



STRATEGY:

BE INFORMED ABOUT DRUGS

Encourage your kids to talk with you if someone is pressuring them to take drugs or alcohol. Be pleased that they want to talk with you and avoid getting angry or growling at them.

For some families, knowledge of drugs is second nature. Young people have seen their parents smoking drugs or taking pills – and sometimes this has happened for generations. But for many families, newer drugs such as “party pills” and “herbal highs” are something that they don’t know a lot about.

The internet can be a good source of information about drugs with many websites providing accurate information about the effects of various substances. The New Zealand Drug Foundation has a good home page where you might start to find out more

www.drugfoundation.org.nz

You can also phone the free Alcohol Drug Helpline Ph 0800-787-797 for advice

Take the opportunity to talk with other parents and share what each of you knows. Being aware of what other families are facing can be supportive when dealing with drug and alcohol issues.

Remember to keep your own prescription medicines in safe places where young people can’t get them. Abuse of prescription drugs by young people has become common overseas. If you no longer need the drugs – return them to your local pharmacy – or dispose of them safely (like flush them down the toilet).



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STRATEGY: NEGOTIATE THE RULES WITH YOUR TEEN BEFOREHAND

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Parties are part of the fun in growing up and a good way for young people to be able to mix with others. Providing some structure about how they can do this will reassure not only yourself, but also your kids that you are there for them, that you care about them, and that they have some say about their life and how they go about living it.

PARTY - AT YOUR HOME

You both should agree on some key issues. These might include:

- What time the party will start – and end.
- Who will be coming.
- If alcohol will be allowed – and if so – how it will be controlled.
- The type of behaviour that will not be acceptable.
- What will happen if the rules are broken.
- Who will supervise.

You may also want to agree on the area you want the party to happen. For example, that the party stays on the property and does not spill out onto the street, that guests only party in the garage, or that no one goes into the bedrooms. Agree on the consequences if these aren't followed – and stick to them, even if it means cancelling the party.

Alcohol and other drugs

Not every teenager has alcohol at their party, especially younger kids. It is quite OK to say **NO** to alcohol being available. However, if you do agree that alcohol will be allowed, you need to be aware that you will be responsible for supervising those who drink it on your property. In fact – **the law requires this**. In order for things not to get out of hand, some parents have used this strategy:

- Get the names and phone numbers of those attending.
- Talk with their parents about the alcohol issue.
- If their parents agree to alcohol being consumed – get them to indicate how much they agree their teenager may have. Better still, get them to drop their teenager off with the alcohol and to meet you at the door. Getting to know other parents is useful, particularly if problems arise and you need them to collect their teenager.
- Set a limit on the type and amount of alcohol that you will permit – and stick to it.
- Let everyone know what will happen if the rules are broken.
- If alcohol is allowed, make sure that you have plenty of food available throughout the party.
- Have plenty of non-alcoholic drinks on hand and let them know it's OK to help themselves. (This is something teenagers may not bring, or feel embarrassed to bring due to 'peer pressure').
- Make arrangements or provisions for safe transport or if you have teenage guests planning on sleeping over, make sure that you have talked this through with their parents first. In the event of a party with a sleepover, be firm on the end time of the party.



STRATEGY:

STAY IN CONTROL

If as host you have decided that you do not want guests to use illegal drugs at the party, and you think that drugs are being taken, you need to take action. This could include speaking with the person(s) concerned in private, making clear your 'no drugs' policy and/or informing parents. If you are unable to contact parents, you'll need to be sure that the young person is in a fit state and able to get home, before asking them to leave. If you feel a responsibility to keep them at the party/under your care, you'll need to find out what drugs they have taken and in what quantity. **Don't hesitate to call an ambulance** if you think one is needed (remember that ambulance officers are not required to call the Police for overdoses or drug incidents).

As a parent – you are not just responsible for your own teenager – but also for your guests while they are on your property. Make sure you have additional help from neighbours or friends to actively supervise the party. If it's a larger party – consider hiring security – it might be cheaper than having a trashed house in the long run.

- ✓ Be involved so you can see what is going on. An easy way to do this is to prepare lots of food, and offer this personally to guests throughout the night. By talking with them, you will soon get an idea if anyone has had too much alcohol or been taking drugs.
- ✓ Deal with issues before they get out of hand.
- ✓ Invite other parents over – they could help you serve food and will be able to assist with security if necessary
- ✓ Have one or more people at the entrance to your property to stop problems before they enter. Uninvited guests, those trying to smuggle in alcohol or drugs, or even those who are already drunk or aggressive – are all problems you can do without and should be turned away.

