

Decoder

Breaking down teen culture, substance abuse, and parenting



5 Tips to Create a Safe Graduation Season for Your Teen

Graduation Season is an exciting time for our teens. Unfortunately, sometimes alcohol and drugs are part of the celebration. Let's keep our youth safe in 2011!

1. Set curfews — Teen car crashes and deaths increase exponentially late at night. If you decide to extend curfews, do not allow large blocks of time that are unaccounted for. Know where your teen is, how long they will be there, when they will be leaving, who is there, and who is supervising the event. In 2008, half of teen deaths from motor vehicle crashes occurred between 3pm and midnight and 56% occurred on Friday, Saturday or Sunday. Not sure if your teen is telling you the truth about where they are? Ask them to take a picture on their phone at the party and send it to you!

2. Be up when they come home — My mom told me that her anti-drug plan was coffee and lights. She was wide-awake, lights on, coffee in hand, when my siblings and I came through the door at night. A teen's curfew should never exceed the parent's ability to stay up. My dad's favorite expression was nothing ever good happens after midnight.

3. Clearly communicate your expectations — Although you may feel you've talked many times to your child about your expectations for healthy choices and the consequences of breaking the rules, graduation season is an important time to repeat this message. Talk to your child about the dangers of drinking and driving and getting in the car with a drunk driver. Research shows that parents who discuss possible scenarios and seek their teens' knowledge about what to do increases the chances of their teen's safe decision-making. Help your teen feel empowered to make the right decisions.

4. Talk with your teen.

- Get the conversation started, by asking: How are you feeling about graduation season and graduation parties? What are you most excited about? What are you most nervous about?
- Find out who is hosting Graduation parties that your teens has been invited to. Do you know the group of friends they are going with? Does your teen know these kids well?

5. Talk with the Parents Hosting the Party— It's a good idea to ask the parent's who are hosting the party if they are planning to serve alcohol to adults. If so, do they have a plan to keep alcoholic drinks restricted from teens at the party? It might be awkward to ask, but it's important in finding out what kind of party your kids are attending.

Help your teen enjoy graduation without drinking or using drugs. Lay down rules that will help them create everlasting memories.

Adapted from an article posted on April 8th, 2011 by Jeff Wolfsberg for the Partnership at DrugFree.org, and compiled by Grand Futures Prevention Coalition.



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