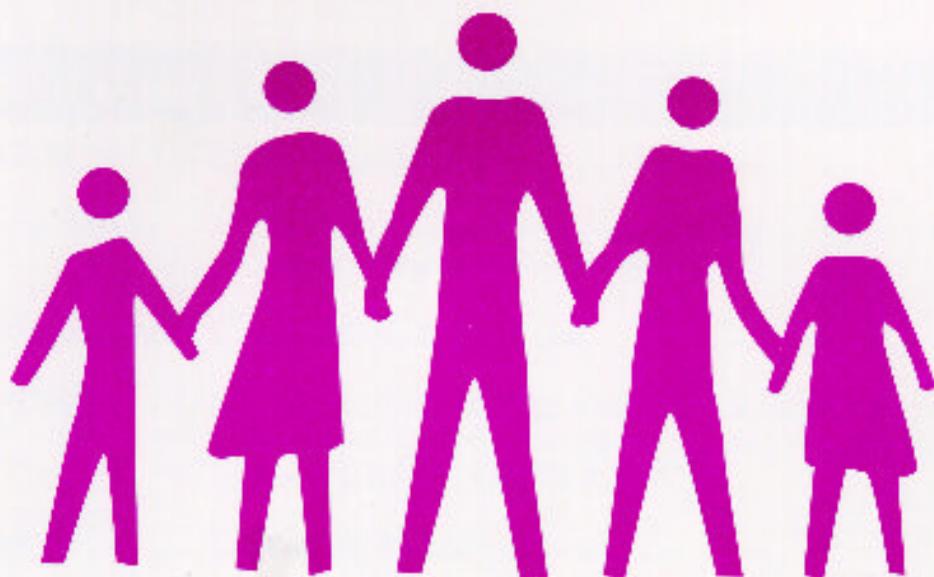


Part 4

# *Non-Family Influences That Matter*



**FAMILY MATTERS**

*A Program to Prevent Teen Alcohol and Tobacco Use*

## Part 4: *Non-Family Influences That Matter*

**W**elcome to Part 4 of *FAMILY MATTERS — Non-Family Influences that Matter*. *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 4 focuses on how influences outside the family — such as peers and the mass media — can encourage your teenager to use alcohol and tobacco. It also shows how families can help fight negative outside influences and encourage positive influences.

### **Part 4 Instructions**

- |              |  |
|--------------|--|
| Parents      | 1. Read the <b>Q &amp; As</b> .  |
| Whole Family | 2. Set aside time soon with your family to do Activity 1: <b>"Just Say No" Is Only One Way To Go</b> .   |
| Whole Family | 3. Do Activity 2: <b>The Critic</b> .  |
| Parents      | 4. Do Activity 3: <b>FAMILY MATTERS Checklist</b> . You'll be surprised by all you've done as you and your family have completed <i>FAMILY MATTERS</i> . |
| Parents      | 5. Read the <b>RECAP</b> of Part 4.  |
| Parents      | 6. Do the <b>NEXT STEPS</b> listed at the end of Part 4.   |

## Part 4: *Non-Family Influences That Matter*



### **Answering Your Questions**

Even though most teens know that they should not drink alcoholic beverages or use any kind of tobacco, they receive many messages from their surroundings telling them otherwise. Both their peers and the mass media can offer lots of encouragement to use alcohol and tobacco. Families can help fight negative influences on their teens from outside the family.

#### ***Could our teen feel peer pressure to use alcohol and tobacco?***

It's possible that your teenager feels peer pressure to use alcohol and tobacco even if other kids do not actually ask or tell your teen to drink, smoke, or chew tobacco. Teens want to be like their friends — that's why they often wear the same types of clothes, like the same music, and have the same hairstyles. Teens who spend lots of time with other teens who drink and smoke may feel they should too, just to be accepted by them. Also, it's common for young teens to think that many more of their friends are using alcohol and tobacco than really are. This belief that "everybody's doing it" can make your teen feel pressure to join the crowd.

Sometimes parents assume that peer pressure is always bad, but it can be good too. If your teen's friends do not drink alcohol or use tobacco, then your teenager may feel pressure NOT to drink or use tobacco.

***How can we help our teenager resist peer pressure to use alcohol and tobacco?***

There are several things you can do. One is to talk with your teenager about why kids their age drink and use tobacco. Ask your teenager if he or she knows kids at school who drink or smoke or chew tobacco, and why they do it. Your teen will probably say that it's because of wanting to look cool or grown-up, because everyone else does it, or out of curiosity just to see what it's like. Talk with your teenager about each of these reasons.

You can help your teenager resist peer pressure by teaching the value of individuality. Talk with your teen about his or her special and unique qualities. Let your teen know that you are very proud of the person he or she is, and for having the courage to be different from friends.

