

10 Marijuana and Alcohol Harm Reduction Tips for Parents



If you are a parent or guardian with children, teens or even young adults, you don't have to be a rocket scientist to know your marijuana or alcohol use and attitudes can influence your youth's using them too.

For example, a recent study published in the *Journal of Adolescent Health* showed that parents' current use of marijuana predicted their children's use of alcohol and marijuana, as did children's perceptions that their parent's supported marijuana use.

Some parents don't believe it, but research shows they have a significant influence on their kid's substance use.

So all parents, regardless of whether or not they use marijuana or alcohol, should take care to protect their youth from substance use harm. Below are 10 tips to help parents do just that.

Why is this important?



While marijuana and alcohol can pose different types and levels of harm for youth, they have many risks in common, including increased likelihood of death and injuries from accidents and poisoning, suicide, depression, unprotected sex, impaired brain development, other drug use, school failure, legal problems and addiction.

In addition, it's clear that the earlier youth start using marijuana or alcohol, and the more frequently and heavier the use, the greater the likelihood for experiencing negative effects and significant harm at some point in their lives.

So all parents should take concrete steps to protect their youth from substance use harm. These steps should be aimed at preventing early use, as well as frequent and heavy use, while your son or daughter is still young.

10 Parenting Tips



Below are 10 tips to help parents reduce the risk of marijuana and alcohol harm to their youth.

1. **Talk with your teen about marijuana myths.**

Youth are likely to believe common myths about marijuana. Particularly, that its use poses no risk for harm. While we will discuss common myths about marijuana use in another document, parents and guardians should debunk the idea that marijuana use by youth is completely harmless.

2. **Set clear expectations.**

Tell your youth in no uncertain terms that you're dead against their use of marijuana or alcohol until later in life, that they should never drive after using marijuana

or drinking, and that frequent or heavy use of either substance is unacceptable behavior for them. Communicating clear and firm expectations for your youth and young adult's behaviors, in this case related to their substance use, can have a significant influence on their actions and well-being.

3. **Protect youth from accessing marijuana and alcohol at home.**

Keep marijuana and alcohol products out of sight and out of the reach of your youth. Easy access to substances increases their use, especially if they are in clear view of your youth.



4. Correct inaccurate norms.

It's common for young people to overestimate the number of their peers who use marijuana and alcohol, as well as their peers and even their parent's approval of their use. Correct these beliefs by telling your kids that, even though it might seem like it, most youth do NOT use marijuana and alcohol. In addition, let them know that most kids and adults do NOT think that it is okay for young people to regularly use either marijuana or alcohol.

5. Emphasize healthy habits and pro-social activities for your youth.

Promote an overall healthy lifestyle in your youth by encouraging and supporting their participation in sports and physical activities, eating healthy foods, getting adequate sleep, controlling stress, volunteering to help others, and engaging in extracurricular activities at school, church and in the community. Let your youth know that being active and healthy will make them feel and look good, improve their self-image and self-confidence, and increase their likelihood of being successful and happy. Here are informational flyers that can help parents provide

positive behavior and image messages to their youth:

<http://preventionpluswellness.com/parent-prevention-plus-wellness-flyers/>

6. Help your youth set self-improvement goals.

Encourage your youth to set and work toward personal improvement goals. Setting concrete, measurable goals is a very effective tool to help youth improve their healthy habits and avoid risky behaviors, leading to improved self-identity, self-confidence, and success in school, sports, career, relationships and life. Here are scripted pep talk lessons with goal plans that parents can use to help their youth set self-improvement goals:

<http://preventionpluswellness.com/ppw-pep-talk-lessons-parents/>

7. Use a contract if needed.

If you are having difficulty communicating with your youth about their behaviors, consider drawing up a home contract to clarify your expectations, rewards and disincentives for your youth engaging in desired and unacceptable behaviors. Here are some home contracts parents can use that emphasize healthy youth behaviors, while also addressing avoiding marijuana and alcohol use, improving school grades, avoiding driving citations, following home rules, and living a moral life: <http://preventionpluswellness.com/prevention-plus-wellness-teen-contracts/>

8. Be a good role model.

By being a good role model, we are simply saying practice what you preach. Engage in healthy

behaviors your kids can see, and avoid using but certainly misusing marijuana and alcohol use in view of your youth. For example, don't ever use marijuana or alcohol and drive afterwards, and don't model embarrassing or inappropriate behaviors that result from over intoxication. You might even show your kids that you are setting goals to improve your personal and professional life.



9. Monitor your teens friends and whereabouts.

It's critical for parents and guardians to keep a close watch on their youth as they gain additional independence throughout adolescence. Communicate that you'd like your kids to spend time with friends that are supportive of their engaging in healthy and pro-social activities, while avoiding marijuana and alcohol use. Set curfews for youth to be home at a certain time each evening. Also, don't hesitate to tell your son or daughter you need to know where they are going before leaving the house, and that you want them to call you to check in during the evening. In addition, do reach out to other parents when your kids say they are going to their home for a party or sleep over. As in international affairs, a parent's

moto should always be: "trust but verify!"

10. Never glamorize or promote marijuana or alcohol use in front of your teen.

Be vigilant to never make comments in front of your youth that paint marijuana or alcohol use in a glamorous or positive light. Even if you are referring to adult legal use of marijuana or alcohol, avoid talking about the benefits of using these substances when you kids are near. Otherwise, your youth can take your comments as personally condoning or even approving the use of marijuana and alcohol use for them.

For more information about preventing marijuana, alcohol and other drug use among youth and young adults, sign up to receive our free weekly blog articles today:

<http://preventionpluswellness.com/request-info-ppw/>



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