

Helping Hand

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The Holidays and Alcohol: Safe Celebrations

What comes to mind when you think of the holidays? Sitting in front of a warm glowing fire? Spending time with loved ones? Eating too much? Where does alcohol use fit into this picture?

The holidays offer many opportunities to drink alcohol. According to Mothers Against Drunk Driving, at least 50 percent of all deadly car crashes that take place during the holiday season involve alcohol.

The incidence of alcohol poisoning of children is also common during the holiday season. At this time of year, it is especially important that parents keep their children safe and talk with them about the dangers of alcohol abuse.

Holiday Celebration Tips:

- Let your child know what you expect. Tell your child that adults may be drinking but under no circumstances is a child allowed to drink alcohol.
- At your holiday gatherings, offer plenty of nonalcoholic foods, drinks, and activities.
- To lower the risk of alcohol poisoning, be sure to throw out partly empty alcoholic drinks. Children love to imitate adults, and if they have access to leftover drinks, they may taste the contents.
- Have a plan in place about what you and your family will do if you are at a party where there are people who have had too much to drink.
- Model responsible behavior by making sure that guests who have been drinking do not drive.



Source: SAMHSA

Reasons to Build a Book Club

Setting up a book club for your children will not only encourage them to read, but it may also help you get closer to them. Here are some thoughts from Scholastic Press about setting up a book club for kids:

Start a parent-child book group and reap benefits beyond reading. With the proliferation of book clubs for adults – from neighborhood groups to Oprah’s Book Club – it’s no wonder that kids want to take part in the action. However, with homework, sports and much more competing for your child’s time (and yours), the idea of setting aside a couple of hours every month or two to discuss books can be daunting. Consider, though, that a parent-child book group can help you:

- Become closer to your child
- Share different aspects of their life
- Expand your conversations beyond “How was school today?”
- Offer understanding about your child, their peers, and how they think



Steps Toward Raising an Ethical Child: Resolving Conflict

By Matthew Barnes and Lifescape Staff Writer

Part of becoming an ethical person begins with learning to control emotions. If a person cannot appropriately express emotions, it compromises their ability to hold true to the beliefs they value. Learning conflict resolution skills and fostering empathy can help your child to manage emotions. Such skills can assist your child with controlling impulses, getting along better with peers, making wise decisions and solving everyday problems.

In an age-appropriate manner, work on each step of the conflict resolution process:

- Controlling emotions
- Understanding another’s feelings and point of view
- Identifying underlying reasons that motivate someone to think or act in a certain way
- Communicating and active listening
- Generating alternative solutions
- Considering consequences
- Developing a plan of action

Preschoolers

The capacity to learn and practice skills improves with age, but you can expose your child to these concepts during the toddler years. Help your child develop a positive attitude toward conflict resolution by setting a good example. Use play, books, music and real-life observation to point out positive and negative ways of dealing with strong emotions and conflict.

Preschoolers need help labeling feelings. Having strong emotions is OK, but expressing feelings in certain ways is not. For example, “It’s OK to be mad, but don’t hit.” Provide appropriate suggestions and examples of other ways to display the emotion. It’s just as important to praise your child for dealing with emotions appropriately.

When conflict arises, help your child identify the person and problem that is troublesome. Encourage talking and listening. Show preschoolers how they too contribute to the problem. Practice listening skills by asking your child to rephrase the problem in his or her own words.

Elementary age

The ability to see cause-and-effect relationships helps this age group better understand each skill, but you need to help your child integrate the individual skills into a process. Encourage your child’s emotional awareness and help him or her to value other people’s feelings.

Help your child recognize the signs of letting emotions get the best of them, and remind your child to think before acting. Work on active listening: Pay attention when he or she speaks and do not interrupt. Insist you’re shown the same courtesy. Explain how seeking allies to “gang up” on someone does not help resolve conflict.

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Support your child’s attempts to initiate conflict resolution on his or her own.

Preteens

Preteens typically get a lot of practice using these skills with their parents. Keeping your cool and sticking to conflict resolution fundamentals shows your teen that you’re not forcing your will or opinion, but instead, you are genuinely interested in finding a mutually agreeable solution.

Many preteens are too embarrassed to share their feelings or feel that doing so makes them seem immature. Remind your child that solving problems requires good communication and an understanding of another person’s point of view. Asking open-ended questions helps encourage communication.

Help your preteen find underlying issues and patterns, and brainstorm solutions. Assessing whether what your child thinks is correct is less important than coming up with as many alternative solutions as possible. Help children see how their actions affect other people’s feelings, as well as their own.

Where Did the Time Go? Spend Time with Your Kids Now



Time flies! Before we know it, our kids are all grown up. Most parents realize the rewards of close family ties. Yet the demands of jobs and day-to-day household activities can be stressful and tiring. It's easy for quality time with our kids to be squeezed out.

Finding "quality" time can be tough. Take advantage of that one-on-one time that just happens as you are cooking, caring for a pet, riding in the car, or raking leaves.

Talking with children is one of the best things you can do to help them grow up confident and secure.

Ask questions that take more than a "yes" or "no" answer. Ask younger children to explain something or talk about a story you read together, objects you found in nature together, or their take on school and friends.

