



# WHANAU PACK

TOOLS FOR FAMILIES  
AND PARENTS WITH TEENAGERS



## **MOST THINGS ABOUT THEIR WORLD ARE CHANGING. DON'T LET YOUR LOVE BE ONE OF THEM.**

**You know it. They know it.** Teenage years are growth years and ones of great change. Not only are their bodies growing but also their brains - which continue to develop until their early to mid 20's. Teens need food, sleep, and exercise and lots of love and support – the same as for a child, but in different ways.

The family (whanau) is the most important building block for a healthy teen, with a safe and secure home being the place they can learn and grow. Just like the tupuna tamariki, who believed that they would not be harmed whatever they did, today's kids now need to believe this too. They must know and trust everyone in their home.

Parenting a teenager isn't easy, but it can be a lot of fun if you follow a few basic guidelines, such as keeping a close relationship, supporting your kids as they learn from their mistakes, and serving as a good role model.

*"I'm in a no-win situation right now. Sometimes you treat me like a child, but when I act like one, you tell me to grow up and behave like an adult. You say I'm hard to live with. Well ... wear my skin for a while."*

Current alcohol law reform policy has highlighted an increase in parental responsibility around the supply and supervision of alcohol to young people. With new research available on the harmful effects of alcohol consumption, it is important for parents/caregivers to be informed about the risks and supported in ways to minimise the harm to their teenagers.

By adolescence, your kids should know the facts about alcohol and your attitudes and beliefs about other drug use. Now is the time to focus on what you've already taught them and work on keeping the lines of communication open.

This booklet offers you some simple ways to improve your communication and build a stronger bond with your son or daughter. The material draws upon principles from the Tikanga Whakatipu Ririki model and from positive parenting techniques. It focuses on the topic of alcohol in particular but the same principles may be applied to most topics challenging young people and their parents/caregivers.

Try not to be overwhelmed by all of the material.

**Pick just one idea at a time – think about it and give it a try** for at least a month to see what changes might happen. It's never too late to strengthen your relationship with your teen – you just have to stick with it – and find what works.



***Teens who spend time, talk, and have a close relationship with their parents, are much less likely to drink, take drugs or have sex.***





**WHY ARE TEENS DIFFERENT?**

## THE TEENAGE BRAIN

We used to blame hormones for teenagers often strange and impulsive behaviour. New research has found that they are so different because their brains are undergoing a **BIG** change, which starts around puberty and continues through to their mid-20's.

For teenagers, this means that they just **don't** think the same way as adults. Their brain is not ready or able to work in the same way as ours. The greatest changes are to the parts of the brain that handle impulse control, judgement, decision-making, planning, organisation and emotions.

More importantly – the kinds of stimulation you provide for your teen can actually shape the *structure* of their brains. Current studies show that teenager's brains develop very quickly in relation to the things that they experience. This is why they learn games like those for Playstation easier than older adults. Their brain grows and learns – constantly "rewiring itself".



*Since their brain isn't fully developed, it can be a big challenge for teenagers between coming up with an idea and being able to decide if it's actually a good one.*



This period of growth also means teenagers' brains are more sensitive to drug use – much more so than those of adults. Excessive alcohol – such as that from binge drinking (more than 5 standard drinks drunk quickly over a short period) can cause actual physical damage to their brain. Alcohol also interferes with their learning, causing both short- and long-term memory problems and can also lead to higher stress levels and risk of depression and suicide.

Starting to drink at an early age is also associated with alcohol dependency and related problems during adult life.

**For these reasons, it is important for parents to delay and limit alcohol consumption and use by teenagers for as long as possible and the same applies to tobacco and Marijuana use.**

## PHYSICAL NEEDS

### MORE SLEEP.

Teenagers need an average of 9 hours of sleep each night – 1-2 hours more than younger children and adults. Sleep is important – it is the time when growing happens.

During the teenage years, the body's 'clock' is temporarily reset, telling a person to fall asleep later and wake up later. It is natural for teenagers NOT to feel tired later in the evening.



