



PARENTS DO MATTER!

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Many parents feel that their children don't listen to anything they have to say, especially as young children grow into teens. And there are, no doubt, times when kids don't pay as much attention as their parents would like! However, studies show that parents do have an influence on their children. In fact, there are some startling statistics regarding parental influence. For example, did you know...

- Kids who say they benefited from drug discussions with their parents are 50% less likely to use drugs.
- Only one in four teens surveyed said their parents had talked to them about prescription drug misuse.
- Teens who have seen their parent(s) drunk are more than twice as likely to get drunk in a typical month.
- Teens who have seen their parent(s) drunk are three times likelier to use marijuana and smoke cigarettes.
- Teens who believe their father is okay with their drinking are two and a half times likelier to get drunk.

It is interesting to note that the more parents expect their children to engage in risky behaviors such as drinking and using drugs, the more likely their children are to follow through with those behaviors. Parents who believe that they are only being realistic in expecting risky behavior from their children are contributing to a self-fulfilling prophecy. "By thinking risk-taking or rebelliousness is normal and conveying that to children, parents might add to other messages from society that make teens feel abnormal if they are not willing to take risks or break laws," according to college professor Christy Buchanan.

And according to Joseph A. Califano, Jr., "Teens' behavior is strongly associated with their parents' behavior and expectations, so parents who expect their children to drink and use drugs will have children who drink and use drugs."

Parents may actually lower the rate of risky behavior in their children by expecting that they can resist negative peer pressure and engage in positive behavior instead. And research consistently reveals that children who learn a lot about the risks of drugs at home are up to 50% less likely to use. Still many parents have difficulty talking with their kids about drugs and alcohol.

Parents modeling good behavior, exposing their children to examples of positive things youth do, and making sure their children know there are consequences for risky behavior are all steps parents can take to influence positive behavior in their children. It is also important to share a family history of alcoholism or addiction since it can help a teen's decision making. Teens showed a weaker brain response to risky decision-making if there is a family history of alcoholism. The brain areas most affected are important for executive functioning, which guide complex behavior through planning, decision-making and response control.

What else can parents do?

- Teach trust by role-modeling
- Be patient and apologize when you make a mistake
- Ask your children what they need from you
- Listen a lot, avoid interrupting
- Teach children about ethics, values and principals
- Help children discover what gratitude means
- Keep promises you make
- Answer questions and be consistent
- Let them know you will love them no matter what
- Be diligent-ongoing conversations are more effective
- Look for teachable moments

Parents are the most powerful influence in a child's life—greater than peers, popular music, television, celebrities and the media! But only 30% of children report learning a lot from their parents. Use your influence positively!

(Source: www.timetotalk.org; www.jointogether.org)

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