

Problem Solving Skills

Helping teens develop good problem-solving skills will help them avoid social pressure to drink. Good problem-solving involves the following skills:

- Being able to recognize problems and recognize the need to do something about them.
- Identifying a range of possible solutions to the problem.
- Gathering information about the advantages and disadvantages of each of the possible solutions.
- Considering the advantages and disadvantages of each solution and choosing the one that seems the best.
- Following through with the solution.

As a parent you can help your teen develop these skills by giving them guidance and helping him or her practice.

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Selected References

Borkowski, J. G., Ramey, S. L., & Bristol-Power, M. (Eds.). (2002). *Parenting and the child's world: Influences on academic, intellectual, and social-emotional development*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum and Associates.

Bornstein, M. H. (Ed.). (2002). *Handbook of parenting* (Vols. 4-5). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum and Associates.

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Parents are the Solution

Part 3 in a Series of 6

**HELPING YOUR TEEN
RESIST PEER PRESSURE
TO DRINK**

Tips for Building
Self Esteem and
Promoting Problem
Solving

**A Collaboration of the
State College
Communities that Care
Partnership**

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SELF ESTEEM

A teenager with high self esteem feels good about himself or herself, has confidence in his or her abilities, and feels a sense of satisfaction in social interactions and in one's social life.

What can you do to foster healthy self esteem?

- **Give lots of encouragement.** Remember that it's important for teens to gain your approval, so try to give sincere praise more than criticize.
- **Help teens set realistic goals.** If expectations are too high, failure can have a dramatic effect on self esteem.
- **Give teens choices.** Self esteem is enhanced if teens perceive that they control their life. Encourage teens by guiding their decisions.
- **Provide teens with responsibilities.** Adolescents who help out will learn to see themselves as an important part of the family.
- **Don't treat your teens' problems lightly.** Give teens some time to work things out on their own, but let them know that you are there to help.

Teach your teen to value his or her individuality. This will give your teen the confidence to make his or her own choices about drinking, rather than follow what his or her friends are doing.

Social Pressure & Self Esteem

The most influential reason why teens drink is social pressure. Teens with higher self esteem will be better able to resist social pressure to drink.



How can you help teens resist social pressure to drink?

- Help them put it in perspective that not everyone is necessarily drinking.
- Let them know that even if other people are drinking, this does not make it right or a good thing to do.
- Help them plan ahead for what they will do if they are offered alcohol or drugs, such as coming up with brief, but effective “one-liners” that will diffuse the pressure without making a big scene (e.g., “No thanks, I don’t drink”).
- Help them affirm their own values, attitudes, and beliefs with respect to drinking.

AVOIDING PROBLEMS

Being able to recognize signs of strong group pressures and having well-developed problem solving skills, high self-regard, and resistance skills will ultimately help your teen stand up for what he or she believes in, even under difficult circumstances.

Helping teens develop positive friendships...

Teens tend to base friendships on common interests and companionship. With age, there is more reliance on mutual acceptance and social support. Let teens know that friendship derives from mutual respect, empathy, knowledge, and trust, rather than superficial things.

- Parents can prevent their teens from being overly influenced by a single “bad” friend by helping them to make many different friends, and by participating in a range of different activities.
- By having a diverse group of friends, teens will be exposed to a range of different peer norms. This will help them develop a degree of independence from unhealthy group pressures and group norms.
- When a teen has a friend of whom the parent strongly disapproves, one of the worst things that a parent can do is forbid the teen from seeing that friend. Teens value their friendships and will defend their friend, causing them to focus on the positives of the friendship. Instead, give input in a sensitive and open way.