***One study showed that for young people who started drinking by the age of 14, almost half (1 out of every 2) went on to develop alcohol dependency problems, compared with only 1 in 10 who didn't drink alcohol until they were 21.<sup>1</sup>***

## HOW CAN I TELL IF MY TEEN IS GETTING ENOUGH SLEEP?

***Here are some of the signs that your teen might need more sleep:***

- *difficulty waking up in the morning*
- *inability to concentrate*
- *falling asleep during classes*
- *feelings of moodiness and even depression*

Teens also have high risk of having car accidents because of falling asleep behind the wheel.

***Here are a few suggestions to get your teen the sleep they need:***

- *establish a reasonable bedtime and wake time, make this consistent throughout the week (remember they need about 9 hours sleep)*
- *establish a bedtime routine, taking a hot shower or quiet activity like reading, beforehand*
- *cut down on caffeine (especially from energy drinks)*
- *encourage daily exercise (make sure this is at least 2 hours before bedtime)*
- *unless it's important (like sports or an appointment), let them sleep later in the morning in the weekends*











**TO BE A MORE  
EFFECTIVE PARENT  
AND ENJOY A CLOSER  
FAMILY RELATIONSHIP,  
YOU NEED TO SPEND  
QUALITY FAMILY TIME  
TOGETHER.**

**TIME**



## STRATEGY:

## EAT TOGETHER AT LEAST 5 TIMES A WEEK



To be a more effective parent and enjoy a closer family relationship, you need to spend quality family time together.

Research shows that teens do better when their families eat together at least 5 times a week. It doesn't have to be only dinners – it could include shared breakfast or lunch on the weekends.

### **The key is to do it together.**

Teens who share regular meals with their family are:-

- more likely to do better at school,
- less likely to smoke or abuse alcohol or other drugs,
- less likely to become obese or overweight,
- less likely to have suicidal thoughts or behaviours,
- feel better about themselves, and
- feel more connected to their parents and whanau.

## **MEAL TIMES PROVIDE A GREAT CHANCE TO CONNECT AS A FAMILY. IT'S YOUR CHANCE TO TALK WITH YOUR KIDS - TO DISCUSS THEIR DAY – THEIR HIGHS AND LOWS, THEIR PLANS AND GOALS.**

- Make shared family meals the priority. Focus on being together, rather than creating an elaborate meal that everyone will enjoy. Let everyone know when the meal is served and when they must be home.
- If the family is not used to eating together regularly, start small. At first, get used to eating together two or three times a week, before increasing to more regular meals together.
- Get everyone involved with the meal. Helping with the shopping, picking vegetables from the garden, finding a recipe, cooking, serving the food, setting or clearing the table – are all things that can get the whole family involved.
- Make it a habit to turn off the TV, iPods and cell phones while you eat. The important thing is to be together without distraction.
- Encourage good table manners, but try not to make them an issue or cause tension. It's more important to appreciate one another's company and your time together.
- Don't let the talk get out of hand and allow family members to criticise each other. Keep it light and fun.
- Use the time you have together to connect. Talk about your day. Ask your kids about school or their friends and their plans for the week or weekend.
- Avoid growling at kids or correcting them when they share things during meals.





## STRATEGY: FIND TIME TO SPEND TOGETHER ON A REGULAR BASIS



*"Well, you know when we're teens, we're so busy pushing our parents away that when we want them, it's hard to ask."*

**TEENS REALLY WANT ADULTS TO HELP SHAPE THEIR VIEWS ABOUT THE WORLD. THEY WANT ADULTS TO SPEND TIME WITH THEM AND TO TELL THEM ABOUT THE WORLD AND HOW IT WORKS.**

It's a fact - teens don't want to end their relationships with their parents as they grow older. They just want them to change as they grow. Spending quality time with their parents is one of teens' biggest priorities - but they can't do it alone.

It is really easy as a parent to get caught up in work issues, money issues and everything else that parents and families have to deal with on a daily basis. It is important, however, to remember to spend quality time with your teen and have meaningful conversations.

Be involved in something that your teen is involved in, even if it is just being a **fan at their games**. This will give you a common topic to talk about. Also, families that never spend any time together have a harder time communicating with each other. Get creative about scheduling family time.

