

Conversations

About Alcohol at Different Ages

Decision Making Grid



How do conversations about alcohol begin?

We know that they can begin with a question or a comment in the presence of a trusted adult at any time. The element of surprise certainly keeps us on our toes whether talking with an observant elementary aged child who is simply curious about what's in the cup, tweens beginning to feel peer pressure, a teen who worries about athletic eligibility, or a college student who is having trouble studying because of partying friends.

To provide some guidance of what to say to different ages based on the practical scenarios that may be affecting them at various stages in their lives, we've devised a handy list of talking points for all ages and stages.

After all, talking about alcohol is easier than you think, especially when having the necessary knowledge about the health risks associated with underage drinking to share with kids of all ages or reiterate that parents are the leading influence.

How to use the grid

AS A PARENT

Sometimes questions from children can catch us off guard especially if the question relates to a topic that might seem difficult to talk about. It is important to listen to the questions children ask and answer just the question itself (as opposed to going into more detail). If children are not asking these questions, parents may want to use these prompts as conversation starters to begin the conversation. Parents can also use their own responsible behaviors as conversation starters. Don't be afraid to bring up something that's going on at that moment.

AS A TEACHER

While the grid may help you get started with a conversation with individual students, it can also be used for role-playing during a related health lesson or after reading a book or story that may mention underage drinking or alcohol. If you suspect a student is drinking use the resources in your school and community to get them help.

AS A COACH

Coaches may overhear conversations between players in the locker room or on the side of the field about what happens outside of the school or team setting. Raise the discussion during a team meeting at the beginning of the season to help students understand the big picture when it comes to training or team rules and their bodies.

AS A SCHOOL COUNSELOR

In addition to being able to talk as a counselor with students, these conversations lend themselves to role-playing during whole class guidance or small group guidance lessons. One student could play the role of student while another plays the role of parent to encourage students to think about underage drinking and the impact of alcohol.

GRID ON BACK

Decision Making Grid

	Kids 8 and under <i>Talk Early</i>	Tweens 8 - 12 <i>Ask, Listen, Learn</i>	Teens 13+ <i>I Know Everything</i>	College 17+ <i>Parents You're Not Done Yet</i>
Scenario	What is alcohol?	How come adults can have a drink and I can't?	The person I was supposed to come home from the party with was drinking	I can't study because my roommate wants to have people over for parties
Parent	Alcohol is something that some adults choose to drink and when drunk responsibly it won't hurt our bodies and brains in the same ways as yours because you're still growing.	Alcohol is illegal for those under 21 and harmful for your growing brain and body. It won't affect me the same way since my brain and body are fully developed.	If you are in an uncomfortable situation, let's come up with a secret word so your friends won't even know it's me on the other end of the phone. If you need to be picked up, once i hear our word I'll be there, no questions asked.	Have you talked to your residential advisor about what to do when this happens? Is there a friend who you could study and stay with on the nights this happens?
Teacher	Alcohol is a drink for grown ups that isn't healthy for a kid's body. It hurts your brain's ability to learn and remember all of the things you're learning in school.	Alcohol is illegal for those under 21 and harmful for your growing brain and body. It can affect your ability to learn, your mood, and your behavior in the classroom.	Have you talked to your parents about a way you can get home if this happens again? They would rather have you call them than get in the car with a friend who has been drinking.	Is there another place on campus where you could study? I don't want this to impact your grades.
Coach	Alcohol is a drink for grown ups that isn't healthy a kid's your body. You won't be able to achieve your goals in sports if you have something like alcohol harming your growing body.	Alcohol is illegal for those under 21 and harmful for your growing brain and body. It affects the way our bodies can perform when playing sports.	Have you talked to your parents about a way you can get home if this happens again or is there a responsible teammate who could give a ride? Everyone would prefer that you come home safely and not get in the car with someone who has been drinking.	Have you talked to your roommate about how sleep is important and how detrimental alcohol is to your physical performance?
School Counselor	Alcohol is a drink for grown ups that can cause kids to make bad decisions. Just as you're learning the difference between right and wrong with things like sharing and fair play, you should know what is and isn't good for you to put in your bodies.	Alcohol is illegal for those under 21 and harmful for your growing brain and body. It affects how we make decisions.	Did you know friends would be drinking at the party and have you talked to your parents about how to get home if this happens again? Is there another adult you could turn to for help next time?	Advisor/residential advisor: Have you talked to your roommate about how their behavior is affecting you? Let me know if you want my help initiating a conversation.

