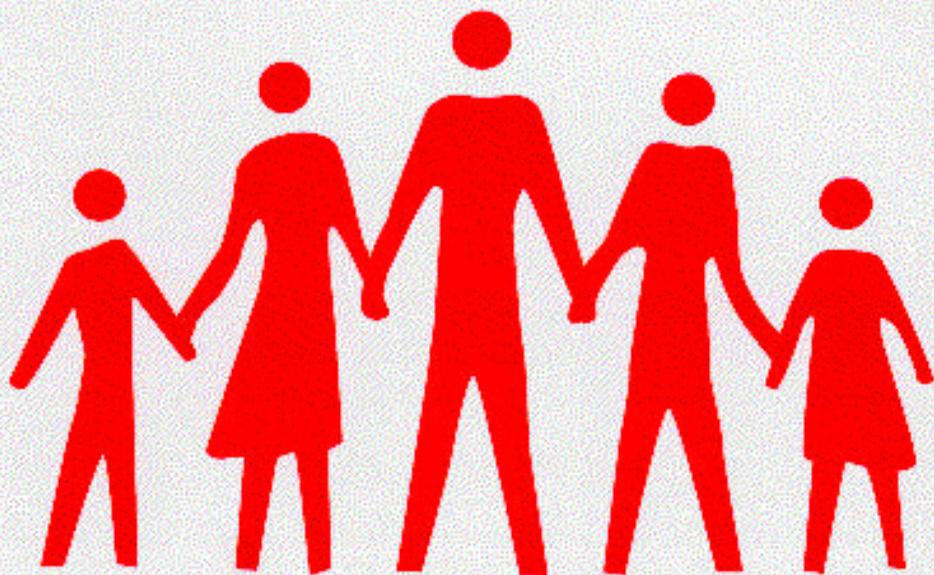


Part 2

# *Helping Families Matter to Teens*



***FAMILY MATTERS***

*A Program to Prevent Teen Alcohol and Tobacco Use*

## Part 2: *Helping Families Matter to Teens*

**W**elcome to Part 2 of *FAMILY MATTERS — Helping Families Matter to Teens*. *FAMILY MATTERS* is a program to help families prevent young teens from drinking alcoholic beverages, like beer, wine, wine coolers, and mixed drinks, and from smoking cigarettes or using smokeless tobacco.

Part 2 has two sections. The first section, **Understanding Your Teenager**, focuses on changes children experience as they become teenagers. The second section, **Working Together As A Family**, is about some of the things that make families work well together. Both sections set the stage for family activities you'll be doing to help keep your teen from becoming involved with alcohol and tobacco.

If you haven't already, choose a time soon to tell your teenager that your family will be doing *FAMILY MATTERS*. Your teen may not use alcohol or tobacco and may tell you that you can trust that will never happen. Say how proud and happy that makes you, and that *FAMILY MATTERS* is also for teens who are not involved with drugs.

### **Part 2 Instructions**

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|--------------|--|
| Parents      | 1. Read the <b>Q &amp; As</b> in <b>Understanding Your Teenager</b> .  |
| Parents      | 2. Do Activity 1: <b>Now We Get It!</b>  |
| Whole Family | 3. Plan a time for your family to do Activity 2: <b>Where Are You Coming From?</b> Follow these tips for successful family meetings when you plan this activity. |

#### **Tips for Successful Family Meetings**

1. Include your teenager and as many other family members as you can.
2. Plan a time that doesn't conflict with other important things.
3. Choose a place where there will be few interruptions and the TV won't be on.

