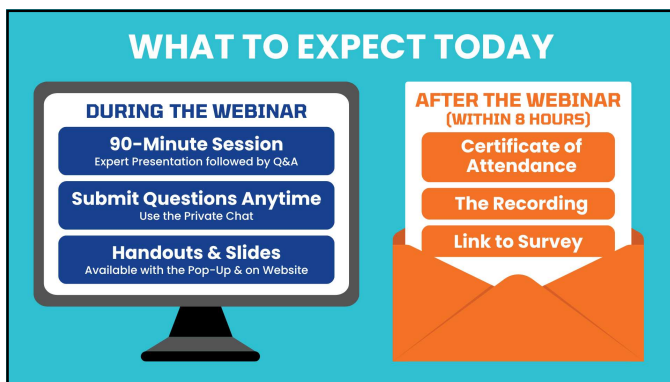
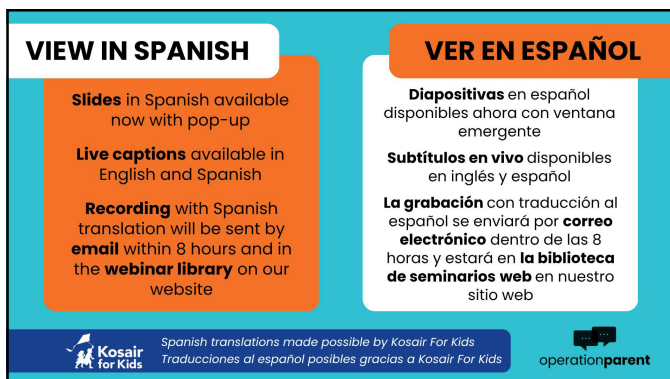




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OUR MISSION:
To empower parents and caregivers to have casual, courageous conversations with their kids.

Operation Parent, Inc. is a recognized 501(c)(3) charitable organization with federal tax ID #20-3857612

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LET'S KEEP HAVING
CASUAL COURAGEOUS
conversations

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Nov 17

What's AI Replacing?:
AI as a Friend, Advisor & Companion to Youth
Robbie Torney
Common Sense Media

operationparent.org/webinars

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[OPERATION PARENT]

The Buzz is Changing:
Alcohol & Caffeine in a New Generation

Aaron Weiner, PhD, ABPP
President, Prime for Life

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Dr. Aaron Weiner, PhD, ABPP

President, Prime for Life



- PhD and Board Certification in Counseling Psychology (2013 | 2019)
- Former President of the Society of Addiction Psychology
- Dad of two fantastic kiddos!
- Fun fact: can juggle 3 balls for a limited number of seconds



7

Prime For Life



Prime For Life helps schools and communities move from "we have a problem with substances and feel stuck," delivering a program that reduces student risk and recidivism. In partnership, we:

- **Deliver a judgement-free prevention program** that meets students where they are and facilitates making informed choices.
- **Train instructors and administrators** to provide the program, either in the classroom or online, live or with a self-paced course.
- **Provide ongoing support** and growth opportunities for administrators, instructors, and participants.



I would consider this year to be a success. We've had approx. 500 kids complete the course with only about 25 repeaters. 95% success is very good to me.

-Bryan,
Executive Director of Student Personnel Services & myPrime Administrator

8

Key Takeaways

- 1 Alcohol is more harmful than most parents and teens think it is, and is absolutely worth taking seriously
- 2 Caffeine is the most commonly-consumed psychoactive substance by teens, and use has both developmental and functional implications
- 3 Parents can impact their child's perception of social norms and risk, as well as have a positive impact on a teen's substance-related decisions

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POLL

About what percentage of high school seniors drank alcohol in the past month?

