

TFCC CONNECTION

Keeping parents connected

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Are you concerned about your child's use of alcohol or drugs? Those of us who work with teens are definitely concerned.

Some of what is going on is downright frightening. Within the last month, I have received numerous troubling pieces of information. One is a flyer on a new kind of methamphetamine, which is one of the more popular drugs circulating among our teens today. This new methamphetamine is strawberry flavored and bright pink to appeal to the younger crowd. The other was an article about the juice flavored alcoholic drinks frequently called "alcopops". Alcopops are usually sweet and packaged in smaller bottles or cans to appeal to the younger drinker, such as Mike's Hard Lemonade, Zima, and Smirnoff Ice. U.S. statistics report that 90% of teenagers agreed that drinking these new, sweeter drinks would make it more likely that they would try other alcoholic beverages. And, twice as many 14 – 16 years olds preferred them to beer or mixed drinks. Anheuser-Busch's latest product "Spykes" come in a pocket-sized bottle that is easy enough to conceal, yet potent enough to spike someone's drink at a party.

Now, we already know that alcohol and cigarettes are routinely marketed to a younger and younger crowd, *despite the protests of parents*, but what you may not know is that research shows that the younger a person is when they begin drinking, the higher the likelihood that they will develop a full blown addiction in adulthood. Statistics show that teens that begin to drink alcohol before the age of 15 are four times more likely to develop an alcohol addiction in adulthood.

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STAY TUNED

In our next issue TFCC CONNECTION will discuss what makes a family healthy, successful and able to stay connected in today's world.

I fully believe that parents today have to be smart and alert to the marketing machine including ads on television, magazines, internet, billboards, music videos, and store product placement. In addition, parents must stay aware and alert to what the latest drugs are, how prominent they are at their child's school, among their peers, or even among their peers' parents. Parents need to know the signs of usage, about addiction, and understand the effect of alcohol and drugs on an adolescent's developing brain. We have to be smarter than kids when it comes to these topics so that we can educate them.

In order to keep communication open with parents and help educate about this issue as well as many other important issues relevant to raising teens and children today, the Teen and Family Counseling Center is introducing our quarterly eNewsletter, **TFCC CONNECTION**. Each newsletter will focus on an issue that we feel is important, based on our experience as mental health providers working with kids and families both at our local schools and at our outpatient clinic. Our information is not meant to scare or overwhelm parents, but it is meant to arm you with facts, information and inspiration to step up to the tough job of parenting and keep the lines of communication open with your kids.

Take care and stay connected,
Georgia Clarke, Executive Director, TFCC

"Breathalyzers at the football game won't work ... Kids will just use another drug that won't get picked up."
Student Los Gatos High School

PARENTS: The Anti-Drug

PARENTS: The Anti-Drug. Is this fact or fiction? Can parents really prevent teens from developing an alcohol or drug problem?

Unfortunately today’s parents have a lot they’re up against. We’re living in a brave new world of designer drugs made especially for teens. These include potentially lethal inhalants made from over the counter cough medicine, fruit-flavored methamphetamine, and marijuana that is 8 times more potent than that grown in the 1960s. Such drugs set our children up for dealing with the seduction of ultra highs and eventually ultra addiction. Combined with the still maturing, still developing brain of a teenager this recipe can lead to heartbreak and disaster for many families. It also means that we have a whole new war on drugs to fight.

How can you protect your teen? In surveying current literature for the TFCC Alcohol and Drug Awareness and Resiliency Program, we uncovered many ways parents can help. We also learned that there are no guarantees and that it’s not always possible to save your child from experimenting or becoming addicted to substances. However, what you can do is become educated and prepared to strengthen your parenting during the teen years.

Parents can help by building “resiliency” which is the ability for kids to slough off temptation and pressure and to be able to rely on different, healthier ways of coping or interacting. Resilient teens are those who can resist temptation and peer pressure at parties. They realize that not everyone drinks or uses and this has been modeled for them in their families. They are also fairly comfortable with themselves and are not drawn into wanting to change who they are or how they feel. Resilient teens also know there are serious risks and consequences to illegal substance use and know their parents, school, and the law will follow through with them. These are kids who have resources and people in their lives who accept and love them and who they enjoy spending time with. In short, resilient teens have strong support systems headed up by parents like you.

To create this kind of resiliency takes time. It takes education about what is going on in your child’s life. It takes courage and leadership to set limits and create boundaries. It takes endurance to build a positive and respectful relationship with your child. It takes not letting go, even when you want to at difficult times. Finally, it takes openness and courage to get honest about the role that alcohol or drugs play in your history or present day life. It may also take getting your own source of support and help.