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| Parents      | 4. Later in the week, read the <b>Q &amp; As</b> in <b>Working Together as a Family</b> .  |
| Whole Family | 5. Do Activity 3: <b>Let's Talk!</b>   |
| Whole Family | 6. Do Activity 4: <b>Family Time</b> . You can do this activity right after Activity 3 or at a different time. Be sure to read over both activities first so you'll know what to expect and can gather anything you need to do them. |
| Whole Family | 7. Do Activity 5: <b>FAMILY MATTERS Badge of Honor</b> . This fun activity will take very little time.   |
| Parents      | 8. Read the <b>RECAP</b> of Part 2.  |
| Parents      | 9. Do the <b>NEXT STEPS</b> listed at the end of Part 2.   |



## ***Understanding Your Teenager***

During the teenage years, many changes happen — physically, emotionally, mentally, and socially. These changes are normal and healthy, but they can affect how your teen acts toward you and other family members. By being more aware of these changes, you'll understand what your teen is going through and be better able to help prevent him or her from using or abusing alcohol or tobacco.

### ***Why does our teenager question things we say?***

Young teens are trying hard to gain independence. Questioning adults, rejecting advice and criticism, and becoming frustrated if they don't get the freedom they want are all part of that effort. Teens also begin to think more logically than younger children and they think more about the future. That leads them to question beliefs and values they used to accept.

Young teens still need parents. They are trying to find a balance between independence and dependence, but don't always know how. This may explain why they can be rebellious one minute, and warm and caring the next.

### ***Why does our teenager spend so much time looking in the mirror?***

Young teens think about their bodies a lot. They feel uncertain about how they look, especially in comparison with others. With the start of puberty, they become increasingly interested in their own sexuality. All that time spent in front of the mirror is for reassurance that "I'm normal."

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### ***Why does our teenager want to spend so much time with friends?***

Perhaps at no other time in life are friendships as close and important as for young teens. They can spend hours sharing thoughts and feelings with each other. Talking and being with friends help teens make sense of the changes they are experiencing.

Teens may see anything that separates them from friends as bad. Because they want so much to be accepted by friends, they sometimes do things that they do not really want to do, like smoke cigarettes and drink alcohol.

### ***Why does our teenager want to do one thing one minute and something else the next?***

Teens are gaining a sense of who they are. They fantasize and daydream as a way of "trying out" different identities. Experimenting with hair and clothes is part of trying to figure out who they are. As teenagers wrestle with their identities, they are apt to seem inconsistent in what they say and do. That's all part of the changes they're experiencing.

### ***What do these changes have to do with teenage alcohol and tobacco use?***

A lot! Because young teens like to experiment with new activities, many try alcohol and tobacco for the first time at this age. Drinking and smoking are ways teens can show their independence and signal that they are "growing up." Drinking and smoking are also social activities that teens do with friends. Because they spend so much time with friends, there are opportunities for alcohol and tobacco use. Teens may believe that they must drink and smoke to be accepted by their friends.

## Activity 1

# Now We Get It!

● WHY: To help parents understand some of the changes teenagers experience

■ WHO: Parents

▲ HOW LONG: 5 minutes

*Think about things your teenager said or did last week. List 5 things that your teen did that might be explained by the changes just described.*

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

## Activity 2

# Where Are You Coming From?

- WHY: To help teens and parents understand what it's like being a teenager
- WHO: Whole family
- ▲ HOW LONG: 30 minutes

*Sometimes it's hard for teens to believe that their parents were ever young. And sometimes it's hard for parents to remember what it is like being a teenager. Let each family member share answers to the questions below. You might want to pull out family snapshots if you have any to look at as you talk.*

**Hint: Use the Tips for Successful Family Meetings on page 1 when you do this activity.**

### **Questions for Parents or Other Adult Family Members**

1. When you were a teenager, what was your favorite thing to do for fun?
2. What did you want to do when you grew up?
3. Who was your best friend? Tell a story about you and your best friend.
4. What kinds of clothes did you like to wear and what was your hairstyle?
5. What were your favorite things to do together with your family?
6. What kinds of things did you worry about?
7. How do you think things are different today than when you were a teenager?