10

Youth Past-Month Alcohol Use in the US

Past-month alcohol use, ages 12–17

NSDUH, 2025

Gender	Percentage
Boys	6.0%
Girls	5.9%

Past-30-day alcohol use by grade

Monitoring the Future, 2025

Grade	Boys	Girls
8th	4.0%	4.5%
10th	9.6%	10.7%
12th	22.6%	21.6%

- 75% of seniors and 54% of 10th graders say alcohol is easy to obtain
- Underage drinkers most often last drank at home (44%) or a friend's (42%)
- Starting before 15 means about 3.5x the adult risk of an alcohol problem

Sources: SAMHSA, 2025 NSDUH Detailed Tables, Table 2.27B (July 2026); Meach et al, Monitoring the Future 2025, Vol. 1 (Dec. 2025); NAAA, Get the Facts About Underage Drinking; Responsibility.org summaries of 2025 MTF and NSDUH

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Alcohol's Impact by the Numbers

- 140,000 alcohol-related deaths annually
 - 380 deaths per day
 - 3rd leading cause of preventable death
- 40% of all driving fatalities
 - Most impactful human cause
 - 36 people daily
- 40% of all violent crime
- 66% of domestic abuse cases
- 50% of sexual assaults

Deaths from alcohol addiction are rising

More people in the U.S. are dying of alcohol-related causes, and men more than women. States ranked by percentage increases, 2007–2017, and death rates per 100,000 people for men and women, all ages, in 2017.

INCREASE IN DEATHS, ALL AGES, 2007–2017
 15%–30% 31%–40% 41%–50% 51%–100%

SOURCE: Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, University of Washington (IHME); Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

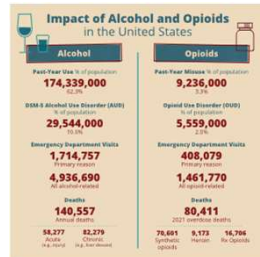
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Alcohol's Impact by the Numbers

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Alcohol and Youth

- 90% of alcoholic drinks consumed by teens are consumed during binge-drinking episodes
- In 2011, ~188,000 people under 21 went to the ER for alcohol-related injuries.
- Interferes with brain development
- Linked to anxiety and depression later in life
- Linked to lower grades and more dropouts in high school

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(NIAAA, 2016; Higgins et al., 2017)

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Why do teens and young adults choose to drink?

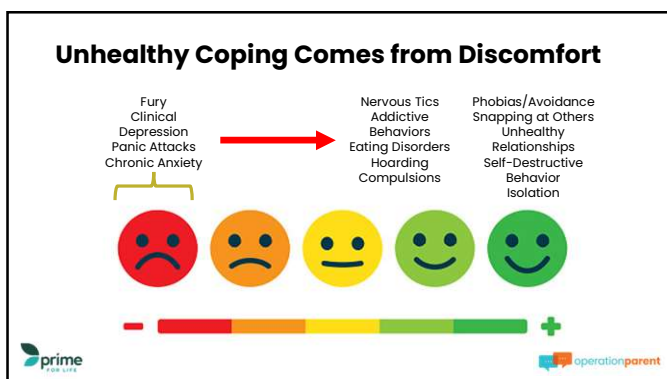
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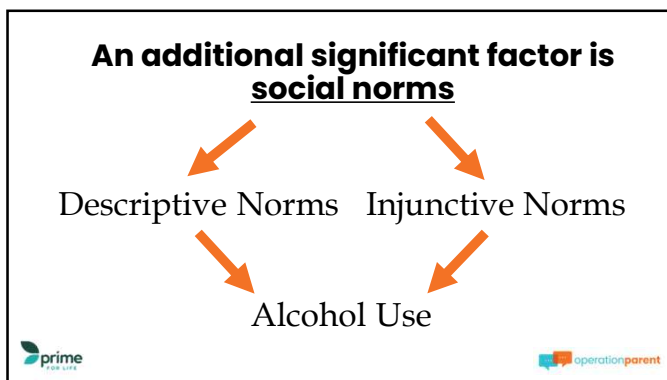
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The Percentage of High School Students Who:	2013 Total	2015 Total	2017 Total	2019 Total	2021 Total	2023 Total	Trend (All Years Available)	2-Year Change (2021-2023)
Experienced persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness	30	30	31	37	42	40		
Experienced poor mental health ¹	—	—	—	—	29	29	—	
Seriously considered attempting suicide	17	18	17	19	22	20		
Made a suicide plan	14	15	14	16	18	16		
Attempted suicide	8	9	7	9	10	9		
Were injured in a suicide attempt that had to be treated by a doctor or nurse	3	3	2	3	3	2		