## MAKE SPENDING TIME WITH YOUR TEEN ONE OF YOUR BIGGEST PRIORITIES.

*You can:*

**Take 15 ... or 20.** Give 15 or 20 minutes a day to your teen. Give her all of your attention - and let her choose what you do. She may want to talk about something that's bothering her. Try having a cuppa, reading a magazine together, or going for a walk. The important thing is that you focus on them.

**Show an interest.** Talking about what your teens are doing at school is a great first step. Attend their games and performances. Go to the parent-teacher conference. Being there shows them how important they are to you more than your words can.

**Be friendly.** Make an effort to get to know your teen's friends and their parents. Offer to drive a group of teens to the movies or to town. Make your home a place where they can feel comfortable "hanging out." You will get to know the people important to your teen - and be able to know she's in a safe place.

**Make a plan.** Lots of parents have grand plans for family time together - the rituals and traditions they'd like to establish, or the things they always dreamed they'd do with their families. The difference between families who dream about it and families who experience it is in the making of a plan. Write it down, block it out on the calendar, and talk it up in the days leading up to it. Being deliberate about family time shows our kids the value we place upon it and them.





**Routines** offer parents and teens a sense of security in their daily lives. When you establish a routine of communicating with your teen - it can be as simple as saying good-night at the end of the day - you are strengthening their sense of security.

“My kids usually share with me right at bedtime, either mine or theirs. I think it is because they are starting to relax and want my view on things that are going on so that they can work through it. Sometimes it’s really late but they seem to be thinking most at that time. Sometimes I’ve wanted to use tooth-picks to keep my eyes open because I’m so tired ... but I always listen to what they have to say.”

## **DADS - ONE ON ONE**

Dads in the teenage years are particularly important. Fathers often spend less time with their kids than mothers – so dad’s need to consciously plan and spend more time. Supporting them in their hobby is a great way for dad to be involved, or finding some common ground where you can have one on one time together. For many teens, this could include learning to drive or helping with a project around the house. More simply, it might just mean asking them to come with you when you go out, or asking for their opinion on something that you are thinking about.

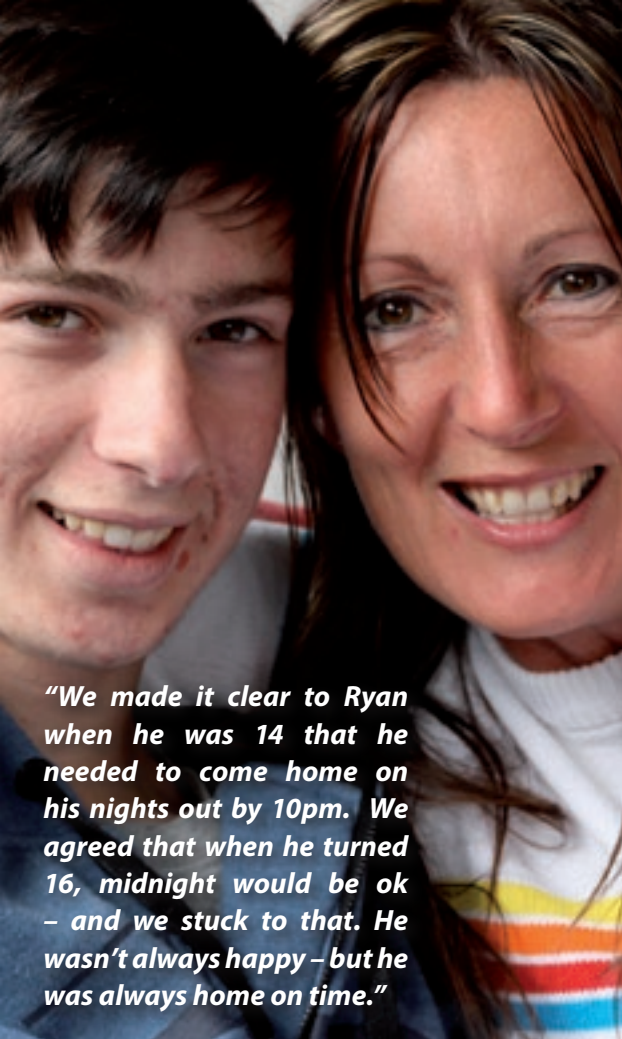




**MOST THINGS ABOUT  
THEIR WORLD ARE  
CHANGING.**

**DON'T LET YOUR LOVE  
BE ONE OF THEM.**

## **BOUNDARIES**



*"We made it clear to Ryan when he was 14 that he needed to come home on his nights out by 10pm. We agreed that when he turned 16, midnight would be ok – and we stuck to that. He wasn't always happy – but he was always home on time."*