- ✓ Keep the alcohol in a central place, under your control. Even if it means individually labelling each drink and to who it belongs to, this will ensure that you are in control of the amount of alcohol consumed. If you think someone has had enough, then say so and tell them that you will return the remainder of their alcohol to them at the end of the evening.
- ✓ If things do go very wrong, don't hesitate to call the Police as soon as possible.

It wasn't me! Although your teenager may be willing to follow the rules for the night, other teenagers may not be as responsible or willing. Have a strategy in place to deal with those that may break the rules of your house. Make the consequences clear at the outset – broken rules means eviction from the party.

Remember ...

Plans and boundaries help to keep your teenager safer.

You should expect all these things from the parents of your teenager's friends if they were hosting a party with alcohol as well. If you aren't up to providing all of these things – you probably shouldn't be hosting a party with alcohol at your home.





STRATEGY: NEGOTIATE THE RULES WITH YOUR TEEN BEFOREHAND

PARTY - AT OTHER PEOPLE'S PLACE

Be informed. Your teenager should be able to tell you at least the following:

- Whose party it is and where it is being held.
- The phone number of the parents hosting the party.
- The time the party will start and finish.
- How they plan to get there – and back home.
- Who they will be going with.
- If there will be alcohol. If so, how it will be provided and monitored.
- If the party will be supervised – by whom – and how?

If they can't tell you these things – they shouldn't be going until they can.

Better still, you should phone the parents of the youth who is having the party and get them to provide answers to these questions. Having had contact with other parents helps to keep you informed and make it easier to deal with any problems if they do crop up. It also affirms how much you care about your kids and their safety. An easy way to break the conversation is to phone and ask for directions. That done, you have the chance to discuss your concerns.

It is important to discuss what you expect with your kids and come to an agreement on 'rules' - and the consequences if they are broken - *before* you let them go to a party. In particular, you should also discuss:-

CURFEW: You can't control the end of the party – but you can agree on a time for your teenager to be home. Make sure they understand this, that they know the consequences of not being home on time. You should wait up to check they are in on time – and that they are ok – which means not roaring drunk, or with obvious signs of injury. It gives you a chance to ask how their night was, and to show your support for them coming home as agreed.

ALCOHOL: If you agree that they can drink, set a limit on how much they are allowed and what sort of alcohol they can drink. Lesser strength products (1 standard drink per bottle or 2-5% alcohol) are preferable. Avoid stronger products – or they will get drunk much quicker with inevitable problems. Also make sure that they have had something to eat before they head out to the party. They should fully understand that if they don't follow the rules – there will be consequences. Always follow through with this if they break them.

"We made a rule that if Maddie felt a party was 'getting out of hand' that she would text us – and then we would call her back straight away no matter what time of the night. She would say 'do I have to come home?' and we would say 'yes'. She would act grumpy with us, but we would come and pick her up. It was our way of letting her blame us, but keeping her safe and letting her keep face with her mates."



LOCATION: Sometimes parties end up 'moving'. Make sure that you know where your teenager is and, should the party location change, make it a rule that they let you know.

SLEEPOVERS: Very often sleepovers are part of a party. It's always a good idea to meet with the parents of the youth who is having the party, and check the sleeping arrangements, and if there is a curfew time and how it is going to be invoked.

BACK-UP: You can help them to cope with situations that get out of hand, if you arrange before hand some simple strategies:-

- A buddy. Encourage them to go with a friend or buddy – and to look out for each other throughout the party.
- A "safe" word or sign. If they get into trouble or want to leave, being able to communicate the urgent need for your help can save them from losing face in front of their friends.
- A mobile phone with credit for use in an emergency.

While your teenager is out partying, there should be someone who will be available to be called upon if they need help – no matter what time or what happens. If your teenager calls you for help, no matter what time, be available, understanding and calm. Unless your teenager is clearly distressed, the time for questions is the next day, after a good night's sleep.



EVEN WITH THE BEST PARENTS IN THE WORLD, YOUNG PEOPLE CAN STILL GET INTO TROUBLE

WHEN THINGS GO WRONG