
Parenting for Prevention

Student Assistance Services Corp., 660 White Plains Road, Tarrytown, New York, 10591, December, 2008

Thoughts for the Holidays



This year may be a very challenging holiday season and it is hoped that some of the

information in this newsletter can help families keep everyone healthy and safe.

If nothing else, the current economic situation can be a catalyst for everyone, no matter whether one has a religious affiliation or not, to think about the true meaning of the holiday season. For me it is counting one's blessings and appreciating the importance of family and friends.

This time of year can be a very challenging time for those who are in recovery and for their families. Helping them navigate the holiday season in a healthy manner can be the best gift that we can give them.

Everyone at Student Assistance Services joins me in wishing you a happy, healthy holiday season and new year.

Patricia Murphy Warble
Editor



Tips for the Holidays

Keeping families safe and healthy

This year the holidays will probably be less hectic and more subdued than in the past years. However, it is important to note that under "normal" circumstances, this is the time of year when more alcohol is consumed than any other time of year. And this holiday season, given the current economic situation, it is possible that there will be a temptation among adults to use alcohol to deal with their own concerns and anxieties.

As in past years, the holiday season will still have gatherings and parties, and parents may be so preoccupied with holiday preparations that they do not realize that their teens may end up being in unsupervised settings. Also, many holiday parties including New Year's Eve or football parties are linked to the consumption of alcohol and in some cases seasonal "cheer" has become synonymous with over-doing it.

First and foremost, be a good role model for your children. Modeling good behavior is worth a thousand words. It is hard to get across a message of appropriateness and moderation if your own choices around alcohol are unhealthy.

There are usually more cross-generational parties during this period of time and as a result adults and children are often attending the same functions. Usually, alcohol is present at these gathering. As a result, children may be seeing adults consuming a significant amount of alcohol as part of holiday celebrations. In addition, the number of people and confusion at parties may provide teens with the possibility of drinking alcohol without anyone noticing.

To offset the impact of this reality, parents can be pro-active in terms of keeping their own children safe and healthy during the holiday period. First and foremost, be a good role model for your children. Modeling good behavior is worth a thousand words. It is hard to get across a message of appropriateness and moderation if your own choices around alcohol are unhealthy.

If you choose to drink alcohol, it is important that your children see you drink alcohol as a beverage that accompanies a meal or as a toast rather

than as a way to become sociable or to relax. It is also important that you do not drive after drinking or let your children ride in a car with any adult who has been drinking.

Also talk to your children, especially your teenagers, about the risk of alcohol abuse during the holidays. This period of time can be regarded as an opportunity for “teachable moments” and parents can make the most of them. Explain that the holidays are a time when most people are socializing more often and as a result there are more opportunities to drink alcohol.

Also let them know that some people have a very difficult time during the holidays and look to alcohol as a way to deal with unhappiness and depression. Point out that there are better and healthier ways to deal with these issues, discuss how alcohol is a depressant and that it can actually aggravate these conditions. Then discuss healthy ways to cope with negative emotions and to socialize.


Also, be vigilant about where your children are during parties and family gatherings. The frequency, size, and lack of supervision during crowded holiday parties can provide children with the opportunity for a “sip” here and there or further experimentation. Let your children know that just because it is the holiday time and many of the adults around them are drinking, you do not want them to drink.

Helping Your Adolescents Stay Healthy During the Holidays

The holidays can provide special challenges to the parents of young people.

- Make sure that your children are in a safe and chaperoned environment during the day and in the evening.
- Have a “code” phrase that your child can say to you over the cell phone that translates into “come get me, there are things going on that make me uncomfortable.” For instance, your child might ask, “what time is granny coming tomorrow?”
- Talk to your child about the dangers of drinking. Send clear and consistent “no use” messages.
- Also discuss the dangers of drinking and driving and alcohol poisoning. Make sure your child understands the need for adult intervention into these serious situations.
- “A Contract for Life” can be obtained on the Internet at www.madd.org. This contract is between a parent and teen and states that parents agree to pick up a teen who needs a safe ride home with no questions asked. The goal is to keep children safe for the moment and other concerns can be dealt with at a later date.
- Be aware that prescription and over-the-counter drugs might be available at the homes of friends and families that you visit over the holiday period.

- What your children will remember most about holidays is not the presents but the experiences and time shared together as a family. Some of the simplest things like playing a game or taking walks become lasting memories for your children.
- It helps to deal with the challenges of the Holiday season by eating properly, exercising, and getting enough sleep. When family members are over tired, things can seem overwhelming. Even the most perfect holiday celebrations are usually accompanied by some frustrations and disappointments. Healthy eating, sleeping, and exercising helps to keep everyone and everything in perspective.