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Opportunity: Setting Accurate Norms

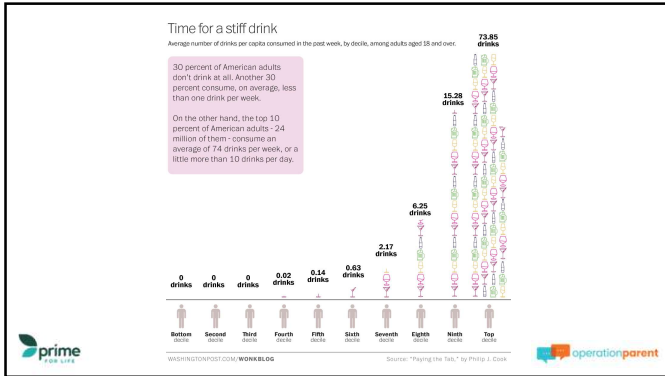
	Perception of Harm (moderate to great risk)	ALCOHOL		
		Perception of Peer Use vs. Actual	Access - Retail	Access - Parents with permission
Boone	82%	42%	14%	19%
Carroll	63%	28%	24%	30%
DeKalb	81%	42%	16%	16%
DuPage	85%	41%	22%	22%
Grundy				
JoDavies	71%	37%	21%	15%
Kane	81%	48%	20%	15%
Kankakee	81%	47%	22%	17%
Kendall	84%	31%	14%	11%
Lake	85%	42%	20%	20%
Lee	78%	49%	21%	13%
McHenry	82%	47%	24%	19%
Ogle	74%	44%	34%	15%
Stephenson	83%	44%	19%	9%
Whiteside				
Will	77%	51%	24%	19%
Winnebago	78%	48%	18%	27%

Source: Illinois Youth Survey Table By: Lea Bacci

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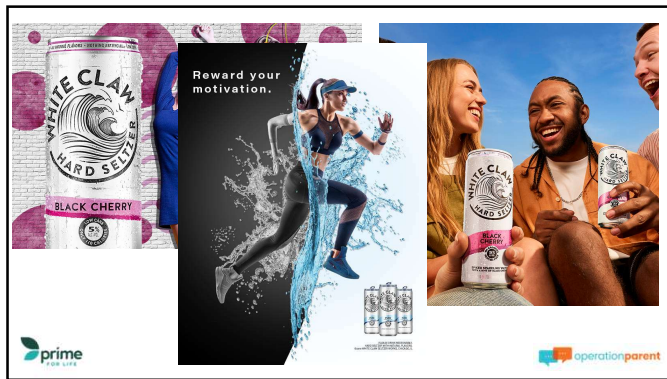
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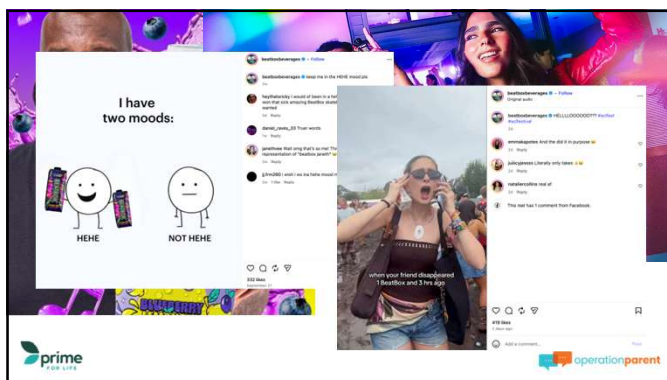
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Why do norms matter?