In today’s world of over-scheduling and pressure, there is a huge need to take the time and forethought to build resiliency in our children. There is a need to educate ourselves and stay informed about what’s going on in our teen’s world. This is the key weapon for our current war on drugs. With education, commitment and courage I hope **parents can indeed become the Anti-Drug.**

Marianne Vernacchia, Clinical Director, TFCC

HOW TO SET A LIMIT

- **“NO” because I love you and that is unsafe.**
- **I’m sorry you think it’s unfair, but I’ve made my decision.**
- **Alcohol is a serious, mind altering, addictive substance that is illegal. We do not allow underage drinking in our family and household.**
- **I need to know you will be safe. Let’s talk about it.**
- **No, but what you could do is...**
- **NO MATTER WHAT...you can call me if you need a ride, feel unsafe, or end up making a mistake.”**

EMPOWERED PARENTS

Worried about your child using?

TFCC uses the acronym **ERASE**

to empower parents and help them remember how to build resiliency in their children.

EDUCATE yourselves and be aware of what the latest trends are in alcohol and drug use. You may visit the resource section of this newsletter for many good places for this information or just peruse MySpace.com to keep abreast of what goes on in any teen's world!

RULES, consequences, and limits in your household are very important. Hopefully these rules were defined when your teen was young. Now is not the time to abandon them! While you want to gradually increase your child's freedom, you also want to monitor their freedom and not be afraid to set limits. Also, don't provide the resources or means for your child to be around or buy drugs. Don't give them \$50 to go to the movies without collecting change. Don't have a party and leave teens unsupervised and don't go out of town without arranging proper supervision.

Teens still need **ATTENTION** and connection even though some may avoid it at all costs! Although they may cop an attitude that is hard to tolerate, it is important that you don't let go all the way. Designate Sundays from 3 p.m. on as "family time" where the computer, phone, and friends are declared off limits. Cook a meal together, hike, watch movies, play a game and find ways to enjoy each other's company.

ERASE
to build resiliency

Education

Rules

Attention

Support

Explore

Offering **SUPPORT** and keeping communication open is vital to your relationship with your teen. While teens may not talk about themselves, they may talk about their friends or other people. Use this as a spring board to ask their opinions about certain issues and dilemmas. Remember to listen, not to judge or overpower. Don't flip out when they discuss something uncomfortable or shocking. The goal is to stay connected, not to change your child's thinking at this point.

Lastly, is perhaps the most important: **EXPLORE** your own use and family history of drinking and drug use. Do you have a glass of wine every evening to "unwind"? Do you work long hours and then let go on Friday evening with friends over drinks? Do all the celebrations in your family involve alcohol? In addition to recognizing a genetic predisposition toward addiction, modeling appropriate behavior is perhaps the most effective way to prepare your child to appropriately deal with alcohol and substances in their life.

*Marianne Vernacchia,
Clinical Director, TFCC*

"Only 4% of parents surveyed lock up or monitor the alcohol in their home" – SHIFT coalition Parent Survey March 2007 ⁽¹⁾

**TFCC OFFERS
ONGOING CLASSES**

PARENTING, SELF-ESTEEM & MORE
AT OUR CLINIC IN DOWNTOWN CAMPBELL

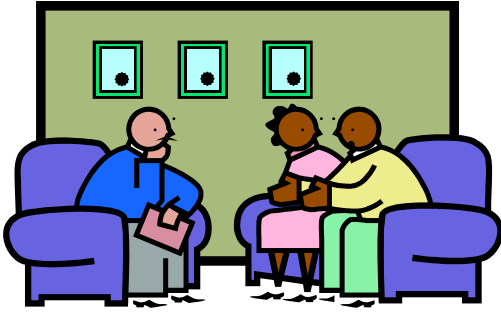
*DISCOUNTS & SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

CALL OR VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT
www.teenfamilycounseling.org

NAMI, National Alliance on Mental Illness

NAMI is a non-profit, volunteer grassroots organization providing support, education and advocacy for those suffering from mental illness as well as their family and friends; reduce stigma and guilt; promote research; and improve services by working with health professionals and families.

info@namisantaclara.org (408) 583 0001
www.namisantaclara.org



TEN FACTORS THAT HELP PREVENT ADOLESCENT DRUG/ALCOHOL USE

1. **Supportive** Family (tuned in, communicative, spends fun time together, supervision, and rules/boundaries)
2. **Non** Using Peers
3. **Positive** Role Models (coaches, teachers, clergy, extended family)
4. **School** Involvement (band, sports, clubs)
5. **Hobbies** or Extracurricular Activities (fishing, horseback riding, scouts)
6. **Positive** Self-Image and Self-Esteem
7. **Social** Skills (active with friends)
8. **Academic** Ability and Success
9. **Resiliency** Ability to Cope (with stress/traumatic events; not overly reactive)
10. **Head Start** program at early age

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS OF TEENAGE DRUG OR ALCOHOL USE

1. Sudden change in child's peer group
2. Highs and lows in energy level or behavior
3. Strong defiance toward rules and regulations
4. Excessive sleeping
5. Inability to sleep; up all night
6. Excessive excuses for misbehavior
7. Poor hygiene
8. Self-isolation
9. Drastic change in weight
10. Withdrawal from activities that were formerly enjoyed
11. Sudden drop in grades
12. Defensiveness
13. Coming home under the influence
14. Exhibiting a short fuse (easily angered or explosive)

Lawson and Lawson (1992)

TFCC is a non-profit counseling agency that provides sliding fee counseling for a wide variety of issues with adults, children and families. All of our services are provided by registered trainees and interns under the supervision of licensed professionals. In addition to general counseling, we offer an Alcohol and Drug Awareness and Resiliency Program for teens that are experimenting or moderately using alcohol and drugs.

