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ideas for parents

Easy Ways to Build Assets for and with Your Child

Restraint: A Key Asset

Sex, alcohol, and other drugs are topics many parents would prefer to avoid. But shaping our kids' perspectives on these issues builds an important foundation for their healthy development. Not only do their values influence their behavior, but also these same values can influence many of the choices they make.

Search Institute research has found that valuing restraint is an important asset for reducing involvement in many different risky behaviors. In fact, researchers found that 9th to 12th graders who abstain from sexual intercourse while they are teenagers are less likely to:

- Frequently use alcohol.
- Use illegal drugs, such as marijuana or cocaine.
- Chew tobacco or smoke cigarettes.
- Fight, get into trouble with the police, use a weapon, or steal.
- Feel depressed and consider suicide.
- Drive a car after drinking alcohol or ride with someone who was drinking.

How do you encourage young people to value abstaining from sex, alcohol, and other drugs as teenagers? Avoid simply labeling these activities as bad. Instead, explain the consequences of these behaviors. Work on building assets with your children. Keep them informed and be open to their questions. Encourage self-care and, of course, be a role model.

Questions to Ask Yourself

- ***How often have you discussed sex, alcohol, and other drugs with your child?***
- ***How often does your child come to you for support and advice on these topics?***
- ***Which topics has your child never asked you about?***
- ***How are you communicating your values about sex, alcohol, and other drugs to your child?***

FAST FACTS

ASSET #31: Restraint

Youth are more likely to grow up healthy when they believe it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.

47% of youth surveyed by Search Institute have this asset in their lives.*

What Are Assets?

Assets are 40 values, experiences, and qualities that help kids succeed. "Restraint" is one of six positive-values assets.

* Based on Search Institute surveys of 217,277 6th- to 12th-grade youth throughout the United States during the 1999–2000 school year.

time together

Three ways to improve communication about sexuality and drug use with your child:

1. Together choose a book on sexuality, alcohol, or other drugs. Both you and your child read it separately and then discuss it together later.
2. Be clear about boundaries, values, and your reasons. Most teenagers are relieved to hear their parents say, "We expect you not to have sexual intercourse or drink alcohol as a teenager." Explain why, and be open to questions.
3. Look for opportunities to respond to what's in the media regarding sexuality, alcohol, or other drugs that doesn't directly involve your child or your child's friends. Discuss your reaction and ask for your child's opinion.

Keep Them Safe

Let your child know that if he or she is ever in the situation of being pressured to have sex, drink, or get high, your child can call you to come get her or him with no questions asked.

Quick Tip:
Restraint requires courage—and support.

talk together

Questions to discuss with your child:

- What do you think healthy relationships have to do with restraint?
- Do you feel you're good at saying no to things that might hurt you or others? Why or why not?
- What are our family's values in terms of sexual behavior? Drinking alcohol? Using other drugs?

Why Kids Say No

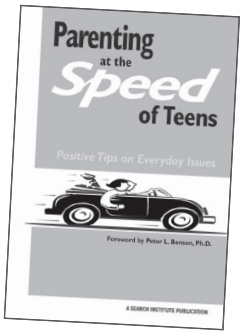
Why do some young people abstain from sex? Researchers at the Carolina Population Center at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill found that teenagers were more likely to abstain from sex when they:

- Expected negative consequences from having sex.
- Worried about getting pregnant.
- Thought it would hurt their reputation.
- Thought sex wouldn't be healthy at their age.

These teenagers were far from social outcasts. They were considered attractive, were socially successful, and dated quite often.

More Help for Parents

Parenting at the Speed of Teens is a quick and easy-to-use book that offers positive, commonsense tips for dealing with both the everyday issues of parenting and the serious issues that teens may encounter. Available at: **mvparentstore.search-institute.org**.



Final Word

"To be clear with children we must first be clear with ourselves, recognizing that we have abilities and limits, and acknowledging our true values."
—Anne C. Bernstein, Ph.D., author of *Flight of the Stork*

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