- Social norms are some of the strongest predictors of teen alcohol use and binge drinking
- 4 primary sources of impactful norms:
 - **Parents**
 - **Peers**
 - **Media**
 - **Social Media**



(François et al., 2017) (Kantawong et al., 2022) (Cheng et al., 2024)



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Parental and Household Norms

- What is explicitly said?
- Supervised introduction to alcohol (including via sips) has consistently been shown to be detrimental to long-term outcomes in research
 - Normalizes use
 - Related to increased quantity and frequency, risky drinking behavior, alcohol-related problems, and higher levels of alcohol use
- What relationship to alcohol is being modeled?
 - Stress reduction? Unhealthy patterns?
 - Studies indicate children are aware of how intoxicated a parent is
 - 1 in 5 say they had been embarrassed by their parent's drinking



(Van der Kruk et al., 2023) (Institute of Alcohol Studies, 2017)



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LONGITUDINAL STUDIES IN ADOLESCENTS

Cognitive and neural effects of adolescent alcohol use

Cognitive			Neural	
comparative with controls ↓ Binge/heavy drinking	no exposure ↑ Alcohol use	no exposure ↑ Withdrawal & hangover symptoms	comparative with controls ↓ Binge/heavy drinking	no exposure ↑ Alcohol use
↓ Immediate recall (short-term memory) ↓ Delayed retention, recall (long-term memory) ↓ Learning ↓ Visuospatial function ↓ Working memory	↓ General cognitive functioning ↓ Verbal memory ↓ Executive functioning ↓ Semantic clustering ↓ Reading skills ↓ Visuospatial function ↓ Impulsivity	↓ General cognitive functioning ↓ Psychomotor speed ↓ Attention (males)	↓ Gray matter volume, particularly frontal, temporal ↓ White matter growth ↓ White matter integrity ↓ Cerebrospinal fluid volume, cerebellum	- Brain activation during executive functioning - Brain activation during reward sensitivity tasks ↓ P3 amplitude, particularly fronto-parietal, during executive functioning and attentional control - Gray matter frontal volume - Brain activation during reward sensitivity tasks



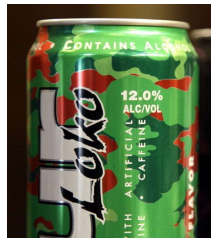
Adapted from Table 1 in Lewis, B., Meredith, L. R., Kitzman, A. R., Bryant, B. E., & Spangula, L. M. (2022). Effect of alcohol use on the adolescent brain and behavior. *Pharmacology, Biochemistry and Behavior*, 192, 110889.



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Alcohol and Caffeine

- Alcohol reduces sedation, but does not mitigate alcohol-related impact on the body
- Can lead to irregular heartbeat, dehydration, increased blood pressure, alcohol poisoning
- Greater chance of binge drinking, unwanted or unprotected sex, driving drunk or riding with a drunk driver, or sustaining alcohol-related injuries.



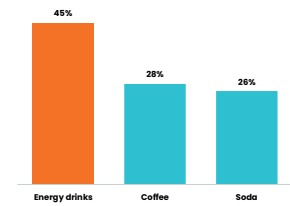
(Kucypers, 2006) (Perez-Mana, 2022) (CDC, 2024)



30

Energy Drinks > Coffee > Soda

Teens' preferred source of caffeine
% of teens, spring 2025



Top energy drink brands among teens
% naming each as favorite, fall 2025

Rank	Brand	Share
1	Red Bull	28%
2	Monster	27%
3	Alani Nu	19%

- **94%** of teens who name Alani Nu as their favorite are girls
- Preference is not intake: soda supplies the most caffeine for ages 12–19 (**20%**), coffee **14%**; energy drinks are not in the top five



Piper Sandler survey of U.S. teens (fall 2022; n=10,988; average age 15.7). Alani Nu gender split reported from Piper Sandler's spring 2025 analysis. Intake shares are mean % of total caffeine, BHAMES Aug 2021–Aug 2023. Sources: Piper Sandler, Talking Back With Teens (spring and fall 2023); CDC NCHS Data Brief No. 556 (July 2026)



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POLL

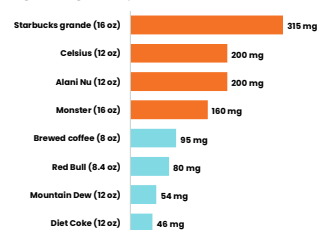
How much caffeine is in one can of Celsius or Alani?