***Questions for Teenagers***

1. What is your favorite thing to do for fun?
2. What do you want to do when you grow up?
3. Who is your best friend? Tell a story about you and your best friend.
4. What kinds of clothes do you like to wear and what is your hair-style?
5. What are your favorite things to do together with your family?
6. What kinds of things do you worry about?
7. How do you think things might have been different for your parents when they were teenagers than for you today?



## **Working Together As A Family**

*Remember the Q & As are for parents only to read.*

There are many different ways families can work together — like really talking and listening to each other, showing that they care about each other, and spending time doing things together. Sometimes though, families have a hard time figuring out how to make things work. Having a family that works well together is one of the most important things you can do to keep your teen from using alcohol and tobacco. Being a good family member to your teenager is also one of the most difficult jobs you'll ever have.

### ***How can we talk with our teen without it being a "turn-off"?***

A good way to learn how to talk with your teenager is to be a good listener. Let your teen know that you'll listen to anything. Be sure you do listen carefully, and respect each other's feelings even when you disagree. That way you can learn what your teen knows and feels. Make a lot of direct eye contact to show you're listening. Use encouraging words and ask questions to keep the conversation going. If you take your teen's concerns seriously, your teen is more likely to listen when you talk about things that are important to you.

Communication can be blocked by such things as giving too much advice, acting like you know all the answers, forcing your opinions on others, and being overly critical. These are sure "turn-offs" for teens, and adults too. Be open to talking and listening!

Teens in families with good communication skills are less likely to become involved with alcohol and tobacco. For one thing, good communication is needed for teens to learn what other family members think about alcohol and tobacco. If you involve your teenager in problem solving and family decisions, then it will be easier for you to talk about these drugs.

## Part 2: *Helping Families Matter to Teens*

### ***Should we set rules about what our teenager can do?***

Teenagers, just like younger children, need boundaries. You must decide which rules are most appropriate for your family. Families that work well together set clear rules, make sure their teens understand the rules and the consequences for breaking them, and consistently enforce the rules. But parents shouldn't try to control everything teens do. You should expect your teenager to be responsible. Try to encourage independence and individuality. At the same time, show that you expect family rules to be followed.

Teens are less likely to use alcohol and tobacco if there are family rules about drug use. In Part 3 of *FAMILY MATTERS*, we'll help you set family rules for your teenager about alcohol and tobacco use.

### ***Won't having a lot of rules make our teenager question how much we care?***

No! Rules are a way of showing your teenager how much you do care. But family rules work best in families where there is a lot of love and affection. Be sure you show your teenager how much you care — don't be shy about giving hugs, pats on the back, or compliments. It's never too late to show your teenager affection. At first your teen may act uncomfortable. Just keep at it — your teen will appreciate your effort!

Of course, all families have disagreements sometimes, but that doesn't mean family members don't still love each other. Try to avoid family fights where family members shout and scream at each other and call each other names. Take time to cool off, then try to settle things without being cold or threatening.

Teens from families where there's lots of affection and encouragement are less likely to use alcohol and tobacco. By showing your affection, support, and acceptance, you are helping protect your teenager from drug use.

## Part 2: *Helping Families Matter to Teens*

### ***How important should school be in our family life?***

Families that work well together put a lot of emphasis on school. You can help your teenager by giving lots of encouragement about school. Do this by showing interest in school work. Ask about what topics are being studied in school, and if there's any school work you can help with. Encourage your teen to participate in school activities. You can show your support of school achievement by participating in activities, like PTA meetings, back-to-school nights, parent-teacher conferences, and school fairs.

Teens who are interested in school and do a good job with school work are less likely to use alcohol and tobacco. Talk with your teen about how important it is to try hard in school. By taking an interest in school, you could help prevent your teen from using alcohol and tobacco.

