



ANHEUSER-BUSCH

FAMILY TALK

ABOUT DRINKING

PARENT GUIDE



BE THE INFLUENCE

A new way to talk with our kids about alcohol,
underage drinking and responsible choices.

Have meaningful conversations | Build trust | Start today

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INTRODUCTION



The first step in talking to our kids about drinking doesn't involve our kids at all.

Instead, it's about sitting down and asking ourselves some tough questions:

- “Parents, what’s our stance on underage drinking?”
- “What are the agreed upon limits and consequences regarding underage drinking?”
- “As parents, are we making responsible choices and being good role models for our children?”

Before we can take the next step, we have to be honest with ourselves.



IF YOU WANT IT DIFFERENT, DO IT DIFFERENT.



The coaching model is a unique and powerful way for us to connect with our kids. When we are more coach-like in our approach, we can create the right atmosphere for deeper, more meaningful conversations about alcohol.

The good news is that, as parents, we don't need to reinvent ourselves or memorize a list of rules. With the coaching model, we just need to sharpen the tools we already have.

If you're reading this, it's because you genuinely want your children to make smart decisions in this adult world. The coaching model is a different approach that really works, as long as you're willing to leave the traditional approach behind.

TRADITIONAL APPROACH

Will there be drinking at the party?
Will his/her parents be home?
Do your friends drink?

COACHING APPROACH

If there is drinking at the party, what will you do?
If the parents are not home, what is your plan?
If your friends are drinking, how will you take care of yourself?

**“Coaching is about
facilitating change that
will lead to
desired results.”**

The Adler School of
Professional Coaching

EVERYBODY WANTS TO BE HEARD



Even at a young age, kids have a pretty sophisticated ability to know when they're being truly listened to, and when they're just being tolerated. Our kids—especially teens—have a deep need to be heard. In fact, it's one of the most critical aspects of a parent-child relationship. If kids don't think we're listening, they'll stop talking to us. Therefore, as parents, we need to understand the three distinct "levels of listening".

Chances are, most of our conversations with our kids involve listening with an agenda, which is Level 1 listening. That's perfectly understandable. However, if we can elevate our conversations and listen with an open mind (Level 3 listening), we have a much better chance of uncovering our children's true thoughts, fears and opinions about underage drinking. In some ways, listening is the most powerful tool we have for connecting with our kids and promoting responsible choices.

LEVEL 1: "LISTENING WITH AN AGENDA"

At this level, we aren't really listening at all; we're just reciting a script we have in our minds. For example, we might say:

"Sit down. Your mother and I want to talk to you about underage drinking. You know you're not supposed to drink, right?"

In other words, we've come to the conversation with a specific outcome in mind. We aren't really open to ideas that stray from our original agenda. Level 1 listening is usually characterized by yes-or-no answers and interruptions, which can lead to misinterpretations, misunderstanding and hurt feelings.

LEVEL 2: "LISTENING FROM OUR PERSPECTIVE"

This level of listening is better, but it still lacks true openness. At Level 2, we're listening to what our kids say, but we're instantly relating it to our own views and experiences. For example:

Teenager: "Mom, you just don't understand how hard it is to be the only one of my friends that has such strict rules"

Parent: "I know it's hard to be a teenager. When I was your age...(etc.)"

When we listen like this, our kids feel as though their comments are just a platform for us to remind them that we know what's best. On the surface, it may seem like we're having a conversation, but actually we're not. We're just waiting for our turn to talk.

LEVEL 3: "LISTENING WITH AN OPEN MIND"

True listening means listening without judgment or criticism, and responding to the specific ideas, fears and opinions expressed by our kids in the present moment. In other words, we focus on what they're saying, not on what they've said in the past, what we believe or what we think they should be saying. For example:

Teenager: "Mom, you just don't understand how hard it is to be the only one of my friends with such strict rules."

Parents: "I believe you. What makes it difficult? How have you been dealing with it?"

As parents, it's always tempting to discount the way our kids feel, because we don't believe they have "real" problems. But their problems certainly feel real to them. By responding to their comments with an open mind, we show them respect, which helps build trust and a higher level of involvement in their lives.

