



A Parent's Worst Nightmare

Karen's Story

Karen always considered herself a hands-on parent. She went to all of her daughter's parent-teacher conferences, she never missed a soccer game or ballet recital, and she and her daughter, Melissa, had a pretty open, honest relationship...or so Karen thought. She never would've in a million years thought Melissa would have gotten caught up with the bad crowd, but she was severely mistaken. Karen rarely drank alcohol, and she had never even smoked a cigarette, so she thought Melissa would never be curious about either of those things.

She ignored all of the signs for months. Melissa started skipping class to go drink behind the dumpsters with her friends, but Karen just thought she always had the flu. Melissa would slur her words and trip all over the place, but Melissa just thought she was tired from her difficult class load and soccer practice. It wasn't until the police showed up at her door one night that she realized she made a terrible judgement call in how to prepare Melissa for the peer pressure she would encounter in high school. Melissa was so drunk coming home from a friend's house that she ran right off of the road and into a ditch. She had hit another person, but they would be ok. Melissa, however, had not survived the crash.

Test Yourself

1. Beer has a higher alcohol content than a shot of vodka.
a. True b. False
2. Alcohol is produced by a process called osmosis, where yeast interacts with different ingredients.
a. True b. False
3. It's illegal for anyone under the age of 21 to drink alcohol.
a. True b. False
4. It's all right to follow the "Do as I say but not as I do" motto when it comes to teaching teens about alcohol use.
a. True b. False
5. There are plenty of ways to have a fun and fulfilling life without ever using alcohol.
a. True b. False

Answers: 1. b, 2. b, 3. a, 4. b, 5. a



HOW TO KEEP KIDS ALCOHOL FREE



*A Parent or
Teacher's Guide*

What Can I Do?

As parents, guardians, or teachers, it can often feel daunting to teach kids and teens the importance of staying away from alcohol. You may think that your child would never be pressured to try alcohol, but the truth is that teens throughout the country are pressured every single day to try alcohol. Whether it's from their peers or from social media or television, kids are exposed to alcohol constantly. It's your job, therefore, to educate them on the true dangers and to give them the tools to say, "NO!"

Know Your Stuff

What is Alcohol?

Alcohol is produced when different grains or fruits are fermented. Fermentation is a chemical process where yeast interacts with different ingredients, leaving a liquid behind. This liquid is then called alcohol, which can produce different side effects when ingested like slurred speech, delayed reaction time, changes in emotions, unsteady motions and balance. It's illegal for anyone under the age of 21 to drink alcohol, yet teens still try to get away with it.

Types of Alcohol

Different types of alcohol can have different levels of alcohol content, meaning some are more powerful than others. A shot of liquor, for example, has a higher alcohol content than a glass of beer, making the user feel drunk faster with a smaller quantity of liquid. Typically, a standard drink is one that contains about 14 grams of alcohol.

- **12 ounces of beer (5% alcohol content)**
- **5 ounces of wine (12% alcohol content)**
- **1.5 ounces of distilled spirits (40% alcohol content)**



Tips for Keeping Kids Alcohol Free

- Be involved in their day to day activities and lives. Ask your teen questions that go beyond "how was your day?" Have a sincere interest in what's going on in their lives.
- Be a role model for your teen by practicing what you preach. Don't become drunk in front of your teens, and never drink and drive.
- Establish a two-way dialogue with your children about drinking, whether you drink alcohol or not. Don't just talk at them. Let them ask questions, and keep the conversation open and honest.
- Know the facts about alcohol use and abuse and discuss them with your children. Try your best to remain objective and factual when discussing the consequences. Teens tend to already believe their parents are over-exaggerating.
- Reduce availability. Lock it away, or don't keep it in the house at all. Work with other parents to minimize the availability while your child is in their home.
- Be prepared for other families having different standards of acceptable behavior. If the parents of your teens openly allow underage drinking, tell your teen it is not acceptable for them to drink. Tell them you'll be dropping them off and picking them up, so even if they do drink without your permission, they won't be able to drive.
- Set a rule that your child must never drink and drive. This should be your most serious rule.
- Do not joke about alcoholism or drunken behavior. Alcoholism is a serious issue, and it should not be taken lightly by your children or you.



Fun and Healthy Alternatives

Some people believe that they can't have fun without drugs or alcohol, and that living sober must be miserable and boring. However, the truth is that there are millions of ways to have fun and still be drug and alcohol free. Here are some suggestions and activities you can encourage your teen to try:

- Make others laugh. If your teen thinks they're funny while they're drinking, encourage them to try making others laugh by telling jokes or playing pranks without alcohol.
- Play a sport. If your teen enjoys playing a sport like basketball or soccer, remind them how much better they would be if they didn't drink alcohol. Explain to them that alcohol dehydrates them and makes it harder for their muscles to recover.
- Listen to music or play an instrument. Many people that once found solace in drugs will appreciate how music can make them feel, even when they're sober. Whether it's listening to a small local band, going to a big concert, or playing their own guitar, music is a great way for teens to have fun without drugs or alcohol.
- Learn to bake or cook. Give your teen the creative freedom to experiment with different ingredients and recipes.
- Volunteer in your community. Some of the happiest people in the world are those who donate their time, not just their money, to their communities. Go spend time at the animal shelter or hospital, or spend your afternoon cleaning up your local park. Doing something will give your teen a sense of accomplishment that no drug could ever give them.
- Have a movie marathon. Whether your teen enjoy rom-coms or scary movies, let your teen have a marathon with their friends.