – it's the law. Understand what your objective is and stick to it.

Talk to other parents. It's more than likely they are not totally comfortable with mixed sleepovers, despite what your child may say. Insist you speak to the other parents first to discuss the sleepover. Do this and you'll be amazed at how few children are then available for the sleepover your child wants!

Going to parties and alcohol

Speak to the host parents, even if you don't know them. Tell your child you're not prepared to let them go otherwise. Check an adult will be present and their policy on alcohol. If you can, drop your teenager off and pick them up, or share lifts with parents you trust.

If sleeping over after a party at another friend's house, check plans are genuine and again speak to the parents. Ask your child to ring or text you when they're safely at their friends house. Make sure your teenager has had a good meal before they go out.

Check they have a fully charged mobile that they must keep on, and that you have planned how and what time they are getting home. Be prepared to say no if you're unhappy about a party or if your child doesn't want you to speak to the host. There may be rows, but remember that this is because you care, not because you are being a killjoy. Offer an alternative treat instead to soften the blow.

Don't feel pressured by younger teens to provide them with alcohol to take with them to parties or threaten you that they'll ask their mates to buy it for them instead (explain they risk their friend being fined or charged). If your teen breaks your agreement, such as what time to be home, then make sure you carry out any consequences, such as grounding them or taking phone away

When your teen is a guest

Check with the host's parents who will be supervising. Ask if alcohol is going to be allowed and tell them your feelings on this. (Remember, government advice is that young people under 15 should not drink at all.)

Always have a landline number for the home they are staying in (with mobiles they could be anywhere). Tell your teen if he/she is worried or

uncomfortable about anything, he or she can phone you and come home.

Although you may find this period stressful, remember it doesn't last forever. Says Paula: "Having to plan the occasional evening watching TV in your bedroom while the kids have their sleepover party downstairs isn't really such a high price to pay.

If you're having trouble accepting it, remember all the times you had friends around in the evening and sent your child upstairs while you socialized. Well, now it's their turn..."

DRUGS

it's important to talk about drugs

Most teens come into contact with drugs in some form or another at some point in their life. If they do decide to take them - and the majority of teens don't - there are many possible reasons why. For some, it might be a case of rebellion, or a need to fit in; others might use them as a way to relax, get high, and lose their inhibitions; or it could even be as simple as curiosity - a chance to experiment with different drugs and see what it's like.

Young people who can talk openly with their parents are less likely to try drugs than those without this relationship, and they will wait until they are older before deciding whether to experiment with drugs. In addition, families that have experienced drug or alcohol misuse say that being well-informed about substances and their effects would have helped them to either minimise problems caused by drugs, or to identify them at an earlier stage.

Callum Jacobs from FRANK says: "Being able to talk to your children is key to preventing and limiting the potential problems caused by drug misuse, yet many parents feel unable to tackle this subject, partly because they feel ill-informed and afraid that their child will know more about drugs than they do. However, this is too important an issue to be swept under the carpet - every parent needs to find out the facts about drugs so that they can feel confident enough to talk to their children."

How to talk to your teenager about drugs

1. Prepare

Think about why you want to have the talk. Is it because your child has reached a certain age and you think it's about time, or have you noticed some worrying changes in behaviour - for example, your son or daughter is staying in his or her room for hours on end, or going out all the time? Remember, adolescence is often a difficult time and your child's behaviour might in fact be nothing more than their teenage development or adjusting to new feelings and experiences in their life, so try to be open about what might be affecting their behaviour.

The next stage is to do some research. Find out the facts (see www.talktofrank.com) and think through your views on drugs. For example, do you reject all forms of drug taking or do you make a distinction between cannabis and heroin? It's important for you to be clear about your own opinions before you talk to your child.

Commented [MH1]:

2. Having the conversation: stay calm and be open

Getting too intense will put pressure on your child, so it's important to stay calm and open-minded. Encourage a relaxed conversation, starting with questions about the 'bigger picture'. Try to find out how things are going outside of home, with their friends, at school, etc. Make sure to ask questions that won't result in one-word answers; this way, the conversation will be much more likely to flow.