For additional information, go to the Westchester County website,

www.westchestergov.com

and click on

Stay Safe This Holiday Season

Tips for Parents: Hosting Holiday Parties

These tips are part of Student Assistance Services' efforts to raise the level of awareness concerning the use of alcohol and other drugs during the holiday season.

1. Know the law. It is illegal to give or sell any alcoholic beverage to a person under age 21, unless you are that person's parent or guardian.
2. An adult, or parent, who serves alcohol to persons under age 21 can be held responsible for injuries or damages caused by that minor's intoxication.
3. Under Westchester's new Social Host law, anyone over 21 can be charged for allowing alcohol to be consumed in their home by individuals under 21.
4. A teen, 16 years of age or older, can be criminally charged with a variety of crimes for providing alcohol or other drugs to another teen, even if no money is exchanged.
5. Set up the ground rules before the party:
 - Agree on the guest list and send out invitations
 - Only those invited will be allowed to attend
 - All guests enter from one entrance
 - Notify police about the party date and time
 - Notify neighbors
 - Coats and bags will be "checked in"
 - The party will be alcohol and drug free. (Do not assume your child knows this). Any guest who tries to bring alcohol or other drugs, arrives under the influence, or drinks alcohol or uses other drugs at the party will be asked to leave and their parents will be called so they can get home safely.
6. Remove all prescription and over-the-counter medications from any bathroom that will be used by guests.
7. To ensure safety of all guests a parent must be visible and present to supervise. Invite parents of your child's friends to help chaperone.
8. Patrol in and outside your house, monitor the garage, windowsills and bedrooms

You play a significant role in your child's life.

Clear expectations and rules will help keep your children safe during this festive season.



During the holidays there are resources available for anyone in need of information, advice, reassurance, referral or other help.

914-591-HELP

This is hotline that is in operation from 8:00am to 5:00pm, except for holidays and weekends.

A trained professional is available to provide confidential information related to alcohol and other drugs.

914-949-1200

**Alcoholics Anonymous
A list of meeting times and places is available by calling this number.**

Holiday Gift Suggestions

Anthony Wolf, Ph.D.

- *The Secret of Parenting*
- *Get Out of My Life, but First Could You Drive Me and Cheryl to the Mall?*
- *Why Did You Have To Get A Divorce?*

Kuhn, Schwartzwelder, and Wilson

- *Buzzed*
- *Just Say Know*

David J. Wilmes

- *Parenting for Prevention*

Rachel Simmons

- *Odd Girl Out*

Ron Taffel

- *The Second Family: How Adolescent Power is Changing the American Family*

Debra Haffner

- *Beyond The Big Talk*
- *From Diapers to Dating*
- *What Every 21st Century Parent Needs To Know*

Patricia Hersch

- *A Tribe Apart: A Journey into the Heart of American Adolescence*

Dan Kindlon

- *Too Much Of A Good Thing: Raising Children of Character in An Indulgent Age*
- *Raising Cain*

Rosalind Wiseman

- *Queen Bees and Wannabes: Helping Your Daughter Survive Cliques, Gossip, Boy-friends, and Other Realities of Adolescence*
- *Queen Bee Moms & Kingpin Dads: Dealing with the Parents, Teachers, Coaches, and Counselors Who Can Make--or Break--Your Child's Future*

Michael Bradley, Ph.D.

- *Yes, Your Teen is Crazy!: Loving Your Kid Without Losing Your Mind*
- *Yes, Your Parents Are Crazy!: A Teen Survival Handbook*

Upcoming Events

Jan 8 **6:30pm**

Saunders High School Library
Parenting Teens in Stressful Times
Ellen Morehouse, LCSW
Contact: 376-8150

Jan 13 **7:00pm**

French American School
Teens. Parents, Alcohol, Drugs And the Law
Westchester DA Janet DiFiore
Contact: Helaine Couty, 250-0420.

Jan 22 **7:30pm**

White Plains High School Library
ROADD TRIP
Contact: 422-2196

Jan 23 **9:30am**

Bedford Historical Hall
Strong Marriages Build Strong Families
Suzanne Burger, PhD
Contact: 234-3227

Jan 30 **9:30am**

Bedford Historical Hall
Parenting in the 21st Century
Debra Haffner
Contact: 234-3227