Dear Parents,

Although you may not think your child listens to you, research shows that your views about substance use are the leading deterrent to your child’s decision to use alcohol and other drugs. If you discuss your rules and values openly, honestly and often, you lower the chance that your child will engage in substance use. Young people today must make decisions about alcohol and drug use that no previous generation has had to face. Education and parental support is the key to setting them up on a path towards a healthy and productive future.

**Show interest and discuss your child’s daily ups and downs.**
During middle school, age appropriate discussions should focus on strengthening self-esteem and staying focused on life goals. Let your child in on all the things you find wonderful about him. He needs to hear a lot of positive comments about his life and who his is as an individual — and not just when he makes the basketball team or gets an A. Show interest and discuss your child’s daily ups and downs. You will earn your child’s trust, learn how to talk to each other, and won’t take your child by surprise when you voice a strong point of view about drugs.

**The dangerous summer between 8th and 9th grade.**
The summer between 8th grade and High School is often when kids are faced with difficult choices as their growing desire for independence leads to increased involvement in high risk behaviors and a greater reliance on peers. The rules you set to keep them healthy and safe are a more important safety net than most other times in their lives. As they seem to push you away, they secretly need you more than ever.

**Alcohol, tobacco and other drugs interfere with brain development.**
A young person’s brain is a work in process, making them excellent creative thinkers but surprisingly bad at considering the consequences of their actions. In fact, a young person’s brain is completing some very important development during adolescence and well into young adulthood. Alcohol, tobacco and other drugs interfere with this development and the same circuitry that makes our kids want to explore new things also makes them much more susceptible to addiction. And it makes it much more difficult for them to quit.

**Majority of addicts begin using in their teen years.**
Ninety percent of addictions begin in the teen years so it’s important that you stay involved, get to know their friends and know that they are appropriately supervised — including monitoring their social media and calling their friend’s parents. As parents it important to be a good role model when it comes to drinking alcohol, taking medicine and handling stress.

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**Over 60 years of research shows that families that build positive assets for their children have a better chance for a healthy future.**
- Adult relationships (other than parents)
- Positive Peer Influence
- A safe neighborhood with caring adults
- Parent involvement in their children’s schools
- Unstructured down-time at home
- Participation in creative activities
- Service to others
- Sense of purpose
- Future-oriented thinking and planning

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**Wellness & Prevention Center.**
SAN CLEMENTE

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SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE WELLNESS & PREVENTION CENTER ARE SUPPORTED IN PART BY WESTERN YOUTH SERVICES.
PARENT TIP SHEET:
Raising Healthy Teens

3 TIPS SPECIFIC TO THE COMMUNITY OF SAN CLEMENTE.
One of the best ways that we can curb drug and alcohol use in San Clemente teens would be for parents to protect their teens and their community by not sponsoring teen parties. It may seem crazy, but many teen parties in San Clemente are approved by parents - such as after prom parties, sport team parties and IB student parties. All these types of parties were broken up by San Clemente Sheriff in 2014-2015 while parents were home.

1. **The years of throwing your kid’s parties maybe over.**
   You may want to reconsider having a “party” for your child while in high school. We’ve found that in our community at a majority of teen parties alcohol is sneaked in by the teens. Even at parties where parents are diligent at keeping alcohol and drugs out of the party — it still happens. Protect your teen and your community by having smaller parties, with a controlled guest list and a specific activity. A dance party with a DJ is not a good idea.

2. **During the teen years remove alcohol and drugs from your home.**
   Alcohol in the home should be greatly reduced and monitored during the teen years. Drugs should be locked up or disposed of at the San Clemente Sheriff Station Drop Off box. Protect your teen, their friends and your community by not having drugs and alcohol easily accessible. Beer in the garage fridge is not a good idea.

3. **Don’t put your beliefs about drugs and alcohol onto another family.**
   Do you believe serving alcohol in your home to your teen is acceptable? Do you think it is better your teen drink alcohol at your home where they are supervised and not driving? Experts don’t agree with either of these statements. Don’t put your beliefs about alcohol on to another family. You do not have the right to serve alcohol to another family’s child and you could be legally responsible if something tragic happens. Don’t let your home become the house all the kids hang out at because they know alcohol and drug use is permitted.
FACT: 1/2 of mental illness begin by the age of 14 and 3/4 begin by the age 24.
Unfortunately, there are long delays—sometimes decades—between when the time symptoms first appear and when people get help. Studies show that early treatment can make a big difference for successful management and recovery. Encourage family members to have open and honest conversations about their emotional health just as they do about their physical health from a young age. Children with untreated mental health symptoms are more likely to try alcohol and other drugs.