### ***Isn't having fun together important for building a family that works well together?***

Yes! Spending time together as a family is one of the best ways for families to learn to work well together. All families today are busy, but there are many simple ways for family members to spend fun times with each other. Try involving your teenager in some of your day-to-day activities, like cooking meals, going on walks, shopping, or doing yard work. It's also important to set aside special times to spend with your teenager, like going to the movies or an event together, going out to eat, or taking a family camping trip. Try not to plan anything special when your teenager already has plans. Doing things together as a family isn't always easy, but it's important for building a sense of family commitment. As you spend time together doing things, you'll find it easier to talk with your teenager.

Teens who spend time doing things with their families are less likely to become involved with alcohol and tobacco. When your family spends a lot of fun time together, you are helping prevent your teenager from becoming involved with these drugs.

## Activity 3 Let's Talk!

● WHY: To help families build good communication skills

■ WHO: Whole family

▲ HOW LONG: 30 minutes

*Ask each family member to think of something that happened in the past week. It could be something important, something funny, or something that made them happy. Then, choose a time for the family to tell each other about their experiences.*

***Hint: Use the Tips for Successful Family Meetings on page 1 when you do this activity.***

*Before beginning, show each family member this list of four key communication tips.*

### **Tips for Communicating Effectively**

1. Listen carefully for words, meanings and feelings.
2. Ask questions to show you're interested and to get at feelings.
3. Give encouragement instead of putting each other down, lecturing, or giving too much advice.
4. Show respect for each other's thoughts and feelings.

*As each family member talks, the rest of the family should make a special effort to practice each skill.*

*After everyone has had a chance to tell their story, talk about how well each of you used communication skills. Give examples of good communication skills and compliments to each other. Talk about things you could have done better.*

## Activity 4 Family Time

● WHY: To help families plan special times together

■ WHO: Whole family

▲ HOW LONG: 15 minutes to plan and more time to do

*Choose a time when all family members can sit down together, like after a meal or before a favorite television program. Ask each family member to think of a fun activity for the whole family to do together. Then, decide on the rules for the family activities — like how much time is allowed, any limits on how much money can be spent, or how close to home the activity must be. Have each family member think of one or two activities, write the ideas on slips of paper, and put them in a bowl.*

*Let your teenager be the first to draw a slip naming an activity. Choose a day and time in the next week when your family can do the activity. Then let each family member draw another slip and schedule a time for those activities. This will work best if you have a calendar that you can mark the activities on. Schedule activities as often as comfortable for your family.*

***Hint: Having a calendar to use for scheduling activities will be helpful.***

## Activity 5

# **FAMILY MATTERS** Badge of Honor

- **WHY:** To give families a way to reward each other for working well together
- **WHO:** Whole family
- ▲ **HOW LONG:** 5 minutes

*Make a **FAMILY MATTERS** Badge of Honor with colored paper and pens. Use the badge to reward each other for anything that contributes to your family working together well — like doing a chore without being asked, spending time talking with each other, or helping someone with a problem. Let mom start by pinning the badge on someone and explaining to the rest of the family why the award was given. Then, the person who was honored must award the badge to someone else within the next three days. Let your teenager exchange the badge for small privileges, like staying up a half-hour later on weekends or spending extra time with friends.*

## **RECAP**

- Young teens are going through a lot of changes. The more you know about what your teenager is experiencing, the more understanding you'll be.
- Teens from families that work well together are less likely to become involved with alcohol and tobacco. Try to do things with your teenager that build a strong family. Encourage other family members to do them too. This will help keep your teenager from using alcohol and tobacco.
  - Talk with your teenager about things that are important to your teen and to you.
  - Make sure your teenager knows what you expect of him or her.
  - Give your teenager lots of hugs and encouragement.
  - Talk with your teenager about school.
  - Spend time with your family doing things together.
- Remember and use these communication skills: listen carefully, ask questions, give encouragement, and show respect.

## **NEXT STEPS**

1. Be sure all family members — your teenager, older brothers and sisters, and parents — know about *FAMILY MATTERS* and are involved in the family activities.
2. A member of the *FAMILY MATTERS* staff will call you in about a week to answer any questions you have.