Teach your teen how to say no to friends who encourage drinking or tobacco use. Although taking a firm stand by saying "No, I don't want to." might seem like the simplest thing to do, this can be hard for many teens. Talk with your teen about other approaches, like making up an excuse such as "I can't because my parents would kill me!" or "I have to meet a friend tonight. Gotta go." Other strategies teens can use are to suggest another activity, change the subject, point out bad things that could happen, and turn the peer pressure around ("I can't believe you'd ask me to do that if you're really my friend!"). Help your teenager think of situations where there could be pressure to use alcohol and tobacco and how to react.

***What can we do to help our teenager get more positive than negative peer pressure?***

You can help make sure your teenager is getting positive peer pressure by knowing who your teen's friends are, by meeting the parents of your teen's friends, by not letting your teen be at a friend's house when parents are away, and by encouraging your teen to make friends with teens who don't use alcohol or tobacco. Parents who know other parents have the opportunity to know more about their teens' activities.

## Part 4: *Non-Family Influences That Matter*

In general, teens who are supervised by their parents are less likely to become involved with alcohol and tobacco than teens whose parents know little about their friends and the things they do together. Make it a point to know where your teenager is at all times, and to encourage your teen to spend time with friends whose families share your concerns and values about teenage alcohol and tobacco use. Encourage your teenager to join in activities at school, your community center, or church. Teens who are busy and having fun in appropriate activities have less time to become involved with alcohol and cigarettes.

Be sure you encourage other positive influences too. For example, most schools have classes or programs about drug use. Be supportive of activities such as these at your teen's school.

### ***Pro-alcohol and tobacco messages are everywhere in the mass media. What can we do to fight this influence?***

It's true that the mass media make alcohol and tobacco look very appealing to teens. Television, advertisements, movies, and other forms of the media often show alcohol and tobacco being used by beautiful and successful young people who don't have problems because of drinking or smoking. The mass media may give teens the idea that these behaviors are normal and the way to make lots of friends, have fun, and be attractive.

You can help your teen become aware of how the media portray alcohol and tobacco use in unrealistic ways. You can help your teenager learn how to resist media influences. Many parents limit the amount of time teens can watch TV each day and help choose the programs and movies their teenagers can watch.

You can help your teenager become a critical viewer of alcohol and tobacco messages in the mass media. For example, as you watch TV together, point out whenever alcohol or tobacco is used in a commercial or show. Talk about how using alcohol or tobacco was portrayed. Was the image a positive one? Did the characters face any problems because of drinking or smoking?

## Activity 1

# "Just Say No" Is Only One Way to Go

- **WHY:** To help teens learn several ways of dealing with peer pressure to use alcohol and tobacco
- **WHO:** Whole family
- ▲ **HOW LONG:** 20 minutes

*Talk with your teenager about some of the ways to respond in situations where there is pressure to use alcohol or tobacco. Pressure could come from being asked to drink or smoke, from being offered alcohol or tobacco, or simply from being in a situation where other teens are drinking and smoking. "Just say no" sounds easy, but isn't always easy for teens. Here are several other ways of "saying no." What other ideas can your teen and their older brothers and sisters add?*

**Use a family rule** — "That's against the rules in my family and I won't be able to watch TV for a week if I get caught."

**Give a reason or make an excuse** — "I can't drink because my coach says it'll hurt my game." "I don't like to smoke because it gives me bad breath."

**Point out bad consequences that could happen** — "We could get kicked out of school." "No way! My parents will ground me if I get caught."

**Suggest another activity** — "Let's have something to eat." "I'd rather play a video game."

**Ask questions** — "What makes you think I'd want to chew tobacco?" "Where did you get that beer?"

## Part 4: *Non-Family Influences That Matter*

**Turn the pressure around** — "I thought you were my friend. A friend wouldn't ask me to do that."

**Use humor** — "Hey! You must think I'm a dope." "I look funny enough without a cigarette hanging out of my mouth!"

**Stick with others** who are not using alcohol or tobacco.

**Pretend not to hear** or understand offers to use alcohol or tobacco.

**Walk away.**

*After talking about some of the strategies for dealing with peer pressure, read the same stories about peer pressure out loud that your family talked about in Part 3. Choose story A if your teen is a girl and story B if your teen is a boy. Use the questions after each story to discuss peer pressure and how to handle it.*

**A** *Kristen is in the seventh grade. She has a lot of friends, but is not part of the most popular group at school. Sarah is one of the most popular girls in her class. Kristen thinks Sarah is beautiful and wants to be friends with her. One day Sarah asked Kristen to skip gym class with her and drink a wine cooler. Sarah has stolen a wine cooler from her mother. Kristen has seen other kids skip class and knows it will be easy to get out of gym. She is so excited that Sarah has asked her to go. But Kristen has never drunk a wine cooler before.*

How could Kristen handle this situation? Can she tell Sarah no and still be friends?

