

Alcohol Discussion Guide: Age-Based



Middle School

Alcohol is the number one most abused substance by adolescents. Children start to think positively about alcohol around age 9-13, so the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends starting to talk to children about alcohol around age 9. However, parents can set the stage for these discussions by modeling healthy alcohol consumption and using this age-based alcohol discussion guide.

MIDDLE SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN:

- Talk about the temptations they will face at this age and how they may be tempted to experiment.

PEER INFLUENCE: Also known as 'peer pressure' or 'social conformity'. A normal, innate desire to conform to the norms or behaviors of other group members.

REFUSAL SKILLS: Thinking and communicating skills that help youth avoid engaging in high-risk behavior such as resisting peer influence to drink alcohol. The ability to be assertive and say 'no'.

PEER INFLUENCE SCRIPT: *'Your peers will become more important to you as your brain develops during middle school. Therefore, peer pressure or influence may become more powerful to resist. That is why we want you to practice your refusal skills. How will you say 'no' if _____.'*

- Teach that curiosity and the desire to be liked are normal, but that you still expect them to say 'no' to alcohol.

- Describe the negative health effects of using alcohol.

NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF USING ALCOHOL: Alcohol can cause slurred speech, drowsiness, poor judgment, vomiting, diarrhea, upset stomach, headache, breathing problems, slowed heart rate, decreases in coordination, loss of consciousness, increased chance of violence or car crashes.

- Discuss the Parent Review Rule: All kid activities will be reviewed by a parent.

PARENT REVIEW RULE SCRIPT: *'I trust the part of your brain that is grown but don't trust the part that hasn't developed yet. So, the rule is that a parent needs to review all activity requests before the activity happens.'*

- Continue talking about TV, social media, and Internet scenes that glamorize alcohol use.

GLAMORIZE: To make something not good or unhealthy look glamorous, romantic, or desirable.

MEDIA SCRIPT: *'Why do you think media makes alcohol use look glamorous? Why do they only show the positives and fail to show the negative things that happen when people drink alcohol?'*

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- Review your Family Code and establish the consequences for underage alcohol use. Typically, if a child engages in underage alcohol use, the consequences could include:
 - 🌐 Grounding or loss of freedom for 2-4 weeks
 - 🌐 Loss of peer privileges for 2-4 weeks
 - 🌐 An act of restitution (example: writing a paper about the harms of underage drinking; apologizing to a friend's parents for their behavior while drinking during a sleepover; helping clean up damage from a party)
 - 🌐 Loss of vehicle for 2-4 weeks, longer if they engaged in drinking and driving (when they will be of driving age)

RESTITUTION: An act restoring a child's integrity to their word as promised in the Family Code. Making good or making up for acting in a way that does not represent the Family Code.

- Establish random alcohol testing procedures. See Parents Home Page on the BrainAbouts Core to find the section on Drug Testing.

ALCOHOL TESTING SCRIPT: *'Happy 11th or 12th Birthday! Your brain is moving into the second phase of brain development during which your brain grows its higher-level executive function skills. Developing these skills are vital for you to become a fully self-supporting, successful adult! From here on out, we will be giving you random alcohol tests once or twice a year, or upon suspicion. This will be your #1 Refusal Skill. When you are tempted to try alcohol, all you will have to do is think about your alcohol testing and say, 'No way, my parents test me!'*