## BE THE ROCK FOR YOUR KIDS.

While the teenage years can at times be stormy and emotional, your kids need to know that you will always be there and what you expect from them. Despite what teens might say, most just want you to be their "rock" .... by setting limits, acting like adults and being there for them - **no matter what.**

## RULES

It's part of being a teenager to push against the boundaries, to test the rules. However, if there are no boundaries and no rules then they have no guide to know when to stop, when it is enough, or even to understand that what they are doing is simply wrong. Teens also need to have enough space to make decisions and take responsibility for their actions. Your rules should be not too loose – and not too tight.



## **STRATEGY: DON'T LET THEIR PROBLEM BECOME YOUR PROBLEM**

If you want to change your teens' behaviour, you need to make the problem theirs – not yours.

Try not to get upset or angry when your teenager doesn't follow your rules. Instead - point out the consequences you have agreed ahead of time.

"Jessica started coming in later than our agreed time from parties. We'd argue and I'd get mad. We'd both shout and swear and usually end up in tears. Then, I stopped arguing with her – and made it clear that if she didn't come home on time – she'd have to stay home the following weekend. She spent a couple of weekend's at home before it sunk in. But we got there in the end. You just have to stick at it – and not take it personally."



**Kia Marino – Let there be calm. Stop the urge to shout or say something nasty.**



## **STRATEGY: COOL OFF WHEN YOU NEED TO**

It's easy to tell when things are out of control. The volume switch is up – and the talking has become shouting. Now is the time to STOP – COOL OFF – and agree a time to talk later when you are all in a better state.



**Haere – Go. Getting angry? Going to lose it? Walk away.**



## FOUR STEPS TO BETTER RULES.

When you talk with your kids about setting rules or limits - there are 4 things that can make the discussion easier.

### 1. "I'm on your side....."

Always begin with love (aroha). Let your kids know that you care about what happens to them and that you have their best interests at heart – for their own good.

Setting limits can sometimes cause conflict between you and your kids. They may get mad, or feel victimised. They might want to resist your rules because they seem harsh and uncaring. Expressing your love will help your teen to hear what you are saying, accept the rules and understand the results if they break them.

To show your love, try saying things like...

*"I'm doing this because I love you and I care what happens to you."*

*"I just want you to do the best that you can."*

### 2. "I have some rules I want you to follow..."

Young people need you to give them guidance and to set rules and limits around a wide range of activities, including alcohol use. These are the "dos and don'ts" that let your kids know what you expect of them. They tell your kids where the line is – so they can choose whether or not to cross it. These limits need to be clear and understood, so that your kids are left in no doubt if they have crossed it. Teenagers who have reasonable expectations for how they should act tend to do better in life, because rules are part of life.

***Setting rules tells your kids you care about them.***

- Make as few as possible – 3 to 5 should be enough. More than 5 and it becomes difficult to remember them all and make them work.
- Make them realistic.

- Keep them simple and fair.
- Negotiate the details. Teenagers need to see what's in it for them before they'll consider making a compromise.
- Revisit the rules from time to time. As changes happen for your kids, the rules you set for them should take this into account.

### **3. "You can choose to accept or reject the rules."**

To be real, you can't always make your kids make the right choice. It's hard to be in total control of what they do, especially outside of the home. So in order for kids to learn to make good choices, they also need to be able to make bad ones AND know what happens when they stuff up. Learning from our mistakes – or from making poor choices – is how we learn to better cope in life. This can be frustrating and even painful for us as parents or caregivers, but it also means that when our kids learn from their mistakes – they will be better for it.