HOW TO BE R.E.A.L.: SIMPLE IDEAS FOR DEEPER CONNECTIONS



BELIEVE THAT WE ARE THE INFLUENCE

When they're young, it's easy to see the influence we have on our children. They repeat the things we say, they copy our mannerisms, they dress up in our clothes. But as they get older, they start to roll their eyes when we speak. They mimic their friends and, for reasons we can't understand, they insist upon wearing...*that*.

But research proves we're still the number one influence in their decisions about alcohol.* They may not be talking to us, but they're listening—and they're watching everything we do. We still have the influence. We just need a new way to use it.

“Human change is a process, not an event.”

Terry Bacon & Karen Spear

REALIZE OUR CHILDREN NEED TO HAVE A CONNECTION WITH US.

Our children want and need a close relationship with us. We recognize this when they're younger and less sure of the world. As they become more independent, we may feel disconnected. But their need for a deep connection with us hasn't changed. Our job now is to find new ways to connect so they always feel supported and our influence is never lost.

EXAMINE OUR OWN ASSUMPTIONS AND PREJUDICES.

We may think we know what our children are going through, but chances are, we don't. Kids today are dealing with distractions, temptations and pressures that are unique to their generation. When we set out to create deeper conversations about underage drinking, we should ask ourselves: “Are my own experiences getting in the way? Am I really prepared to listen to my child's point of view?”

ALWAYS BE AWARE OF THE OTHER INFLUENCES IN KIDS' LIVES.

As parents, it's natural to fight against the influences of our children's peers, other role models, the media, etc. As these things enter our kids' lives, we feel like our influence will be diminished. But the surest way to lose our influence is to fail to show our children that we can relate to their world. Get to know their friends—not just who they are, but why they matter to our kids. By embracing their concerns and taking them seriously, we encourage them to see that our advice is based on true understanding.

LISTEN, BECAUSE ALL KIDS (ESPECIALLY TEENS!) HAVE A DEEP NEED TO BE HEARD.

As they get older, our children begin to feel that their ideas and opinions deserve consideration. When our kids evaluate our rules and advice, they need to know that we're basing our words on a real understanding of what they're thinking and feeling. If they don't feel heard, they are more likely to turn to peers for validation.

UNDERSTANDING THE STAGES OF PARENTING

As our kids grow, their brains develop and change. To a very large degree, these changes are obvious. But some aspects of our children's mental growth are harder to spot. To have more effective conversations about alcohol, we have to tune in to our children's cognitive needs, and develop skills that help keep us on the same page.

Simply put, the concept of parenting stages is about learning to adjust our parenting styles to match our children's development.

According to a leading expert,* there are three main parenting stages: teacher, facilitator and coach.

In the following chapters, we'll cover these three stages in greater detail. For now, it may help to look at a brief overview of our kids' cognitive development and how it relates to the issues of alcohol and underage drinking.

“Curiosity is the driver of attention, exploration and experimentation – and therefore of all learning”

Marilee Goldberg



STAGE ONE: TEACHER

Children aged 1-7 need their parent to be a teacher. Someone to explain and guide them through a complex world they don't fully understand. Establishing clear limits is extremely important during this stage. Learn how to be the ideal teacher here.



STAGE TWO: FACILITATOR

Children aged 8-13 need their parent to be a facilitator. Someone to foster underage drinking conversations and help them process situations by using problem-solving techniques, such as open-ended questions.



STAGE THREE: COACH

From ages 14-21, children develop a strong sense of self. Now the parent's role is to respect independence, stay involved and support them in becoming responsible young adults.



UNDERSTANDING THE STAGES OF PARENTING



FROM LEARNING RULES...

Due to brain development, children are limited in making choices based on intellectual reasoning! Therefore, it's important during this time to establish clear limits and rules as well as set up reasonable consequences to their choices.

...TO MAKING CHOICES

After age 7, the brain develops and no longer looks at the world in black and white. Children begin to notice inconsistencies. They compare house rules with their friends and may begin to question the rules that have been established. Our children begin to make choices based on our rules and their own thoughts and opinions.



STAGE ONE: TEACHER

FOR AGES 1-7



WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Up to age 7 or so, our kids are developing a sense of the world around them. They are very concrete and literal by nature. Most of their new ideas come to them in the form of direct experience. They are innocent and believe what we tell them about the world. To an extent, they don't even differentiate between what they experience and what we say. They depend solely on others and their opinions.

WHAT DO OUR KIDS NEED?