FACT: A young person’s body cannot cope with alcohol the same way an adult’s can.
Drinking is more harmful to teens than adults because their brains are still developing throughout adolescence and well into young adulthood. Drinking during this critical growth period can lead to lifelong damage in brain function, particularly as it relates to memory, motor skills (ability to move) and coordination.

According to research, young people who begin drinking before age 15 are four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence than those who begin drinking at age 21. Help your teen thrive by letting their brain fully develop unharmed.

FACT: Geographically, cities along the coastal regions of Orange County tended to have higher rates of drug/alcohol-related hospitalizations and death than other cities.
Even more alarming is that 1 in 4 teens report prescription drug misuse or abuse. The majority of children who abuse prescription drugs and over the counter medications report getting them from family or friends.

The most important thing you can do as a parent is to closely monitor drugs prescribed to family members and over the-counter medicines. Experts recommend that parents lock up prescription medications to keep them from being used improperly. Safely dispose of any unused medications in your home by using the City’s permanent drop box or following the methods online on the City of San Clemente website. Keep in mind that the teen brain is especially vulnerable to addiction and, according to neurological research, is still developing until 25 years of age. The powerful opiates so frequently prescribed for pain are very addictive and you may even consider discussing alternative pain remedies with your doctor. Many teen addicts started using after a sports injury or oral surgery, after a doctor provides opiate medication.

FACT: IT’S NOT JUST WEED.
Anxiety, aggressive behavior, inability to eat or sleep—these are just some of the side effects of marijuana use. THC levels, the psychoactive high inducing chemical, have drastically increased - so we can no longer say “it’s just weed”.

The legalization of marijuana has been a hot topic of debate. Pro-marijuana groups have been putting out an abundance of marijuana “facts” that make the drug seem harmless. However, over the last few decades, marijuana has evolved tremendously and not for the better. Growers have been able to produce more concentrated crops resulting in a dramatic increase in potency. Just like alcohol, a higher potency means that a smaller amount can affect the brain in powerful ways. This has led to an increase in emergency room visits by marijuana smokers experiencing toxic reactions leading to mental and physical disturbances such as psychosis, intense anxiety and rapid heart rate.
Sample analysis of marijuana found that the high inducing chemical, tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), has increased in value while the calming and supposedly therapeutic chemical, cannabidiol (CBD), has decreased. Researchers and medical personnel who have shown support for marijuana legalization are mostly interested in the use of the CBD content of the plant which has been studied as part of a treatment regimen for brain and mood disorders such as schizophrenia, Huntington’s disease and Alzheimer’s disease. Unfortunately, with the declining CBD content in the marijuana over the years, people who legitimately need it for its therapeutic effects are hardly receiving them, if at all. On the other hand, the increase in THC which can produce psychotic effects can also lead to addiction.

**FACT: Marijuana is addictive.**
Marijuana has long been praised as a drug that does not create addiction and thus does not present with real health risks. However, recent research has shown the opposite to be true. It has been proven that around 9% of people who use marijuana will become dependent on the drug and the number increases to about 17% for those who start using as teens. Addiction to marijuana accounts for about 4.2 million of the 6.9 million Americans dealing with the abuse of illicit drugs.

We encourage you to share these facts with the teens in your home so that there is a clear understanding of today’s marijuana and the risks that are associated with it.

**FACT: The use of e-cigs is rising dramatically among middle and high school students.**
Studies are finding that unregulated electronic cigarettes are not a safe alternative to other tobacco products and they may even cause lung cancer like normal cigarettes. E-cigs use a battery-powered device to heat a solution that often contains nicotine, along with many other ingredients or “flavorings” known as e-liquid. This produces an aerosol that can be inhaled (vaping). The common misperception is that they contain harmless water vapor when in reality they have been found to contain of over 2,000 ingredients including fluorine, lead and formaldehyde. The safety of these ingredients is unknown when they are heated and inhaled directly into the lungs and bypassing the body’s filtration system.

Particles in e-cigs are very small meaning that particles can travel deep within the lungs and embed themselves in the tiny air sacs in the lungs causing damage. Additionally, e-cigs contain a metal filament used to heat the liquid and create vapor. Over 25 different kinds of metals have been detected in e-cig vapor some particles small enough to enter the blood and go to other organs.

E-cigs have only been in use for the last decade, the long term effects still remain unclear. Cigarettes were introduced in the 1880’s; but it was not until the Surgeon General’s report in 1964 that the link to lung cancer was clearly established.

For more information on these topics please visit [wellnessandpreventioncentersanclemente.com](http://wellnessandpreventioncentersanclemente.com).
Email or call our mental health professional — we are here to help raise healthy teens.

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