### **4. "Here's what will happen....."**

Teenagers need to understand that all of their actions have consequences. If they do good things – they'll be better off and maybe get a reward. If they break the rules, there will be a consequence. You need to be clear to them what will happen if they choose to cross the line. And if they do – you **MUST** follow through with that consequence.

***"We told Ashley that we wanted her to wait until she was 18 before she could drink alcohol at the parties she was going to. We made it clear that she wouldn't be able to use the internet or watch TV for a month if she did."***



**THE BEST PARENTING  
SKILL YOU CAN HAVE  
IS TO SIMPLY ACT LIKE  
ONE!**

## **RELATIONSHIPS WITH YOUR TEENAGER**



## **STRATEGY: STOP TRYING TO BE A FRIEND RATHER THAN A PARENT**

**In order for your kids to respect you, you must give them a person worth respecting.**

You are a parent ... and that is priceless.

No parent can afford to fall into the habit of ignoring parental responsibilities simply because you want your teenager to love you. The way to be an effective parent is to take that responsibility seriously. And if you do a good job, your teenager will have many friends that are valuable but you might not always be one of them.

Sometimes you have to make decisions that will not be popular with your teenager, but are in their best interest. The good news is that no amount of parenting will destroy your relationship with them while they know that they are loved and respected.

- **You can't always be a friend and a parent. Parents do things that friends either can't, or won't, do.**
- **Parents make the hard decisions – and parents say no.**

Teenagers don't want their parents to act like them, talk like them or dress like them. In spite of grunts, attitude, and carrying on, young people do want you to act like their parent. They also want to spend quality time with you, and know that they are valued and important to you. Teenagers need limits and a safe, secure home in which to grow. It's your job to provide both, but trying to act like their friend can make them feel insecure.

Teenagers who view their parents as authority figures and providers are more likely to be close to them in adulthood. Relating to your teenager, based on your own experiences, can be a good way to work through challenging situations, but you should never lose your parent status.





## STRATEGY: LET YOUR TEENAGER KNOW THAT THEY CAN TRUST YOU



*"It just seemed like Michael hated us all the time. At times we wondered what happened to the lovely little guy we used to know. But we hung in there and didn't give up our job as parents. After a couple of years, he grew out of it – taking up playing rugby, being more respectful to us, and becoming a popular mate with his friends."*

It's normal for a teenager to, at some point, not particularly like mum and dad. If your teen doesn't like you, and disagrees with you at every opportunity, chances are you are simply doing your job as a parent in raising your kids. It's also normal for teens to shift their emotional attachment from you to their friends. This is part of "growing up" but it is still important to maintain a strong family connection by providing a safe base for them to return to.

Trust and respect are a two way street. They have to be earned on both sides. If you behave in a manner that a parent should - nurturing, caring, taking an interest and putting in place boundaries - then eventually when your kids have a problem, they will come to you. When they do, it is vital that you show them respect and trust. Try to hear them out and not be judgemental. Put yourself in their shoes and then, using your years of wisdom, give them some practical advice – if that's what they want! They may just need to offload – so listen, hear and let them know that you are a safe place. Don't 'interfere' or break their confidence – respect your teen and show that you can be trusted. You may not like what you hear, however ask yourself the question – what would you prefer? To know what is happening in your teen's world or to be completely in the dark?

Show them this trust and respect and they will come back to you, your relationship will grow stronger and closer as they mature.



**BE THE KIND OF  
PERSON YOU WANT  
YOUR TEENAGER TO  
GROW UP TO BE.**

**ROLE MODEL**



## STRATEGY:

## ACT THE WAY YOU'D LIKE YOUR KIDS TO ACT LEAD BY EXAMPLE

### SEEING IS BELIEVING

***Be the kind of person you want your teenager to grow up to be.***

Kids in general, tend to grow up to be a lot like their parents. They know who you are and what you do. The way **you** act plays a major role in the way they will behave. Kids who live in homes where parents smoke are more likely to become smokers. Parents who do drugs or abuse alcohol are more likely to find their kids do the same. Just as our kids can learn and copy our bad behaviours, they can also learn good ones – when we make the effort to show them.