Just as importantly, listen to what your child has to say. Write it down if it helps and consider it later. Don't react to bad language or shocking stories. It's also important to see their point of view. Just as you need your ideas to be listened to, your children need to see that you listen to them - and you don't have to compromise your own boundaries to do this.

3. Make sure the dialogue is on-going

If your child feels comfortable after the initial conversation, they will be more likely to come to you with any future questions. Make sure you're available to talk when they do this, but don't feel that you have to wait for them in order to have another chat.

4. Stay calm

If you're sure there's a problem and your child refuses to talk to you, try to stay calm. Remember that there are different reasons why people take drugs. For your child, it may be as simple as, 'to have fun'. The drugs might make your child feel relaxed, sociable and full of energy, and this may be a phase that they are going through. It's important to explain that drugs are illegal and can affect their physical and mental health, and to let them know that while you may not approve, they can always talk to you about any worries they may have.

Alternatively, your child may be using drugs to escape pressure at school or at home, or because they are having difficulty in coping with stressful situations. Again, it's important to talk calmly and get to the root of any problems, so that you can find a way to work through these problems together and help them manage these situations without drugs.

5. Be supportive

FRANK'S Callum Jacobs says: "One of the best things a child can know is that they have a supportive environment. If you've had a conversation where your child has admitted to taking drugs and you've said: 'I'm not condoning what you do, but if you're in trouble, you can always talk about it with us', they're more likely to turn to you if, or when, they get worried." If the conversation is handled well, your child will most likely feel comfortable enough to talk to you about other problems.

6. Don't blame yourself

Remember, you are not to blame; ultimately your child is responsible for their choice to take drugs. Also remember that, although drug use can be worrying, in most cases your child will not develop a drug problem and will stop taking drugs of their own accord. If it turns out your child has been experimenting with drugs, or you've had a conversation with them about drugs and you feel that you need more help, remember that there are support services available for you both. Don't delay in seeking help. Often parents concentrate solely on finding help for their child, yet getting support for yourself might actually be the best way to help your child.

Callum Jacobs says: "Parents must remember that they also have needs and that they must be able to look after their relationships with other family members throughout this experience. There are many support groups, run by people who have had similar experiences to you and who

will understand what you, your child and your whole family are going through".

Research shows that where young people do develop a problem with drugs, the involvement and support of parents and families can make a big difference to the person's health and their ability to deal with their drug habit. Drugs services, counselling services, and self-help groups offer support to your child at any stage, whether or not they are ready to change their behaviour.

Drugs - what are the signs?

To avoid making assumptions or worrying unnecessarily, it can be useful to be able to recognise the signs that your child may be taking drugs. The following changes in behaviour or appearance could be a sign that something is wrong. However - even if you think you've noticed some or all of these signs, it's important not to jump to conclusions. It may not mean that your child is taking drugs - it could just be part of the usual growing up phase as your teenager comes to terms with new hormones, new responsibilities and a new identity.

- Your child may start asking you for money, or cash could start going missing with no indication of what has been bought.
- You may find unusual equipment lying around the house, such as torn cigarette packets, small sealable bags, or empty aerosols.
- They may experience a lack of appetite, or you could notice sores or rashes around the mouth or nose.
- Your child may experience mood swings, start staying out late, or begin socialising with new friends.
- They may appear drowsy, lack motivation, and lose interest in their personal appearance.

If you're worried, the best thing to do is have a calm, open talk with your child, making sure to listen to whatever they have to say. Try not to be emotional or judgemental as this could ruin your chance to have an honest conversation.

If you discover that your child is taking drugs

Don't panic: Although you may have a strong emotional reaction, shouting at your child is not going to help. Stay calm and remain open-minded. Don't just fire questions at them - make sure that you're listening to what your child has to say. Being able to communicate with your child will help to prevent and limit the problems caused by drug misuse.

Be supportive: If your child is taking drugs, you need to understand why. They may be being bullied, or feeling stressed about school. Young people who talk openly with their parents are less likely to try drugs than those without this relationship, so make it clear that you're there for them, and are willing to help them with any problems they're having.

Do your homework: There are lots of myths and misconceptions around drugs which may cloud your judgement. Until you're well informed, you'll be unable to offer your child sound advice.