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One energy drink can double a teen's daily limit

Caffeine per standard serving
mg; serving size in parentheses



- **Celsius** and **Alani Nu** each have 200 mg a can, **2×** the AAP's 100 mg daily limit for teens
- Starbucks lists grande brewed coffees between **260–360 mg**
- The average teen user takes in **1.6×** the AAP's 100 mg daily limit; the top 10% take in **nearly 4×**



Mitchell et al., Food and Chemical Toxicology (2020) | Monitor Worldpanel 2022 beverage survey



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Table 1. Most popular energy drinks and ingredients per 330 mL [15,16].

Energy Drink	Caffeine (mg)	Sugar (g)	Other Ingredients
Red Bull	160	54	Taurine (2000 mg), gluconolactone (1200 mg), inositol N/S [not specified] and vitamins B3, B5, B6 and B12 N/S
Monster	160	54	Taurine (2000 mg), gluconolactone N/S, carnitine N/S, inositol and guarana N/S, ginseng (400 mg) and vitamins B2, B3, B6 and B12 (40 mg)
Rockstar	160	62	Taurine (2000 mg), carnitine (50 mg), inositol (50 mg) and guarana (50 mg), ginseng (50 mg), ginkgo biloba (50 mg), milk thistle (40 mg) and vitamins B2, B3, B5, B6 and B12 (50 mg)
Mountain Dew	72	61	Carbonated water, high-fructose corn syrup, concentrated orange juice, citric acid, natural flavour, sodium benzoate, caffeine, sodium citrate, gum arabic, erythorbic acid, calcium disodium, yellow 5
Race	160	0	N/S
Sting	290	50	Taurine (148 mg), inositol (21 mg), ginseng (9.7 mg), vitamin B3 (10.2 mg)
Magnus Onmille	N/S	N/S	N/S
Demon Energy Shot (sold in 60 mL)	1600 (200 mg per 60 mL)	N/S	Taurine (10 g), gluconolactone (N/S), inositol (N/S), B3 (N/S), guarana (60 mg), B5 (N/S), B6 (N/S), B12 (N/S)
Full Throttle	141	57	Taurine (N/S), guarana (N/S), B3 (N/S), B6 (N/S), B8 (N/S), carnitine (N/S)
Lucozade	60.5	23	Carbonated water (N/S), citric acid (N/S), sodium gluconate (N/S), potassium sorbate (N/S), aspartame (N/S), acesulfame K (N/S), flavourings (N/S), sunset yellow (N/S), ponceau 4R (N/S), ascorbic acid (N/S)

(Costantino et al., 2023)

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Energy Drinks: Marketing

The top 5 Monster energy drink flavors to fuel your next marathon gaming sesh
Because coffee just doesn't cut it in the digital age.

By Nick Perry on June 20, 2022

f x

It's time to pack your gear. Credit: images: Shutterstock.com, Monster Energy, Shutterstock.

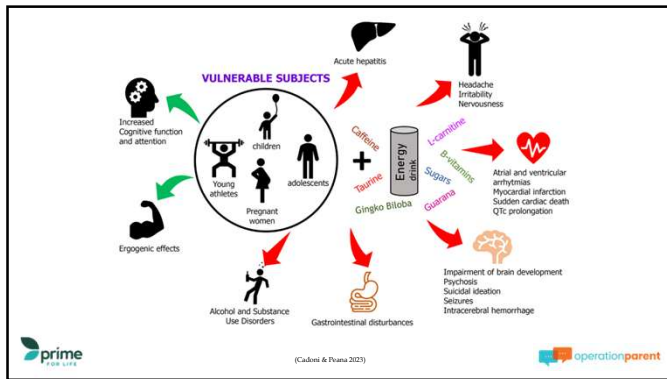
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Energy Drinks: Marketing

Can you beat a Red Bull athlete?

