

## Talking With Your Children

Developing open and trusting communication between you and your children can help them avoid underage drinking and guide them toward healthy decision making.

Some ways to begin talking with your child:

- Encourage conversation.
  - “What was the best thing that happened to you today?”
  - “Who do you admire the most and why?”
  - “Do kids at school talk about alcohol?”
  - “What do you think about drinking? How do you think I feel about it?”
- Encourage your child to talk about her interests.
  - “What are you excited about this week?”
  - “What do you like about school? What don’t you like about it?”
  - “If you knew you couldn’t fail, what job would you choose?”
- Listen without interruption. Your active listening paves the way for conversations about topics that concern you.
- Give your child a chance to teach you something new.
- Ask open-ended questions:
  - “What do you like best about yourself?”
  - “What stresses you out?”
  - “How do you deal with pressure?”
- Encourage your child to tell you how he thinks and feels about the issue you're discussing.
- Control your emotions. If you hear something you don't like, try to not respond with anger. Instead, take a few deep breaths and acknowledge your feelings in a constructive way.

## Alcohol in advertising and the media

Studies have shown that children who understand how advertising and media messages work are less likely to be influenced by them. Here are some things you can discuss with your child:

- Alcohol companies sponsor popular sporting events because they offer a lot of publicity. Plus fans may associate an alcoholic beverage with their favorite sport or team.

- Alcoholic beverage companies use advertising with music, attractive people and fun situations to make you associate those things with their drinks.
- TV shows and movies may show people drinking excessively, but they don't always show the consequences. Getting drunk can lead to more than a hangover. Talk about other risks including drunk driving and accidental injury. Discuss alcohol dependence and how regular alcohol abuse could hurt your teen.

## Points to Remember

- Be clear that you disapprove of underage drinking and expect your child to delay alcohol use until he is 21.
- Remind your child that once she is old enough, she should only drink in moderation.
- Every family has rules, and one of yours is that there is no underage drinking.
- Even though it seems like “everyone’s doing it,” underage drinking is still illegal and shouldn’t be done.
- Underage drinking can put your child’s life in danger. You don’t want anything bad to happen to your child or his friends. Imagine how terrible that would feel.
- Underage drinking can make life a lot harder and ruin your child’s chances to participate in school sports, graduate, go to college, get a job and keep her driver’s license.
- Remind your child that you are there to support him. If he has a question or needs help, you will always be there.
- Underage drinking can sometimes be used as an escape from other problems like stress or problems at school. Ask your child if there is anything she feels she is struggling with.

Want more information? We can help. Visit [www.parentupvt.org](http://www.parentupvt.org) or dial 211 for tools and resources.