UNDERAGE DRINKING

Medical guidance, is that an alcohol free childhood until the age of at least 15 is advised, and this is for very good reasons, as teenagers brains and livers are not fully developed, so they cannot break down alcohol. Alcohol has more of an effect so the risk of accidents and injury to themselves or others is high, and perhaps most importantly exam predictions suffer, falling by 20 points among those who drink weekly, that's the difference between an A* and a C.

Underage drinking has halved in England over the last decade, with 62% of 11 -15 year olds saying they haven't even tried alcohol and the number of 15 year olds drinking weekly has fallen to 10%. Even among 16 -24 year olds just 18% binge drink regularly, contrary to what the media tell us, so teenagers are much better behaved than in our day!

The key thing to remember as parents or carers however, is the more relaxed we are about alcohol in the home, the more likely our kids are to drink outside of it, at parties and in public places, and that's where risk taking is most likely to happen.

When and how to talk about alcohol

- Find a relaxed time when you can both chat, such as when you are giving them a lift, or watching TV rather than when they are half way out the door or with their friends.
- Talk about how they may feel or what they may do under pressure, in difficult situations such as being offered a drink, or being offered a lift home by a friend who has been drinking.
- Talk openly and honestly about the potential dangers of binge drinking. Make it an inclusive discussion, not a lecture.
- If you do drink, be honest about your own choices, rather than just presenting the negatives.
- Talk about how alcohol can influence people's judgement and help them to think through how it might feel to regret something the next day.
- Make them aware of drinks being spiked and how to avoid putting themselves in vulnerable situations. Encourage them and their friends to look out for each other.
- Explore how alcohol affects people in different ways, and how it can make some people aggressive and violent. Talk through ways of keeping safe and walking away from trouble.
- Ensure your teen knows that, no matter how angry you may be with them, you are there for them, and that they can call you if someone gets hurt or they are worried about something.
- Try not to take it personally or feel downhearted if they don't take your advice. Sometimes teens have to make their own mistakes to realise that what you have said is true.

Teach your child about sensible drinking, pacing drinks, alternating alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks and always eating a decent meal before drinking. Warn them how easy it is to go over their limits, make a fool of themselves and compromise their safety or do something they might regret later. Offer your child the chance to ask any questions so they can come to you if they ever need any help.

As they get older, remind them to always keep their mobile fully charged and to let you, or someone outside of their friendship group know where they are going, they should always plan how they are going to get home before they go out and keep enough money aside to get home safely.

Finally, drink spiking is a real risk, so they should never leave their drink unattended or accept drinks from someone they do not know well.

POLICE report spiked drinks has doubled in 5 years

Bearing in mind that the key place where teenagers drink is at parties, so think seriously before agreeing to host a party (especially for those under 16) for your teenager yourself. If you do feel happy, then these tips will help it go well.

- Agree the list of invites with your teenager. Don't make the party too long
- Warn your teen about how they invite their friends – no open invitations on social media
- Agree the house rules and put your teen in charge
- You might have to stay out of sight for you kids street cred, but stick around
- Provide plenty of food – not salty snacks, but carbs
- Teenagers do sneak in alcohol in water bottles, mixed with soft drinks etc, so be prepared and work out how you'll handle this
- Have loads of soft drinks and iced water available
- If anyone is sick or ill, contact their parents and never leave them unattended
- Try and avoid big sleepovers, as the kids won't get much sleep (or you probably) and you won't know what's going on once you're in bed
- Finally, make sure you've warned your neighbours and have a reasonable finish time, allowing parents to pick up and get to bed too
- If it goes well, don't forget to tell your teen how proud you are of them and their mates

RESPECT AND CONSENT

Access the short video on You tube – “*CUP OF TEA* “, which shows the simplicity of both consent and respect.

Consent is a YES or NO ,and we CAN and are allowed to change our minds and to choose, **without** coercion and/or control . Respect for others and for ourselves is vital OR we will lose self esteem when we realise we have not followed our own choices.

Non-verbal consent, as in body language is NOT consent, and would not stand up in a court of law.