Red Bull CHARGE YOUR ENERGY

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Health effects linked to energy drink use			
Heart & blood pressure - Racing or pounding heart - Extra, irregular heartbeats - Slower heart rate - Higher blood pressure - Stiffer arteries	Mood & mental health - Anxiety - Stress & emotional distress - Depression & panic symptoms - Suicidal thoughts & attempts	Focus, behavior & school - Trouble paying attention - Behavior problems - Lower grades	Rare but serious - Dangerous heart rhythms - Cardiac arrest & sudden death - Heart attack - Seizures - Stroke - Psychosis & mania - Liver inflammation - Pancreas inflammation - Kidney injury
Allergies & asthma - Asthma - Hay fever - Eczema	Sleep - Trouble falling or staying asleep - Not enough sleep - Poorer-quality sleep	Other effects on the body - Headaches - Frequent urination - Cavities & worn tooth enamel - Insulin resistance	

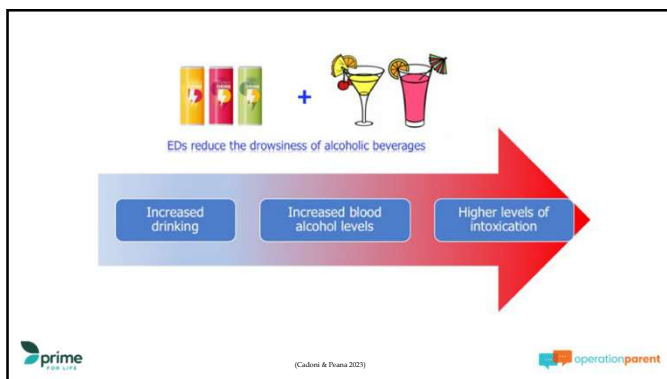
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Adapted from Table 2 in Ajala, C., Van Gansbeke, A., Vitoras, S., & Lohr, A. A. (2024). Consumption of energy drinks by children and young people: A systematic review assessing patterns of physical effects and consumer attitudes. Public Health, 127, 236-245.

Costantino, A., Manno, A., Lucini, J., Casale, C., Toffoletti, E., Fedi, P., & Frazzetto, V. (2023). The dark side of energy drinks: A comprehensive review of their impact on the human body. Nutrients, 15(10), 2022.

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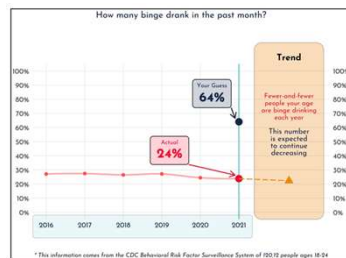
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So, what can we do?

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Parental Influence

- What you **say** matters (really!)
- Set expectations
- Discuss what “drinking responsibly” means if they choose to drink
- Provide information about true norms and health impact



(Gaujensperger et al., 2023)



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	Alcohol PNF condition (N = 272)	
	Baseline	Follow-up
	Mean/% (SD)	Mean/% (SD)
Perceived norms for typical young adults		
Norms for drinks per week	17.2 (18.5)	9.8 (9.8)
Norms for drinking frequency	8.6 (7.0)	5.3 (5.2)
Norms for % who engaged in past month HED	50.6% (0.2)	31.5% (0.2)
Norms for % who drove after drinking in past month	40.0% (0.2)	26.2% (0.2)
Self-reported alcohol use behaviors		
Percent abstained in past month	46.8% (0.5)	52.3% (0.5)
Drinks per week	4.2 (8.3)	2.9 (5.2)
Drinking frequency	2.6 (4.4)	2.2 (4.3)
Number of HED occasions	1.0 (2.6)	0.7 (2.1)
Number of driving after drinking occasions	0.15 (0.6)	0.10 (0.5)

(Gaujensperger et al., 2023)

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Parental Influence

*What you **do** matters*

Stay involved and connected	Remove taboos – 60 one-minute conversations	What are you modeling?	Reduce availability of alcohol
Get to know your teen's friends (if possible, create consistent messaging and expectations from parents)	Supervise parties	Ensure options are available for healthy activities and peer groups	Don't provide alcohol, even in small amounts

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Effective Conversations Require Emotional Safety

- Communicate with **LOVE**
 - Listening
 - Open-ended questions, reflections
 - Offering
 - Feedback sandwich
 - Validating
 - Empathizing



