



Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula®  
**BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES**  
Clint Eastwood Youth Program



# Using your influence

As adolescents grow up, they spend more time out of the house and less time hanging out with the family. Parents can (and should) continue to have a significant influence. They would do well to use their influence wisely, especially when it comes to drug/alcohol use. As much as we might wish for an “easy fix,” evidence tells us the “just say no” strategy is not effective. So what can a parent do?

## Effective strategies for using your influence to prevent drug/alcohol use

- Talk with (not at) your children. Be clear and consistent. Keep your messages short and to the point. Listen when your children talk, even about things that seem unimportant. This keeps the channels open.
- Be open to different types of communication. Try being in touch with your kids via e-mail or instant messaging.
- If one of your teen’s friends is involved in drugs, don’t keep their secret from their parents.
- If someone in your family has a drinking problem, abuses prescription medication, or uses illegal drugs, it is extremely important to deal with these issues directly.
- Spend time with your children in fun recreational activities. Get to know them even better. Find out how your kids see themselves and what they want their lives to be like.
- When your children are out, know where they are and what they are doing.
- Know the names, addresses, and phone numbers of your children’s friends. Get to know their friends and their friends’ families.
- Even if other parents don’t share your concerns or parenting style, keep the dialogue open. Accept that not everyone will agree, but keep talking.
- Use Caller ID on the phone line(s) that your children call to check in with you. Have them make their check-in calls from a “land line” phone when they are at someone else’s house (so that the location appears in the Caller ID window).
- If one of your children wants to spend the night at a friend’s home, be sure that a parent will be home and that you have discussed curfews, values, supervision, and expectations.
- Some parents use drugs with their teens, allow substance-abusing parties at their home, or supply kids with drugs and alcohol; get to know which parents do and learn to say, “Sorry, you can’t go to this party.”
- Set clear, firm, and reasonable limits. Be consistent.
- When disciplining your children, use discipline that is likely to be effective. For teens, try restricting or

eliminating use of a car, taking away their cell phone, and/or limiting unsupervised free time.

- Remove alcohol/drugs from the home if it is likely to be a temptation to them.
- Kids trying to stay clean from substance abuse need to avoid the people, places, and events that have been associated with this behavior. It is extremely unlikely that they will stay sober if attending events where drugs and alcohol are available.
- Think about the amount of money you give your children for allowance, lunches, gas, etc. Are they using it for that purpose? Is it too easy for them to afford drugs and/or alcohol?

## What do you do if your teen is drinking or using drugs?

- Have a straightforward discussion. Try not to yell, judge, or demonstrate anger (even if you are seething).
- Be aware that, as parents, most of us tend to deny the existence or the depth of a problem with our children. Typically, teens have used for several years before their parents acknowledge that there is a problem.
- Give yourself a little time to prepare your responses, and practice what you want to say before sitting down for “the big talk.”
- Seek out the advice of another adult whose beliefs you value — a close friend, school counselor, or clergy member, perhaps. Share your feelings and ask for help. Write down your responses before talking with your teen.
- When you do have the discussion, be sure it is at a “good time,” not when your child comes home drunk at 2 a.m. or after having to bail him or her out of trouble.
- Find out where your teen is getting the money to purchase drugs and/or alcohol. If it’s from your ATM card, wallet, or purse, keep them locked up and out of reach; cut off their supply.
- Get help. Talk to a chemical dependency counselor or a mental health practitioner.

Parents continue to remain a major influence in an adolescent’s decision making. It is important that you clearly and repeatedly (in different ways) state your position regarding drug/alcohol use. Which means, of course, that you must be clear in your own mind about what your position is. Remember, part of a teen’s development is learning. They rely on you to help them set limits (even when they say they don’t like it). They depend on you.

If you need help, we’re here.

This information is brought to you by Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula’s Clint Eastwood Youth Program, providing a structured program to treat drug and alcohol abuse as well as mental health problems.

For more information or to schedule a free screening, please call **373-0924** or **800-528-8080**