ON LINE SHARING IMAGES

It is illegal, under the age of 18 years, to take images naked or in underwear or bikinis, posed provocatively. This is viewed as a sexualised image. Even if the image is never shared it is illegal, as the child has created an offence by possession of an image. Once shared it becomes distribution. Both, are illegal. This will impact their future lives and careers forever.

Parents would you allow a paedophile knocking on your door to speak to your child in their bedrooms? Obviously, No. However, by allowing devices in their bedrooms and bathrooms, that is the equivalent of so doing.

MANY children are taking self-generated images and "live streaming". Especially girls from age 6 years old to 14 years old. Police cannot trace offenders on live streaming and in lock down it has skyrocketed. The increase is hugely concerning.

PLEASE REMOVE DEVICES from their private areas for increased safety and monitoring

Once these images are shared with peers, eventually they reach those of ill intent and are sold on the dark web.

If a child is reported to the police this may mean "sexualised offence" against the DBS, which remains permanent

The age of criminal responsibility is 10 years old.

Some, but not all, Chief Constables may operate Outcome 21, which means they remove any charge, but it is a lottery. Discussions about a change in this Law are still ongoing.

WHY RELATIONSHIPS MATTER

Love is one of the most profound emotions known to human beings. There are many kinds of love, but many people seek its expression in a romantic relationship with a compatible partner (or partners). For these individuals, romantic relationships comprise one of the most meaningful aspects of life and are a source of deep fulfilment.

While need for human connection appears to be innate, the ability to form healthy, loving relationships is learned. Some evidence suggests that the ability to form a stable relationship starts to form in infancy, in a child's earliest experiences with a caregiver who reliably meets the

infant's needs for food, care, warmth, protection, stimulation, and social contact. Such relationships are not destiny, but they are theorized to establish deeply ingrained patterns of relating to others. The end of a relationship, however, is often a source of great psychological anguish.

How to Build a Healthy Relationship

Maintaining a strong relationship requires constant care and communication, and certain traits have been shown to be especially important for fostering healthy relationships. Each individual should, for starters, feel confident that their partner is willing to devote time and attention to the other. They must both also be committed to accommodating their differences, even as those change over time.

In the 21st century, good relationships are generally marked by emotional and physical fairness, particularly in the distribution of chores necessary to maintain a household. Partners in strong relationships also feel grateful for one another, openly provide and receive affection, and engage in honest discussions about sex.

In good relationships, partners try to afford their partner the benefit of the doubt, which creates a sense of being on the same team. This feeling, maintained over the long term, can help couples overcome the challenges they will inevitably face together.

Love and Sex

Sexual connection is a vital aspect of most romantic relationships, but it's not always as central as people may think. Partners have sex for self-interested reasons—it feels good and can boost self-esteem; and for relationship-focused reasons—it enhances closeness and pleases someone they love. Over the long term, most couples will face sexual challenges, as bodies change with age and individuals' desire for sex waxes and wanes (and generally declines). Research consistently shows that most couples struggle to talk about sex honestly, but that when they do, it brings them closer together.

Love also brings people together, but it takes more than love to stay together. Many of us know couples that broke up despite believing that they were in love with each other, because of one partner's infidelity or because of distance or circumstance. But even in long-term stable relationships, partners who feel that they are in love may grow apart, if one believes that they are not emotionally safe in the relationship, or that it lacks passion or intimacy.

STEALTHING in the UK is seen as rape!

It is when a male removes a condom during sex without consent .
women also stealth ! how? They can lie about being on the pill ! They
become pregnant , not face any legal action and the male then has to
pay 18 years of child maintenance

The Power of Love

Loving relationships can literally be a matter of life and death: Having a
supportive relationship is more predictive of warding off mortality than
quitting smoking or exercising, while a toxic relationship is more
damaging than no relationship at all. But love is always reciprocal and
can only survive if both partners are willing to be open and honest with
each other, express gratitude, share their thoughts and feelings, and ask
for support rather than trying to go it alone. Individuals often believe they
are sparing their partner by keeping their troubles from them, but people
can be deeply hurt when they discover that the person they love most
has not confided in them or sought out their support.

Please do contact us for further information or training

www.freedom-abuse.org Marilyn.hawes@freedom-abuse.org