

Understand *your* Child's Developmental Needs

From roughly the age of 12–25, the adolescent brain enters a period of heightened neuroplasticity when the brain is pruning and strengthening its internal connections. During this time, it works differently and is susceptible to negative consequences not seen in a fully developed adult brain.

- Make getting a good night's sleep a priority. Preteens and teens need approximately 9 ¼ hours to best learn and manage emotions.
- During the tween and teen years, your child is more susceptible to negative impacts of stress than an adult. Too much stress can lock down a brain, preventing learning from taking place, and lead to lasting damage. Work with your child to find ways to manage stress in a healthy way and do all you can to avoid adding to it.
- IQ can be altered during adolescence with 1/3 going up, 1/3 going down, and 1/3 staying the same.
- It is very common for adolescents to have difficulties with organization. Look for ways to help with this.
- The impacts of substance use are far different on the adolescent brain vs. the adult brain. Two examples out of many: 1.) The same amount of alcohol that causes sedation in an adult can cause brain damage in a teen. 2.) The impacts of marijuana use are different and longer lasting. An adult that uses marijuana/cannabis could have cognitive impairment for a few hours. A teen could experience cognitive effects that last up to a week.

It is often a hard line to walk, helping and not hindering development as our children become independent. We don't want to be overly restrictive but at the same time we don't want to trust blindly. BN Parents hopes to help you navigate this line.

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You have probably noticed, the developmental period of adolescence presents you with different parenting challenges. You can one moment be filled with joy over your child's growing independence and, in the next, terrified by the risks and challenges they face. The reason for worry is justifiable. Despite the fact that adolescents are healthier than at any other time of life, the rates of death and injury triple during this time period.

We are here because many of these can be prevented when parents have the tools necessary to help their adolescent resist temptations and dangers that can affect their health and safety, like alcohol and other drugs. We know it can at times seem our teens dismiss what we say and their peers have all of the power. However, research suggests strong parent-child relationships along with specific protective practices put in place at home decrease risk.

When you talk to your teen about alcohol...

Parents Make a Difference.

bnparents.org



A GUIDE TO
your ALWAYS
UNSTOPPABLE
TEEN

You may be thinking, “I don’t need to worry about my child. I have a good kid.” We will never dispute that but we will tell you from experience that every child makes some poor decisions. And, experience tells us that parents’ active involvement can help prevent them from making the decision to try a substance. This is particularly important because science clearly shows us that substance use during the teen years can interfere with overall brain development and lead to lasting addictions.

If you are questioning if other parents are talking to their children and putting rules in place to prevent substance use. We can assure they are. **85% of local high school students report, “My Family Has Clear Rules About Alcohol and Drug Use.”** And, the reduction in substance use rates among the high school population confirms it.



Given this, we encourage you to put the recommendations offered in this brochure in place at your home and encourage your teen to visit www.AlwaysUnstoppable.org. Here they will find support to remain substance free, ideas to assist them in reaching their full potential both in high school and beyond, and links to social media for ongoing support.



TIP

Don't assume poor decisions only happen at night. The after school hours are a very high-risk time. Check-in during these hours if you have to work outside the home.

- Get to know your child’s friends, introduce yourself to their parents and exchange numbers.
- When your child is participating in activities away from your watchful eyes, even if you think you would never need to, plan ahead and make sure your child has the words to refuse an offer of alcohol, marijuana, vaping products and any other drugs.
- Eat dinner together and plan fun alcohol-free and cannabis-free activities.
- Lock up or monitor any alcohol, marijuana or vaping products at home.

Make These Parenting Practices a Habit.

Before They Go Out

- Set a curfew and discuss consequences if they were to break it.
- Ask them where they will be, what they will be doing, and who they will be with.
- Ask what the plan is if alcohol, marijuana or vaping is taking place.
- Tell them they can call you at any time for help if they feel unsafe.
- Tell them to keep their cell phone with them and not to make any changes to the itinerary without first talking with you.
- Tell them they need to speak with you as soon as they come home, even if they have to wake you up.



Upon Returning Home

- Either be awake or make sure your teen knows to wake you.
- Have a conversation with your teen to make sure they are coherent.
- Check for signs and smells of alcohol, marijuana, or vaping use. (Some parents require their teens to kiss them on the cheek so they can get a good smell. Determine what works for your family.)
- Ask how the evening went and if there were any problems.

Share These Facts with Your Teen.



- You do not want them to drink alcohol, use marijuana/cannabis, smoke, or use nicotine found in vaping devices.
- Reinforce the legal age for use, 21 years, is in place because there is no such thing as “safe” drinking, marijuana use, or nicotine use from cigarettes or vaping devices when your brain is still developing.
- Emphasize that while their bodies might be nearly developed, their brain is undergoing active construction. During this period of development, they are able to learn and retain information far better than adults. The GOOD news, this heightened ability makes the teen years a great time to explore interests, identify strengths and invest in emerging talents. The BAD news, addiction is learned and substance use can interfere with all aspects of brain development. This is why 90% of addictions have roots in the teen years.
- You do not want them to ride in a vehicle driven by a person that used any amount of alcohol or marijuana/cannabis. Not only is it dangerous, it is against the law.
- Under Illinois Social Host Law, adults can receive a fine of \$500, be arrested or go to jail for providing alcohol or marijuana to anyone under the age of 21.