



Defining Healthy Dating Relationships

Whether or not your tween appears interested in having a boyfriend or girlfriend, he or she is likely feeling (or is at the brink of feeling) peer pressure to “date.”

Though it is easy to make light of boyfriend/girlfriend relationships at this young age, it may be a risky notion; as statistics show that one in three teens experience an abusive dating relationship prior to high school graduation.

While the conversation may feel a bit premature, it is

critical to teach your child, at this early age, about healthy dating relationships. Share with your child that:

- A healthy relationship involves having your own friends and interests - NOT pressure to spend time only with your boyfriend/girlfriend or that person needing to know your every move (by calling or texting excessively).
- A healthy relationship involves maintaining your own voice and point of view – NOT changing your opinion to

avoid conflict with your boyfriend/girlfriend.

- A healthy relationship involves mutual understanding, trust and respect – NOT jealousy, control or pressure to do things you do not want to do (like having sex, drinking alcohol or using other drugs).

Let your child know it is his/her right to end the relationship at any point – keeping in mind, that the other person does NOT have the right to harass, threaten or make you feel guilty for it.



Defining healthy relationships before “serious” dating begins is key. Teaching your child to expect respect and to not put up with anything less, will benefit him or her both in the short-term and in seeking a lifetime partner.

For more tips and information on teen dating, visit www.loveisrespect.org.

Psychosis and Marijuana Use

By Danielle Ferrone, MSW Intern

Schizophrenia is a prevalent mental illness, and typically the onset of this illness begins in one's late teens or early twenties. Much research has gone into predicting factors for this illness; however there is currently little information on the known cause(s). Some of the main beliefs are that schizophrenia may be caused by a genetic, psychological, or environmental component. Another strong belief is that recreational and prescription drugs have the ability to onset this illness.

In support of this argument in particular, statistics show that about half of those diagnosed with schizophrenia use drugs/ alcohol habitually.

Marijuana is believed to be one of the drugs that could onset this illness if used excessively and at an early age.

In a recent study conducted at The University of New South Wales, 83 studies were reviewed, all examining the effects of marijuana on the onset of psychiatric disorders, more specifically schizophrenia. Research found that patients diagnosed with a psychotic disorder were more likely to smoke marijuana at an early age. It was also found that these

individuals developed symptoms of their illness almost three years sooner than those who did not. The strongest link was among those who began smoke between or prior to the ages of 12 to 15.

Psychotic illnesses can have detrimental effects on people's lives and can be devastating for their families. In the New South Wales study the authors state that, "an extra 2 or 3 years of psychosis-free functioning could allow many patients to achieve the important developmental milestones of adolescence." This is essential information in helping us continue to prevent drug use, especially during one's adolescent's years when they are deemed to be most at-risk.

Marijuana is often the most frequently used drug among adolescents, and this study's

findings show just how irreversible the damage of this substance can be on an adolescent's development and mental health. This information is crucial to help parents understand the importance of their role in encouraging adolescents to remain substance free.

NCADD and Pathways continually offer services to help parents and adolescents struggling with substance abuse and abuse prevention. For further information about this issue or any substance related concerns please visit our website (www.ncadd-middlesex.org/) regarding information and services that are available.

Sources

- [Medic.net](http://www.medic.net)
- [Jointogether.com](http://www.jointogether.com)
- <http://www.jointogether.org/news/research/summaries/2011/marijuana-linked-to-early.html>



Grade school kids need early alcohol-use prevention

A recent study that surveyed 4,150 sixth-graders from Chicago-area schools suggests that primary prevention programs for alcohol use should occur prior to the sixth grade, particularly for youth identified at high risk for early use.

The study found that 17.2 percent of the sixth-graders surveyed had used alcohol in the previous year. The alcohol user group scored high in nearly every at-risk factor that was measured.

The study, led by researchers from the University of Minnesota, concluded that prevention efforts need to begin early — by at least fourth grade — in order to address those at risk and to promote protective factors against alcohol use.

What's more, we know that early-onset drinking is a strong predictor of alcoholism

or alcohol abuse later in life, according to several studies.

A study by the Boston University School of Public Health and Youth Alcohol Prevention Center found that among those who started drinking before age 14, 47 percent became alcoholics at some point in their lives, compared with nine percent for people who waited until age 21 or later to begin drinking.

The earlier one drinks, the greater the chance of alcohol-use problems.

In addition, underage drinking is linked to an increased risk of alcohol-related injuries and suicides, risky sexual behavior, physical fights, tobacco use, illegal drug use, and other delinquent behavior.

Alcohol is the No. 1 drug of choice for young people and

adults. Yet, as the American Academy of Pediatrics emphasizes, youth and adults are not equal when it comes to alcohol use.

For one thing, adolescents need only drink half as much to suffer the same negative effects that alcohol has on adults. The brain goes through dynamic changes during adolescence, and alcohol can seriously damage long- and short-term growth processes. Frontal lobe development and the refinement of pathways and connections continue into the middle 20s. Damage from alcohol at this time can be long-term and irreversible.

When underage alcohol use is prevented, the entire community benefits from a decrease in vandalism, theft, traffic accidents and violence. Students who don't drink alcohol enjoy a greater degree of mental and physical health, attend school more regularly, and do better academically.

The Jason Surks Memorial Resource Center houses many brochures and videos that focus on youth addictions. Interested in obtaining copies for your school or organization? Contact NCADD today at 732-254-3344.



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GOVERNMENT AIMS TO CUT MISUSE OF PRESCRIPTION DRUGS BY 15 PERCENT IN FIVE YEARS

The plan includes doctor training, promoting prescription databases in all states and increased focus on rooting out illegal 'pill mill' clinics.

Gil Kerlikowske, Director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, announced the plan will include a requirement that doctors who prescribe oxycodone and other opioids undergo training on proper prescription practices. The plan, called *Epidemic: Responding to America's Prescription Drug Abuse Crisis*, also includes a media campaign about the dangers of opioids.

A major part of the proposal will be a push for prescription drug databases in every state. Now 35 states have prescription drug monitoring programs, and eight more states, including Florida, the epicenter of the pill mills, have authorized databases that are not yet running. A fourth part of the plan focuses on aggressively enforcing laws against pill mills.

New Jersey has already enacted Prescription Drug Monitoring legislation but program is not yet operational.

The above report was provided by Join Together, a program of the Boston University School of Public Health and the nation's leading provider of information, strategic planning assistance, and leadership development for community-based efforts to advance effective alcohol and drug policy, prevention, and treatment. To learn more about this organization and to subscribe to their newsletters, please go to the Join Together website at www.jointogether.org.

The National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD) of Middlesex County, Inc. is a private, non-profit, community-based health organization providing prevention, education, information and referral services to county residents, businesses, schools, faith-based organizations, municipal alliances, and social service agencies since 1980.

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