Teach your teenagers how to handle difficult situations, how to be honest, how to be kind, how to be brave, how to say sorry, how to communicate effectively and how to love. Help them to say 'no'. Remember a stubborn child is one that knows their own mind and values. As that stubborn child grows into a teenager, and eventually an adult, that stubborn streak will help them to say "no" and to be their own person.

Be an imperfect parent. No one is perfect. Admit your mistakes and don't be afraid to say, "I am sorry." Share stories about when you were a teenager. **Be real.**

### Think about what you say ....

Be aware of how you speak about, and behave around, alcohol. If your kids see you stagger in the door each night moaning, "I need a drink!" or reaching for the booze and shouting, "This calls for a drink!" every time there is something to celebrate, they are receiving strong messages about the role of alcohol.

***"Dad comes home everyday with a six-pack of beers. He says it helps him relax.... But after a while, he just starts shouting at mum and she gets upset."***

### Think about what you do....

If your kids know you've had a few drinks – and then drive – you are modelling that it is ok to drink and drive. And if you think you can sneak a cigarette when they aren't looking, you are wrong - they smell it.

***"Mum hides her booze in the boot of the car. She doesn't think we know its there. There's never any food in the fridge but always she has her booze stashed away. She doesn't really care about us kids....."***

### Think about how you respond....

When you react to people and situations by using harsh words or violence, your kids get the idea that it is ok to disrespect people. And in turn – it will be you who they show the same to.

***"My dad told me I couldn't go to my mates place but when I asked him why, he just swore at me and told me to f\*\*\* off. I told him to do the same – and then he hit me. I don't ask him no more."***





## YOUR EXAMPLE IS ONE OF THE BEST WAYS TO RAISE A CHILD.

All the advice in the world to a teenager will count for little if you don't walk the walk.

- Find healthy ways to relax after work or to have fun on week-ends without alcohol or other drugs.
- Let them see you model sensible drinking behaviour such as ...
  - ~ sometimes refusing a drink when it is offered
  - ~ counting the number of standard drinks you are consuming
  - ~ enjoying non-alcoholic drinks
  - ~ refusing to drink when you are driving
  - ~ not drinking till you are drunk
- Eat healthy and exercise – even if it's just going for a walk together.
- Share your thoughts and feelings.
- Admit when you are wrong and apologise.

You may find that some of these are not always easy. If we expect our young people not to drink at all, or to drink sensibly when they are older, we need to show them how it is done.



**KIDS WHOSE PARENTS  
KNOW WHO THEIR  
FRIENDS ARE, WHERE  
THEY ARE - AND WHAT  
THEY ARE UP TO - ARE  
LESS LIKELY TO GET  
INTO TROUBLE.**

**KNOW WHAT YOUR YOUNG PEOPLE  
ARE UP TO**



## Kids whose parents know who their friends are, where they are - and what they are up to - are less likely to get into trouble.

**When your kids are leaving the house, do you know or ask:-**

- Where they are going?
- Who they will be with?
- What will they be doing?
- When they will be home?

If they are staying away from home overnight, you will want to be assured that other adults are going to be present. Get the phone number of the place they will be staying and talk with one of the adults there.

These are the things you should and **need** to know. These should be part of your “house rules” from the day they first head off by themselves. If they can’t – or won’t answer these questions – they don’t go, its that **SIMPLE!**

All this works best when you have good, open, and caring relationships with your kids. Remember – they will be more willing to talk to with you if they think you can be trusted, have useful advice to offer, and are open and available to listen and talk without judging them.

Teenagers who are satisfied with their relationships with their parents tend to be more willing to follow the rules. You can help this by involving them: - listening, asking questions, asking for opinions, offering support and praise, and staying involved their life.



## STRATEGY:

## MODEL THE PRACTICE OF KEEPING FAMILY MEMBERS INFORMED OF YOUR WHEREABOUTS OUTSIDE THE HOME

Following the practise of keeping your kids aware of where you are is a great way of showing that you expect the same from them. It also means that if they need you urgently – they know where to get hold of you. Kids learn lots from what they see you do.

## PRIVACY

The teenage years are when your kids start to develop their own personality and their own need for privacy. As they take on more responsibility, knowing what they are up to is important – but this needs to be balanced with a respect for their privacy and their need for ‘space’.