## Part 4: Non-Family Influences That Matter

**B** Rob and Keith are best friends. They do everything together. They play basketball, listen to music, and hang out together every day after school. Rob is spending the night at Keith's house. The two of them have been playing computer games and it is very late. Keith's parents have gone to bed. Keith says that his parents have a lot of liquor in a kitchen cabinet. He suggests to Rob that they drink some liquor.

How could Rob handle this situation? What are some different ways that Rob can say no to Keith?

## Part 4: *Non-Family Influences That Matter*

### Activity 2 The Critic

- WHY: To help teens become aware of how TV pushes using alcohol and tobacco
- WHO: Whole family
- ▲ HOW LONG: 30 minutes

*Choose one or two of your teen's favorite TV shows for the family to watch together. Look for alcohol or tobacco-related messages in the shows. There also may be advertisements for alcohol during the shows — beer commercials are especially common during sports shows.*

*After the show, discuss these questions with your teen.*

- Did any characters use alcohol or tobacco?
- Why do you think the characters were using alcohol or tobacco?
- Did the characters face any harmful consequences because of using alcohol or tobacco?
- What could the characters have done in that situation besides using alcohol or tobacco?

## Part 4: *Non-Family Influences That Matter*

*If you saw any beer or wine commercials during the program, discuss these questions with your teen.*

- What were the people in the commercial doing?
- Did they need to drink alcohol to do this?
- Were the people in the commercial having fun?
- What harmful consequences of drinking alcohol were not shown?

Part 4: *Non-Family Influences That Matter*

**Activity 3**  
***FAMILY MATTERS* Checklist**

- WHY: To review all the things you've done in *FAMILY MATTERS*
- WHO: Parents
- ▲ HOW LONG: 5 minutes

*You have nearly completed FAMILY MATTERS! The four parts of the program described many activities and other things for your family to do to help prevent your teen from using alcohol and tobacco.*

*On the list below, check each thing you did.*

- \_\_\_\_\_ Involved my whole family in *FAMILY MATTERS*.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Became more aware of how alcohol and tobacco could harm my teenager and my family.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Learned more about changes my teenager is experiencing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Communicated more effectively with my teenager.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Did special family activities with my teenager.

## Part 4: *Non-Family Influences That Matter*

- \_\_\_\_\_ Gave my teenager compliments for doing good things.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Encouraged my teenager to do as well as possible with school work.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Talked with my teenager about alcohol and tobacco use.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Told my teenager that it was important to me for him or her not to use alcohol or tobacco.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Been careful not to encourage my teenager to use alcohol or tobacco by things I do or say.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Established family rules about alcohol and tobacco use, rewards, and consequences.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Consistently enforced the rules, rewards, and consequences.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Watched my teenager for clues of alcohol and tobacco use.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Helped my teenager practice ways to resist peer pressure to use alcohol or tobacco.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Encouraged my teenager to spend time with friends who do not use alcohol or tobacco.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Supervised my teenager's time and activities.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Helped my teenager recognize how the media push using alcohol and tobacco.

## *Part 4: Non-Family Influences That Matter*

*Now, add up the checks. If you have fewer than 15 checks, you may not have done as many things as you could to help prevent your teenager from using or abusing alcohol or tobacco. Look back through this part and the first three parts of FAMILY MATTERS and do as many of the things for your teenager and your family as you can.*

*If you have 15 or more checks, good for you! You and your family have done a lot to prevent your teenager from using or abusing alcohol and tobacco. Review the FAMILY MATTERS materials every few weeks, and keep at it.*

## **RECAP**

- Teens can be influenced by sources outside the family to use alcohol and tobacco. Peers and the mass media are both important outside influences. Because teens want to be accepted by their friends, they can feel pressured to use alcohol and tobacco if their friends use these drugs. The mass media make alcohol and tobacco look very attractive to teens.
- Families can help teens resist negative influences from peers and the mass media. Families can also encourage positive peer influences.
- By supervising your teenager's activities, knowing who your teenager's friends are, and knowing where your teenager is at all times, you can help fight bad influences on your teenager.

## **NEXT STEPS**

1. To help prevent your teenager from using or abusing alcohol or tobacco, keep doing the things suggested in *FAMILY MATTERS*.
  - talk openly with your teenager about not using alcohol and tobacco
  - enforce your family rules and update them as your teenager matures
  - monitor your teenager for signs of alcohol and tobacco use
  - spend time doing things with your teenager
  - make sure you give your teenager lots of love and encouragement
  - be sure you supervise your teenager's activities
  
2. Although *FAMILY MATTERS* has focused on teen alcohol and tobacco use, the activities could help prevent involvement with other drugs too, such as marijuana and cocaine. Be aware of other drugs that your teen might use.
  
3. A member of the *FAMILY MATTERS* staff will call you soon to answer any questions you might have.