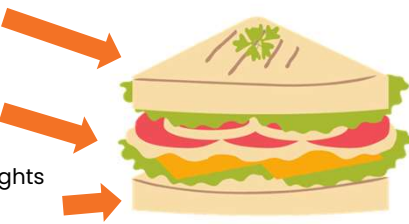
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Offering: Feedback Sandwich

- Ask permission (autonomy)
- Offer advice
- Ask for their thoughts (autonomy)



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Effective Conversations Require Emotional Safety

- Communicate with **LOVE**
 - **L**istening
 - Open-ended questions, reflections
 - **O**ffering
 - Feedback sandwich
 - **V**alidating
 - Reinforce self-efficacy
 - **E**mpathizing



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Validating

- Being understood is a like breath of “psychological air”
- **Not** being understood is the crux of many disagreements
- Telling someone their feelings are wrong (and that yours are right) is a surefire way to remove emotional safety
 - Directly or indirectly
- You can validate an emotional motivation without validating a behavior

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Effective Conversations Require Emotional Safety

- Communicate with **LOVE**
 - **L**istening
 - Open-ended questions, reflections
 - **O**ffering
 - Feedback sandwich
 - **V**alidating
 - Reinforce self-efficacy
 - **E**mpathizing
 - Be in the hole with them



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Empathy



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Demonstrate Emotional Safety

- Communicate with **LOVE**
 - **L**istening
 - Open-ended questions, reflections
 - **O**ffering
 - Feedback sandwich
 - Ask permission
 - Provide information
 - Ask for reactions
 - **V**alidating
 - Reinforces self-efficacy, self-trust
 - **E**mpathizing
 - Be in the hole with them
- Have persistence and don't get discouraged!



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(CMC, 2016)

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IN THE PRIVATE CHAT

How will you demonstrate empathy this week?

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Additional Conversation Ideas

Start talking about alcohol, caffeine, and other substances earlier rather than later

• And check in on a regular basis

Open the topic initially with questions about generalities, not more personal questions

Seek first to understand...

Talk about all sides of the substance, not just the negatives

Connect substance-related decisions to your child's personal values

Lean into empowerment and personal choice



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What can I do if I think my child needs more help?

53

Therapy Directories



Psychology Today



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Emergencies



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Take Homes

- **Unhealthy coping**, including alcohol use, comes from discomfort
 - All behavior has a purpose
- **Emotional coping** and **peer influence** are primary factors
- Exposure to **alcohol-related norms** is a very strong factor in use
 - Family, friends, media, social media
- Caffeine use is very common, but can also be harmful, particularly in **large / adult-portioned** doses



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So, what can parents do?



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Parents

- Parents can...
 - Stay connected, actively set norms and expectations, and help shape peer influences
 - Cultivate emotional safety by communicating with **LOVE**
 - Listen actively, sandwich feedback in autonomy, validate emotions, and show empathy
 - Provide additional resources if a child is struggling



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So, what can schools do?



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Schools

- Schools can...
 - Start a student-led prevention club that models healthy norms
 - Teach evidence-based prevention that corrects myths about how many peers drink
 - Remove energy drinks and high-caffeine products from vending machines and school stores



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Connect at
primeforlife.org!



Aaron Weiner, PhD, ABPP
President, Prime For Life

✉ aaron.weiner@primeforlife.org
in /aaronweinerphd



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Q&A UPCOMING

**USE THE PRIVATE CHAT TO
SUBMIT YOUR QUESTIONS**

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**PARENT HANDBOOKS:
YOUR GUIDE TO MEANINGFUL
CONVERSATIONS!**

It has been, and continues to be, a premier resource for parents looking for a one-stop shop to help guide them and their children through a complicated landscape related to addictive substances and behaviors. It's a fantastic addition to any parent's bookshelf.
-Dr. Aaron Weiner



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Nov 17 **What's AI Replacing?**

UPCOMING WEBINARS

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Q&A TIME!

Submit your questions through the private chat.
We will answer as many as possible, but may not get to every question.

YOUR QUESTIONS HELP MAKE THESE CONVERSATIONS MEANINGFUL

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