*“Michael started to keep the door to his room closed and made a fuss if we didn’t knock before we entered. We felt suspicious about what he might be hiding from us in the first place – but in the end we all agreed that if he cleaned his room up once a week, and put out his dirty washing, we’d leave him to it.”*







## STRATEGY:

## SHARE THE LOAD



**Teenagers who have a variety of adults watching out for them are less likely to engage in unhealthy and unsafe behaviours.**

When work or other activities keep you away from home and you are unable to supervise your kids, involving other adult whānau members, family friends, or neighbours can be helpful in bridging the gap.

*It could be:*

- neighbour
- friend
- friend's parents
- grand parent
- uncle or aunty
- older brother or sister

Make sure that whoever it is has your contact details (e.g. mobile phone number) just in case for emergencies.

## MAKE YOUR HOME FUN FOR YOUR TEENAGER

Your home should be a welcoming place for teenagers if you want them to spend time there and for them to want their friends to visit. Remember that your teen wants to be with their friends, and not always with you. Have an area available where they can be on their own and not always under your watchful eye. But make it a place where, while it is fun for them and their friends, you can also occasionally breeze in and out.



**KIDS THAT FEEL  
CLOSE TO ONE OR  
MORE PARENTS TEND  
TO DO BETTER IN  
LIFE.**

## **COMMUNICATION**



## \* STRATEGY:

## LISTEN TO YOUR TEENAGER ... WHEN THEY ARE READY TO TALK

**Kids that feel close to one or more parent tend to do better in life.**

It is natural for kids to communicate less with their parents during their teenage years. This is part of growing up. However, communication is one of your most important tools and you just need to look for those moments of contact when you are both there with each other.

Take the time to understand. It might not always be convenient – but moments of contact are much more important during the teenage years. Being approachable is the key even if it is 1 a.m. and you go to bed at 10 p.m.

Try to create situations which make talking easier (driving your teenager to school, having them help you with household tasks). You have to be physically close to your kids for communication to occur. Whenever possible, you should try to do things with them, rather than separately. Although teens may not always accept them, provide opportunities for them to do things with you – but don't be too disappointed if it doesn't always work out. Just keep at it!



## STRATEGY:

## ASK OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS AND LISTEN WITH THE INTENTION TO HEAR

Good communication requires not only good listening – but also knowing the right way to ask questions. You will learn more – and show that you care more - if you ask questions that need more than “yes” or “ no” answers.

Try to:

- **Stop what you are doing - turn off distractions like the TV or stereo**
- **Talk in private if possible if there are others around**
- **Look at your teenager**
- **Give your full attention**
- **Sit at the same level**
- **Listen to what is said without interrupting**

Comment on what you think you heard. “It sounds like . . .” or “So what you’re saying is....” are good ways to begin. If your teenager agrees that what you heard is what they said and they have asked for an answer, give one. If no question has been asked, tell them that you understand. If you did not understand what was said, ask your teen to clarify what they are trying to tell you and repeat the last two steps until you do.

The fact that you understand how your kids feel does not necessarily mean that you agree with their behaviour. Show that you accept your teenager as him- or her-self, regardless of what has or hasn’t been done. It means that you care about their feelings!





## STRATEGY:

## SEND CLEAR AND ENCOURAGING MESSAGES

**Don't criticise your teenager**, even when he does something wrong. It's the behaviour that is wrong or bad, not your teenager. It is not what you say, but how you say it. Constant nagging of teenagers can be a sure way to put them off wanting to talk with you.

Be sure most of what you say is constructive and positive. Rather than reminding them of mistakes, failures, or something they forgot to do, stick with the positive stuff and talk about their successes, accomplishments, and interests. Praise and recognise appropriate behaviour in order to encourage more of that.

When you need to comment, focus on the behaviour or the actions, not your teenager personally.

**✗ NOT** ..... **"You're such a lazy kid – you never do anything around the house"**

**✓ TRY** .... **"I'd really appreciate you giving me a hand with the cleaning today"**

***"Why aren't you up? Are you going to sleep all day? Who said you could use that? Clean the dishes off the table. Hurry up and get dressed. Why did you put that on? Turn down the radio."***

**We may think that such messages teach our kids to be responsible. But when most of the messages they receive are like these, they may end up feeling dumb and unloved.**



## STRATEGY:

## BE OPEN AND TELL THE TRUTH

Teenagers are more likely to respond better to positive comments. Sometimes a nod, a hug, or simply a step toward them is all that is needed to show you understand.