With older children and teens, talk about issues and events. Ask teens for their opinions. Discuss the meaning of movies and ads. Mention problems you had during the day and how you dealt with them.

Praise your child for things you might take for granted, such as getting up on time or doing homework without being told. Praise hard work as well as success. Avoid value judgments. Show you understand even if you don't agree. Respect feelings and help them work through hard situations.

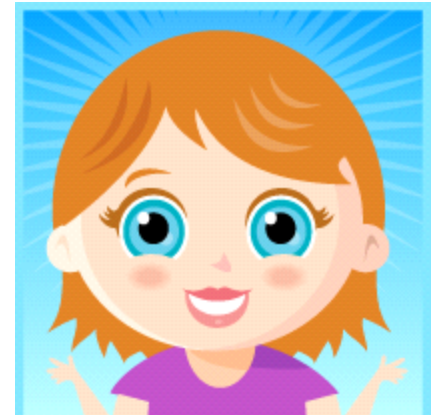
Spending time with your child takes more than talk, though. Find a chance each week to do something special with your child. If they are active in sports or creative arts, go to as many events as you can. Take trips, look at art, gaze at stars, and play games. Activities that call for planning, forming, or solving involve making choices and thinking about results. These pursuits will fuel a kid's curiosity and build creative thinking habits. Find out what he or she likes. For every interest, there is something to try.

Source: SAMHSA

Helping Your Child Gain Self-Esteem

Childhood can be a time of fun, friendship, learning and growing, but it can also be a time of uncertainty and confusion. For some children, figuring out who they are and who they want to be is difficult. When children feel inadequate, interactions with other children can be confusing and even upsetting.

Every child needs to feel good about him- or herself. For some children, self-esteem comes naturally. For others, though, feeling good about themselves isn't so easy. Perhaps they are teased because of a physical characteristic such as height, weight or a speech impediment. Maybe they lag behind other children in terms of social skills.



As a parent, you can help your child develop self-esteem by reassuring him or her of their worth and teaching ways to become proud of him- or herself. Encourage your child to pursue activities that he or she enjoys and praise accomplishments. Point out the things that your child does well—maybe he or she is great at math or is a talented musician or athlete. Remind your child that they're special and that you love them unconditionally. Your child looks up to you, and your support and encouragement greatly affect self-esteem.

Helping your child learn how to socialize is another important role you can play. Organizing play dates for children or taking them to the playground to interact with other children is an essential part of teaching them how to get along with others—a crucial factor in developing self-esteem. As children get older, allowing them to socialize with other children outside school becomes vital to their sense of identity.

Of course, you can't control the fact that your child may be teased from time to time. But you can help your child develop the skills he or she'll need to help grow into a happy, healthy and self-confident adult.

How to Intervene to Stop Bullying

As adults, we may feel uncertain about how to handle bullying when we see or hear it happen. If the situation is not handled appropriately, we could end up inadvertently promoting, rather than reducing, bullying. Here are some tips to help respond more effectively and make the best use of the “teachable moment.”



When you see or hear bullying

- Immediately stop the bullying: Stand between the child or children who bullied and those who were bullied, preferably blocking eye contact between them. Don't send any students away—especially bystanders. Don't immediately ask about, discuss the reason for the bullying, or try to sort out the facts.
- Let students know that bullying is unacceptable and against school rules (e.g., “Calling someone names is bullying and is against our school rules,” or “That was bullying. I won't allow students to push or hurt each other that way”).
- Support the bullied child in a way that allows him or her to regain self-control, to “save face,” and to feel supported and safe from retaliation. Make a point to see the child later in private if he or she is upset, but don't ask what happened at the time of the incident. It can be very uncomfortable to be questioned in front of other students. Let his or her teachers know what happened so that they may provide additional support and protection. Increase supervision to ensure that the bullying is not repeated and does not escalate.
- Include bystanders in the conversation and give them guidance about how they might appropriately intervene or get help next time. Don't put bystanders on the spot to explain publicly what they observed. Use a calm, matter-of-fact, supportive tone of voice to let them know that you noticed their inaction or that you are pleased with the way they tried to help—even if they weren't successful. If they did not act, or if they responded in aggressive ways, encourage them to take a more active or pro social role next time (e.g., “Maybe you weren't sure what to do. Next time, please tell the person to stop or get an adult to help if you feel you can't work together to handle the situation”).
- If appropriate, impose immediate consequences for students who bully others. Do not require students to apologize or make amends during the heat of the moment (everyone should have time to cool off). All consequences should be logical and connected to the offense. Let students who bully know that you will be watching them and their friends closely to be sure that there is no retaliation. Notify colleagues.
- Do not require the students to meet and “work things out.” Unlike conflicts, bullying involves a power imbalance, which means this strategy will not work. Trying to find a way to “work things out” can re-traumatize the student who was bullied and does not generally improve relationships between the parties. Instead, encourage the student who bullied to make amends in a way (after follow-up with an adult) that would be meaningful for the child who was bullied.

Source: <http://www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov/adults/default.aspx>

For more information, contact: