



CommunityNEWS

Promoting Health & Wellness through prevention in our Community.

Parents As Good Models for Teens Coping With Stress

Stress is a common problem among teens, and as a parent, you have a role in helping the teen in your life cope with it. So what exactly is stress? According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), stress is the body's physical and psychological response to anything perceived as overwhelming. This may be viewed as a result of life's demands—pleasant or unpleasant — and the body's lack of resources to meet them.

While stress is a natural part of life, it often creates imbalance in the body, especially a teen's body, which is already experiencing so many changes. Girls also report feeling "frequently stressed" more than boys.

A certain amount of stress can be helpful as a way of keeping your teen motivated. But too much or too little may render them ineffective and interfere with their relationships at home and socially, as well as their physical well-being. According to a recent survey, 43 percent of 13- to 14-year-olds say they feel stressed every single day; by ages 15 to 17, the number rises to 59 percent. The day-to-day pressures teens experience, such as the pressure to fit in and to be successful, can lead to stress. Jobs and family economics can also prove stressful for teens, as nearly two-thirds of them say they are "somewhat" or "very concerned" about their personal finances.

If stress becomes unmanageable and teens are left to their own devices without guidance from a parent or caregiver, they may find their own ways of coping. Sometimes these coping mechanisms involve unhealthy behaviors such as drinking, smoking marijuana, and engaging in other risky behaviors.

Here's how you can help the teen in your life with healthy, productive coping strategies.

Recognize when your teen is stressed-out. Is your teen getting adequate rest? Are they eating well-balanced meals? Do they ever get to take breaks to restore their energy? If these needs are not met, your teen may show it through chronic moodiness, irritability, anxiety and/or long bouts of sadness. If you have a teen daughter, pay particularly attention to notice if she is obsessing about her looks or weight.

Introduce positive coping strategies to your teen. Let's face it, stress will be a part of your teen's life. Help them identify healthy ways in which they can relieve their stress. It can be as simple as having them talk to you about their problems or pressures. Other ideas include: exercising, getting enough sleep, listening to music, writing in a journal, eating a healthy diet, seeing a counselor and reminding them of their accomplishments.

Be a good example. Young people often pick up their coping strategies by watching their parents. If a child sees a parent drink an alcoholic beverage or smoke a cigarette every time they are overwhelmed, they are more likely to imitate the same behavior. So, be mindful of your own reactions to stress and set a good example for your children.



If signs of stress persist, ask for help. Some sources you can consult include: a health care provider, mental health center, social worker, counselor, nurse, therapist or clergy.



WARREN "TALKS"

What drives us in the Warren Prevention Coalition is the promotion of health and wellness and the reduction of youth substance misuse in our community.

We believe an important way to achieve our goals is to connect with our community members through surveys, both online and on-the-street and listen to their ideas on how we can best serve those objectives. *You Talk, We Listen!*



The first of our "Warren Talks" surveys was conducted during the 32nd Annual Warren Holiday festival on Saturday, November 28th. In addition to photos with Santa, a scavenger hunt following social distance guidelines, the Coalition also handed out hand sanitizer and information packets.

We asked folks "How do you think the Warren Prevention Coalition could best serve the needs of the community during the pandemic?"

Of the 31 responses we received there were several common responses and those are listed below. These will help us in our planning on initiating programs and providing resources in our prevention work.

- *Make the community aware of Coalition programs and resources and provide information on how families can practice prevention at home.*
- *Provide information on mental health issues, especially during the pandemic.*
- *Possibly use email or text surveys to reach out to the community and share information.*

Warren Talks *(continued)*

- *Offer virtual sessions on Zoom covering important topics*
- *Continue to partner with local alcohol retailers/servers with compliance checks.*
- *Have more substance misuse education for young teens.*
- *Offer support groups, through schools or virtually on drugs, alcohol, mental and emotional health topics.*
- *Activities like Holiday Festival to keep people connected.*
- *Have a greater presence in the schools.*
- *More social media posts to show awareness.*

Many of the respondents offered praise on the work of the Warren Prevention Coalition and its capacity to serve and provide information to the community. *We Thank You!*

Teaming Up With Local Students to Create Positive Messages

The Warren Prevention Coalition recently began working with a group of Mount Hope High School students to help bring a fresh perspective to prevention messaging through Public Service Announcements (PSAs) they will create.

The thirteen students are part of a videography/marketing class under the advisory of Brian Latessa with support from MHHS principal Dr. Deborah Dibiase. Many of these students also contribute to the Husky News Network (HNN,) the five-minute television program produced live weekday mornings.

The Coalition will provide the students with background information on some basic prevention principles and current Coalition efforts to address youth substance misuse and the promotion of good mental health for the whole community.

Once the PSAs are completed, they will be accessible through social media and on YouTube. We at the Coalition are very excited about the chance to support these young videographers and look forward to witnessing their creativity in action!



Myths vs. Fact: Why Adults Should Not Give Alcohol to Teens

One of the more compelling reasons for people under the age of 21 not to drink alcohol is that their brains are not yet fully developed until about 25 years old, and long term health problems can result if that development is affected. Students that drink often have heightened issues with school, friends, drug experimentation, depression, lower self-esteem and other challenges. According to the Center of Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, Youth who start drinking before age 15 are six times more likely to develop alcohol dependence or abuse later in life than those who begin drinking at or after age 21.



Even with existing knowledge, some myths still exist:

Myth: *“I’d like to have my kids learn to drink at home to drink more responsibly.”*

Fact: Supplying teens with alcohol leads to more frequent teen drinking, and the earlier they begin drinking, the more likely they are to develop alcohol-related problems. *(Partnership for Drug-Free Kids)*

Myth: *“Drinking in high school is a rite of passage.”*

Fact: Teens who perceive their parents to be permissive about alcohol use, are more likely to abuse alcohol and use other drugs. *(The Partnership Attitude Tracking Study)*

Myth: *“Everyone is safe drinking at our house and it’s no risk to me.”*

Fact: Underage drinking is never safe and teens don’t often know the tipping point of too much. Beyond fines, jail time or lawsuits, no parent wants to be responsible for the harm that can result from teen drinking. To learn more about social hosting penalties in Rhode Island, check out [Click HERE](#).

Buying alcohol for teens is never okay! With the support of parents and our community, the Coalition hopes to provide the tools and understanding of substance misuse, and to help foster healthy decision-making for all.



Why Binge Drinking Can Be So Dangerous for Teens

Before you discount binge drinking as something your teen won’t do, take a look at the numbers. About 90 percent of teen drinking is considered binge drinking due to the speed and quantity of consumption. According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism by age 15 around 33 percent have had a minimum of one drink, and by 18 that number goes up to 60 percent.

Americans between the ages of 12 and 20 consume 11% of all alcohol beverages in the U.S. before they reach the legal drinking age of 21. Of those in that age range, 7.7 million admitted having more than a few sips, and they often binge drank.

It’s not just the boys, either. Drinking among teenage girls has risen steadily in the past decade, with 45 percent of ninth grade girls binge drinking and a full 62 percent indulging by the 12th grade.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reports teens who drink before age 15 are four times more likely to be alcohol dependent as adults. The CDC’s 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Survey reported that among high school students during the past 30 days, 29% drank alcohol, 14% binge drank, 5% of drivers drove after drinking alcohol and 17% rode with a driver who had been drinking alcohol.

Because the brain continues to develop up to the age of 25, drinking alcohol, especially binge drinking, can potentially cause permanent damage. Cognitive function and learning ability may be affected as well as the structure and the basic function of the brain.

Because alcohol impairs judgment it can have other dire consequences in an age group that is just learning to make decisions. Binge drinking skyrockets the odds of engaging in risky behavior and the results can last a lifetime.

Alcohol Can Pose Some Different Challenges During Pandemic

Covid-19 has pretty much affected everyone of us and will likely have a long-lasting impact on public health and well-being going forward. And while alcohol misuse was already a public health concern in the United States, it also complicates issues associated with the pandemic.

Alcohol and the Immune System Alcohol misuse both activates the immune system, causing inflammation, and interferes with the body's immune response to viral and bacterial infections. Excessive alcohol consumption may not only influence Covid-19 susceptibility and severity, but the additional anxiety and stress caused by the pandemic itself may also lead to excessive alcohol use.

The Effects of Social Isolation Feelings of social isolation can worsen symptoms of anxiety or depression. Working from home, remote learning and the absence of traditional family gatherings may further contribute to these feelings of isolation and possibly lead some to find ways to "fill the void," to overcome boredom, or use to alcohol as a way to cope.

Teens Are Also Affected Many teens have been greatly affected by the disruption of routines as well as the loss of academic, athletic, and social opportunities like the cancellation of graduations and proms that they've looked forward to for many years. Parents can be important role models for their teens when it comes to finding ways to cope with these significant changes and the additional stress they bring about.

Coping Skills vs. Self-Medication

Self-medication is one of the ways people, young and old, turn to when looking to relieve stress, anxiety, unresolved trauma, depression, and other struggles of everyday life and try to treat their troubling ailment without speaking to a doctor.



From peer pressure and stress with school, to the struggles of growing up and just trying to "fit in," teens can be prone to try self-medicating. And today, it may be easier for teens since

Coping Skills *(continued)*

they can access drugs or alcohol through social media, peer groups or the family medicine cabinet.

The first part in understanding self-medication in your teen is to find the why. That way parents can better address the reason behind the behavior. Understanding what may be driving their teen to self-medicate and looking at changes in their behavior, moods, patterns, and habits, parents can be more effective in helping them cope with problems and stressors in a healthy, productive way.

Offer Coping Skills to Avoid Teen Self-Medicating

Believe it or not, what seems to be simple suggestions by parents or caregivers to their teen on how to cope with a problem or stress, can actually be a very effective way to teach them a skill to utilize each time they feel overwhelmed, stressed or down and help them avoid the temptation for self-medication.

If you notice your teen struggling with school or a friendship drama or experiencing depression, suggest an activity such as going for a walk alone or with a friend, Facetime a friend or relative, or shopping in-store (with mask and social distancing) or online. It may be just the thing they need to break the cycle of anxiety or stress. For more ideas for activities that teens can use as coping mechanisms, [CLICK HERE](#).

Community RESOURCES

East Bay Community Action Program (EBCAP)

100 Bullocks Point Ave., Riverside, RI (401) 437-1000

East Bay Center 2 Old County Rd., Barrington, RI

(401) 246-1195

East Bay Recovery Center 31 Railroad Ave., Warren, RI

(401) 302-6231 or 401-289-2055

BH Link Hotline — (401) 414-LINK (414-5465)

24/7 – help with a behavioral healthcare crisis.

St. Mary of the Bay Food Pantry

645 Main St., Warren RI (401) 245-700



Warren

Prevention Coalition

514 Main Street, Warren, RI 02885 • 401.245.7387

#Connectionisthebestprevention

For information, contact Ann Marie Roy at ARoy@townofwarren-ri.gov or Maria Ursini at Mursini@townofwarren-ri.gov.

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