More than anything, they need a trustworthy teacher to explain the world around them. If our kids believe they can come to us with questions—even tough questions—and get honest answers, we'll start to form connections. This means they'll be more likely to share information with us as they grow up.

STAGE ONE: TEACHER

FOR AGES 1-7



SET BOUNDARIES

Use clear “teaching” statements.

EXAMPLES

“Drinking alcohol is for adults only.”

“You have to be 21 to drink.”

“Underage drinking is against the law.”

“When you are 21 years old you can make the decision.”

BE CONSISTENT

With our words and actions. Be sure to not send mixed signals. Don’t apply different rules for different situations, or act in a way that doesn’t match previously stated rules.

EXAMPLES

Consistently having the same rule about underage drinking, no matter the occasion or what you may be celebrating.

Always be a role model for responsible drinking. As parents, it is important to be on the same page when it comes to your message about underage drinking.

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

It’s not enough to just state the rules. We have to make sure they’re sticking. From time to time, we should follow up with questions that help us gauge our children’s level of understanding.

EXAMPLES

“When we talked before, what did we say about alcohol?”

“How old do you have to be to drink?”

“Is it okay for kids to drink alcohol?”

“What is our rule in this house about drinking alcohol?”

STAGE TWO: FACILITATOR

FOR AGES 8-13



WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Our kids' brains are developing rapidly, moving from concrete thought to abstract, intellectual thought. Day to day, they're starting to question rules and test boundaries. They may notice and complain about inconsistencies, for example: "Why does Joey's dad let him taste beer, but you don't let me?" The world is presenting them with a lot of complex, contradictory information, and they're trying to make sense of it all.

During this stage, our kids are becoming susceptible to outside influences. Friends, family members and neighbors are taking on important roles in their lives. As parents, this can be very scary. We may even feel like we're losing some of our influence. However, we aren't losing it; it's just taking on a new form.

WHAT DO OUR KIDS NEED?

Our job now is to help them analyze and process the world around them. We should shift our focus from concrete rules to becoming facilitators, helping our kids understand new experiences and friendships within the context of our personal beliefs and values.

In the airplane of life, our kids have gone from passengers to co-pilots. We need to let them fly the plane every once in a while, but we have to keep our hands on the controls, to help steer things back on course whenever necessary.



STAGE TWO: FACILITATOR

FOR AGES 8-13

SHIFT TO VALUE STATEMENTS

Help them understand rules in context of our personal beliefs and expectations

EXAMPLES

“I know that some parents let their kids drink alcohol.”

“In some countries, the rules about alcohol are different. But in our country, it’s against the law to drink until you’re 21. In our family, it’s important to respect the law.”

ASK QUESTIONS AND HAVE CONVERSATIONS THAT RESPECT THEIR MATURITY

EXAMPLES

“Do you have any questions about alcohol?”

“OK, I’m going to tell you everything I know about alcohol and what it does to your body.”

“If you ever have questions about alcohol or drinking, here are some people you can turn to [list of mentors].”

ALLOW YOUR CHILDREN TO PRACTICE SAYING “NO”

Having the confidence to say “no” is a skill that takes time to develop. As parents, we can encourage this skill by practicing in low-risk situations. (For example, saying no to music, movies or food choices.)

As a parent, honor personal choices that are low risk. The more confident children are, the better equipped they’ll be to say “no” to their friends.

EXAMPLES

“Would you like to go to the store with me?”

“Would you like to go to the dance at school?”

“Would you like to play a game with us?”

SUPPORT, DON’T THREATEN

As our kids begin to question our authority, it’s tempting to crack down with stricter rules and harsher penalties. But this can push our kids away at the worst possible moment—right when they’re turning to peers for information and support. Take the opportunity to stay involved in their world as it changes and begins to involve the possibility of underage drinking. As parents, we can encourage our children’s decision-making skills by pointing out their positive qualities and reminding them of our support.

EXAMPLES

“When the time comes, I know you’ll make good choices.”

“I think you’re smart enough to ask the right questions.”

“I’ll always be there for you, no matter what.”

“Let me tell you what you can count on from me...”



STAGE THREE: COACH

FOR AGES 14-21



WHAT'S HAPPENING?

During this parenting stage, young adults are transitioning through several different phases of their lives. From high school, to moving out (whether that's college, the military, or the work force), parents continue to be one of the strongest influences in their lives.

