



The Coalition Newsletter

September 2013

Our mission is to prevent and reduce youth substance use & abuse in the Pequannock Twp. Community through collaboration, education and community-wide change.

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An Initiative of:



How to Keep Dinner as Lively as your Kids

- Agree that dinner will be off limits for discussing conflicts—no talk about homework, or whose turn it is to take out the trash, or a recent “D” on a math quiz, or how late the curfew should be on Friday night.”
- If possible, parents as well as teens should make dinner a technology-free zone. If this isn’t possible, then negotiate rules that everyone can agree to, such as: ‘We’ll only use our phones to resolve factual disagreements that come up at dinner’.
- If scheduling conflicts interfere with nightly dinners, consider having a healthy after-dinner, take-a-break-from-homework snack. This might be frozen yogurt with berries, a bowl of soup, or cheese and crackers.
- Initiate conversations about subjects that matter to you & to your children. Did you read an article in the newspaper today that confused, upset, or delighted you? Talk about it and ask for your kids’ reactions.
- Offer to make a new meal, based on your teen’s interests. Even better, make that new meal with your child so that he/she can teach you something about another culture he/she knows more about than you do.

<http://thefamilydinnerproject.org/>

Family Matters

CASA Columbia’s 2012 family dinner White Paper finds that teens who have frequent family dinners (five to seven per week) are more likely to report having excellent relationships with their parents.

Compared to teens who have infrequent family dinners (fewer than three per week), teens who have frequent family dinners are almost one and a half times likelier to say they have an excellent relationship with their mother and one and half times likelier to say they have an excellent relationship with their dad.

The White Paper also finds that compared to teens who say they have an excellent relationship with Dad, teens who have a less than very good relationship with their father are:

- Almost four times likelier to have used marijuana;
- Twice as likely to have used alcohol; and
- Two and a half times as likely to have used tobacco.

And compared to teens who say they have an excellent relationship with Mom, teens who have a less than very good relationship with their mother are:

- Almost three times likelier to have used marijuana;
- Two and a half times as likely to have used alcohol;
- Two and a half times likelier to have used tobacco.

www.casacolumbia.org

Parents, YOU Make the Difference!

As children age, it is important to build trust with them and keep the lines of communication open so that if at any point they begin to feel increased pressure to experiment with smoking, drinking and using drugs they can feel comfortable talking to you about it.

Every day activities like having family dinner together, helping your children with their homework or attending their after school activities have a lasting effect on your kids.

Each of these moments offers an opportunity to connect, share and really listen to what’s on their mind. Research shows that children with hands-on parents are far less likely to smoke, drink or use other drugs.

Remember, parental engagement matters!

Why Should I Worry About My Child Experimenting?

Adolescence is the critical time when kids are at risk of experimenting with drugs, alcohol and tobacco. In fact:

- Nine out of 10 Americans who meet the medical criteria for addiction started smoking, drinking, or using other drugs before age 18.
- Addiction is a disease that in most cases begins in adolescence.
- Preventing or delaying teens from using alcohol, tobacco or other drugs for as long as possible is crucial to their health and safety.

Start your conversations early, and keep talking!

Tips to ‘De-Stress’ Dinner

1. *Develop a plan* - Find what works for you! Some folks prepare weekly menus or daily menus or to prepare as much as possible beforehand.
2. *Conquer picky eaters* - Forcing kids to eat what’s on their plate can turn dinnertime into a battle for control. Repeated exposure to a new food can be beneficial as is patience. Just as it takes time to ride a bike, to potty train etc., teaching kids to appreciate new flavors takes time too.
3. *Make it an orderly affair* - Practicing good table manners in moderation so that it doesn’t take away from the positive aspects of sitting down together for a family meal. Criticizing, evaluating & critiquing can take the fun out of the whole experience.
4. *Sustain conversation* - Not just questions!
5. *Enlist everyone in the effort* - Enlisting help in setting & clearing the table, washing dishes, preparing & planning gets everyone involved in the dinner process & sends the message that mealtime is a family responsibility.

Did You Know? 72% of teens think that eating dinner frequently with their parents is “very important” or “fairly important.”