For an appointment call 408-370-9990

RESOURCE LIST

Counseling Programs for Alcohol/Drugs

Teen & Family Counseling Center's
Alcohol & Drug Awareness and Resiliency Program:
(408) 370-9990
Adolescent Counseling Service's Adolescent
Substance Abuse Treatment Program (650) 424-0852
Pathway Society: (408) 244-1834

Community Counseling Programs – General Individual, Youth and Family

Teen & Family Counseling Center: (408) 370-9990
Almaden Counseling Services: (408) 997-0200
Bill Wilson Center: (408) 243-0222
Community Health Awareness Council: (650) 965-
2020
YWCA: (408) 295-4011

Hotlines/Crisis Support

24-7 Teen Help Line: (888) 247-7717
24-Hour Contact Cares for Teens: (408) 279-8228
CA Youth Line: (800) 843-5200
Los Gatos High School Safe Rides Program:
1-888-550-RIDE
Suicide and Crisis Hotline: (408) 279-3312
Eastfield Ming Quong Mobile Crisis Unit: (408)
379-3796

Alcohol and Drug Treatment Providers

Alcoholics Anonymous: (408) 374-8511
Narcotics Anonymous: (408) 293-4790
Marijuana Anonymous: (408) 450-0796
Al-anon/Alateen: (408) 379-1051
The Camp Recovery Center: (800) 924-2879
Gateway – County Alcohol and Drug Referral:
(800) 488-9919
Kaiser Permanente Adolescent and Alcohol
Treatment Program: (408) 236-6815
Thunder Road Adolescent Treatment Center:
(510) 653-5040
Advent Group Ministries: (408) 281-0708
Daytop Village Inc.: (650) 367-9030

General Information

National Council on Alcoholism and Drug
Dependence: (408) 279-7292
Department of Alcohol and Drug Services:
(408) 272-6518

Websites

www.alac.org.nz/BodyEffect.aspx?PostingID=1550 Game to determine effects of alcohol on the body.
www.BacktoSchool.drugabuse.gov Information on drugs and curricula for schools and parents.
www.clubdrugs.org Information/resources on club drugs.
www.drugfreeamerica.org Teen section for help, personal stories, and resources.
www.escapemeth.com Steps to help to overcome or help a loved one w/meth addiction.
www.freevibe.com Information/education and applications for youth to take action.
www.fridaynightlive.org Youth organization (in SJ) promoting healthy, sober lifestyle.
www.madd.org Mothers against drunk driving.
www.niaaa.nih.gov National Institute on Alcohol Abuse's database of resources.
www.Sarsquest.org On-line magazine w/information on drugs by young advocate, Sara.
www.teens.drugabuse.gov Effects of drugs on brain w/various activities.
www.teenetgoing.com Online counseling groups for teens considering using or using.
www.teenwork.com Forum for California youth to discuss critical issues facing teens.
www.theantidrug.com For parents to get info on different drugs and tips.
www.tweaker.org Crystal meth information and effect on body and life. True stories.
www.weprevent.com Ideas for teens to prevent crime. Information on dating violence, abuse.
www.youthline.org Peer-to-peer conversations regarding health issues and crisis.

If there is a particular subject matter you are interested in, please let us know at
info@teenfamilycounseling.org or visit our website at www.teenfamilycounseling.org

408-370-9990

ASK NANG

Dear Nang,

I have a teen in high school, and she has been invited to parties where alcohol is being served. As a parent, how can I protect my child from attending parties with alcohol and how can I prepare my teen if she is being pressured to drink at parties? - **A concerned parent from Campbell**

Dear Concerned Parent,

Peer pressure is a constant force in many teens' lives. Strengthening your child's self-esteem is the primary way to deal with her need to conform with peers, so that she could say no to peer pressures, i.e. drinking, drugs, sex, when being asked. Maintain open and non-judgmental communication with your child regularly so that she feels safe in expressing her feelings. This would help her not keep secrets from you, which might make her more vulnerable to peer- pressures and temptations. - **Nang Cao, LCSW**

Nang Cao is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker with TFCC. If you have questions, please contact him at info@teenfamilycounseling.org. Answers may appear in the next issue of our newsletter. Nang will not be able to answer questions individually.

⁽¹⁾ SHIFT Coalition to Reduce Underage Drinking



For more information and to receive our eNewsletter contact us at:

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