Teens and young adults have developed a sense of who they are and what they believe, including opinions about alcohol and underage drinking. As they grow into independent thinkers, we're required to evolve our parenting style to match, focusing on listening and creating accountability. This method is the "Coach" approach—the most effective way to stay connected and reinforce our influence.

WHAT DO OUR KIDS NEED?

At this stage, it's important that we exhibit to our children that we trust them, set clear boundaries and encourage the good choices they've made up to this point. We cannot simply rely on a list of rules to keep them in check. Our influence depends upon the strength of the relationship we've built.

But it's never too late to build that trust. Start by really listening to their concerns and ideas. Ask open-ended questions that lead to reflection and a sense of accountability for their actions. And when they answer, have an open mind. Even if they didn't seem interested in talking before, showing them the respect they deserve will go a long way toward building an open dialogue.

STAGE THREE: COACH

FOR AGES 14-21

LISTEN WITH AN OPEN MIND

One of the biggest barriers to communication with our teenagers is our belief that their problems—with friends, school, peer pressure, love interests, etc.—are trivial. They may seem trivial to us, but to our teens, they can feel like life or death. If we discount the importance of the pressures they face—especially when it comes to alcohol—we give them a perfect excuse to shut us out.

Listening from our teenagers point of view will keep the lines of communication open (refer back to the section titled “The Levels Of Listening”). If our teens and young adults see that we are listening without an agenda, they’ll feel respected. Which means they’re more likely to show us respect in return.

EXAMPLES

Listen as if you were listening to your best friend.

Always ask for their opinion.

Respect their opinion and they will respect yours.

When your child talks, avoid interrupting and correcting – just listen.

GET CURIOUS; ASK BETTER QUESTIONS

Now is the time to start asking open-ended questions that help our teens think through potential scenarios involving alcohol, as well as potential consequences. The more curious we are about their lives, the more relevant and effective our questions will be.

EXAMPLES

“What would you do if your best friend asked you to drink?”

“What do you think would happen if your ride home from the party started drinking? What would your plan be?”

“Can I ask your opinion? What are some of the reasons why kids drink?”

“What are some of the things you’re looking forward to after graduation? How do you think those would be affected if you make mistakes with alcohol?”

AVOID COMMUNICATION STOPPERS AND “DRIVE-THRU PARENTING”

Practice your conversation skills, listen, give eye contact and avoid being defensive.

EXAMPLES

Accusations: “I know that you’re drinking.”

Interruptions: “I don’t want to hear your excuses.”

Starting with an agenda or deciding what’s going to be discussed before our kids have a chance to talk: “I want to get to the bottom of your disobedience/lying/etc.”

Rushing the conversation, aka “Drive-thru parenting”: [as we’re dropping our teen off at a party] “Remember, no drinking, okay?”

DON’T GIVE UP ON YOUR INFLUENCE!

As parents, we can sometimes feel frustrated and powerless. In times of frustration, remember that no one will ever have a greater influence on our kids’ decisions about alcohol than we do. We just have to trust ourselves and keep applying the principles of the coaching approach.

EXAMPLES

Be clear with rules around underage drinking.

Don’t give in or give up.

Be consistent and trust they will make good decisions.



STAGE THREE: COACH

FOR AGES 14-21

POST HIGH SCHOOL / MOVING OUT

SET EXPECTATIONS

Whether our young adults are attending college, enlisting in the military or just moving out of the house, they're beginning a new chapter in their lives. To help them with this transition, it's important to set clear expectations. Our children may not be physically living under your roofs, but there continue to be consequences for their actions—both as a member of the family and society at large. It's important to remind them that moving out does not free them from responsibilities, family values, expectations or laws.

EX: "We trust that you will continue to make responsible choices."

"As a parent, we are always here to support you."

BUILD TRUST

Creating this connection relies heavily on the trust parents and children have already established. Gauge that trust using these questions:

- Have they made responsible choices up to this point?
- Are they making responsible choices now (like finding a job or getting good grades)?

If so, take the time to acknowledge and affirm those choices, and show encouragement when he or she is moving in the right direction.

EX: "We have seen you make good choices and trust you to continue."

"You have shown us that you can manage and solve problems, you have good judgment"

"You have learned through trial and error, and continue to grow with your experiences."

