

Keeping Things Substance-Free with End-Of-Year Celebrations

It's that time of year again, the school year is winding down, finals are wrapping up, and Summer is on the way. Of course, this also means graduations and, more pressingly, graduation parties. These are huge occasions in people's lives, but often these festivities can lead to substance misuse, which may endanger those who are celebrating their big day. One study found that although most students don't report drinking during these events, they believe that the average high school student does. This misconception can lead to kids being willing to drink when they otherwise wouldn't, and put them in situations they're not equipped to handle.

If you're holding a graduation party for your child, or if your child is going to other peoples' graduation parties, follow these helpful tips to keep things alcohol and substance free:

- **Talk to your teenager.** Discuss the fact that alcohol or other substances may be present at other people's parties, and inform them as to your expectations and the consequences of drinking and vaping/smoking marijuana. Having honest discussions can help your teen say no and resist peer pressure when in social settings.
- **Discuss repercussions.** Make sure they know that, aside from parental grounding, there could be legal or physical repercussions from drinking or vaping/smoking marijuana. Make sure they know that addiction can be genetic as well, and it may be harder to stop using something once they start than they initially think.
- **Take inventory on any substances that are in the house, and keep them well out of the party space.** It may be tempting to let them drink during the celebrations. However, it's important to remember not only that it is illegal to provide alcohol to a minor, but also that it can cause negative effects on brain development and increase their risk of alcoholism later in their life.
- **Keep track of who they plan on visiting during this time.** Talk to the parents of those in your teen's social circle and make sure that they're also dedicated to keeping things sober at this time of year. If you aren't familiar with the people they are celebrating with, make sure you know where things are taking place. If your child's phone supports it, have them enable location sharing with you.
- **Pick them up and drop them off.** Not only will this prevent them from driving drunk, but it also provides them some additional support. Knowing that they will have a parent picking them up will further assist them in resisting peer pressure and avoid being tempted. Ensure they know that if they feel uncomfortable with any situation they're in, you'll come collect them whenever they would like.

While these tips are not all-encompassing, they will help to make sure your teen is prepared for what may arise. Despite your best efforts, your child may still choose to drink. If this does happen, it's important to remember to remain non-judgmental when discussing what happened. While it's important to provide consequences for these behaviors, it's also important that your child knows they can trust you, and that they can openly discuss things with you without facing disappointment or anger.

For more information on keeping end of year festivities substance free, please visit:

<https://rethinkthedrinks.com/prom-graduation-season/>

<https://cadyinc.org/resources/get-the-facts/keeping-your-child-safe-around-prom-and-graduation-time/>

<https://www.lths.net/prom-grad-season-safety>

<https://allianceforsafekids.org/prom-and-graduation-season/>

<https://www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov/niaacollegematerials/factsheets/highschoolgradfactsheet.aspx>

<https://www.samhsa.gov/data/data-we-collect/nsduh-national-survey-drug-use-and-health>

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36495643/>

<https://www.dartmouth-hitchcock.org/stories/article/how-help-your-teen-stay-safe-around-prom-and-graduation-season>

<https://www.scipnebraska.com>