STAY CONNECTED

When children live at home they're more accessible, so it's easier to be involved and have conversations. But when they move out, the challenge becomes staying connected and supporting their independence without being intrusive. Finding a good balance is key to extending parental influence.

One way to connect is by scheduling a time to talk each week. Establishing a routine can help open lines of communication and create windows of opportunity to engage in conversations around school events or activities. There are also subtle and creative ways to stay connected—such as care packages.

EX: Texting and sharing information, pictures, and videos are a great way to stay connected. It is their preferred language.

Sending cards and goodie boxes are great ways to stay connected and let your children know how much you care.

STAY ON TRACK

When we choose to drink in our own home, especially if doing so in front of underage children, model the responsible drinking behaviors we would ultimately like our kids to adopt in the future if they choose to drink.

Resist the temptation to bend rules and compromise values. Even if we suspect our children have been experimenting with alcohol away from home, we should not change our behavior or position regarding underage drinking.

As we and our teens adjust to this transition, consider asking these questions to keep the conversation going:

EX: "What are your thoughts about underage drinking?"

"Has your opinion changed about underage drinking now that you've moved out?"

"What would you do if your friends invited you to a party where you knew there would be drinking?"



TAKING ACTION



WHEN OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

Traditionally, programs designed to help prevent underage drinking and promote responsible choices regarding alcohol have advised us to talk with our children at specific ages or moments in their lives. But as we've seen through our examination of parenting stages, children of all ages can benefit from ongoing, honest discussions about alcohol. To have meaning, these conversations have to be relevant, and relevance cannot be scheduled.

In our lives as parents, there are windows of opportunity we can use to help strengthen our influence. Sometimes these windows open predictably, such as right after a school assembly about underage drinking. Sometimes they open when we least expect them. Perhaps we're driving home after Thanksgiving dinner at a relative's house at which an aunt or uncle had too much to drink. Or there's a story about alcohol on the news. Or our son or daughter is invited to his or her first party.

In these moments, when our children's minds are thrown open, our guidance and advice can flow in naturally, without resistance. In order to preserve our influence, we have to be on the lookout for these opportunities, and when we spot them, we should seize the moment.

THE IMPORTANCE OF FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

Even after we've begun to have deeper and more meaningful conversations about alcohol, we have to remember that kids have a lot on their minds. To make sure our advice and expectations are clear, we should get in the habit of asking good follow-up questions. For younger kids, this can be something as simple as "How old do we have to be to drink?" For teenagers and young adults, it may be "Tell me what you'll do if your ride home has been drinking?" These types of follow-up questions are important for several reasons:

- They help create accountability.
- They show you have a genuine concern for the end result.
- They create new opportunities for communication.
- They are another way to check in and stay connected with our kids, especially teens.

TAKING ACTION



HOW TO KNOW IF IT'S WORKING...

In the beginning, the victories may be small ones. Our children may want to hang out with us a little more. They may disappear into their rooms a little less often. Then after a while, we'll start to notice more conversation, more sharing of information. Our kids will ask us more questions. When we ask them questions, they'll give longer answers because they trust we won't interrupt or judge them. As our relationships progress, success will become more obvious. Our connections will feel stronger and our children will begin to trust us with new information about their lives. There will be a level of mutual respect that lets us know we're on the right track.



...OR IF IT'S NOT

If things aren't working, it will be obvious. There will be more distance in our relationships, the level of trust will decrease and conversations will continue to occur on a "need-to-know" basis. In some cases, our kids may develop problems with alcohol or other substances. If this happens—or if we suspect it is happening—we will need some additional information or outside help. In the following sections of this guide, there are recommendations for additional reading, along with a list of resources to contact for professional support.

The most important thing is to not give up. It's never too late to use our influence!



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



RECOMMENDED READING

Raising A Thinking Child
Myrna Schure

Redirecting Children's Behavior
Kathryn Kvols

How To Talk So Kids Will Listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk
Adele Faber & Elaine Mazlish

Parent As Coach: Helping Your Teen Build A Life Of Confidence, Courage And Compassion
Diana Haskins

The Teenage Brain
Frances Jensen MD

Positive Discipline for Teenagers
Jane Nelsen

JOIN OUR SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNITY!

Thank you for reading our Parent Guide. We hope it's been helpful. As you begin the process of talking to your children about alcohol, don't pass up the chance to talk with other parents, share stories, ask questions and get additional tips. We need you!



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