*“Good morning. Thanks for hanging up your clothes. Thanks for washing your plate. I’m glad you got yourself up and dressed. Will you help me please?”*

Teenagers want the truth so don’t try to “protect” them. Tell them what you think - and why. Be honest. Your teens may not agree with you or like what you say but they should respect you. And if you are honest with them, hopefully they will be honest with you. Work to create a feeling of trust in your home. When your teenager hits a problem, you want them to be able to be open and trust that they can discuss something with you without feeling as though they are being ‘judged’.

The more you talk and listen to your teenager the less likelihood there is of a falling out between the two of you.





**NOT DRINKING IS THE  
SAFEST OPTION FOR  
YOUNG PEOPLE UNDER  
18 YRS OF AGE.**

**ALCOHOL IS OUR MOST COMMON  
RECREATIONAL DRUG**

## DID YOU KNOW...?

- \* 8 out of 10 New Zealanders aged 12- 65 years reported drinking alcohol within the past year and around 1.4 million people drank at least once a week.<sup>2</sup>
- \* New Zealanders spend approximately \$85 million per week on retail alcohol sales.<sup>3</sup>
- \* About half of the drinkers under 25 years of age drink large quantities when they drink, as do about a quarter of all adult drinkers.<sup>4</sup>
- \* 1 out of 3 students reported binge drinking (5 or more standard drinks in a 4 hour period) in the past month.<sup>5</sup>
- \* Alcohol is involved in around 1 out of every 3 crimes committed in New Zealand each year.<sup>6</sup> It is also a common factor in violent and sexual assaults (including family violence), child abuse and neglect, and road crashes and other machinery accidents.
- \* Alcohol contributes to more young people dying than **any other drug**. Between 2005 and 2007, alcohol contributed to the deaths of one in four children and young people.<sup>7</sup>
- \* Alcohol is now recognised as a carcinogen (cancer causing) and is proven to raise the risk of breast cancer, mouth, throat, digestive system and liver.
- \* Drinking alcohol during pregnancy can increase the risk of miscarriage, as well as harm to your baby causing a range of lifelong effects. This range of effects is called Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder or FASD for short. The effects can include premature birth, brain damage and physical birth defects. The effects continue after the baby is born and can include developmental delay, learning disabilities, and social, emotional and behavioural problems.
- \* **“NO ALCOHOL” during pregnancy and breast feeding is the safest choice.**
- \* Pure alcohol contains 7 calories per gram or approximately 70 calories per 10 ml of pure alcohol (one standard drink measure).
- \* Drinking coffee, cold showers, drinking more alcohol, sleeping or fresh air do not sober you up. **There is NO way to increase the rate at which your body gets rid of alcohol.**



## STANDARD DRINKS

The standard drinks measure is a simple way for you to work out how much alcohol you are drinking. It reflects the amount of pure alcohol in a drink. One standard drink equals 10 grams of pure alcohol (approximately two teaspoons).

It's not the amount of liquid you are drinking that's important – it's the amount of alcohol it contains. As different types of alcoholic drinks have different amounts of alcohol in them, the number of standard drinks in each can, bottle or cask, will also vary.

It takes our bodies at least 1 hour - and sometimes much longer - to remove one standard drink from our bodies. Women absorb and metabolize alcohol differently than men. They have higher blood alcohol concentration (BAC) after consuming the same amount of alcohol as men, and are more at risk of alcoholic liver disease, heart muscle damage<sup>8</sup>, and brain damage.<sup>9</sup>



You'll find the standard drinks content on the label, container or packaging of each drink.

# DRINKING GUIDELINES – LOWER YOUR RISK

Drinking alcohol has both immediate and long term health effects. Because people are different – there is ***no amount of alcohol that can be said to be safe for everyone***. Low risk drinking guidelines reflect the harms that might arise from single drinking occasions (where there is a risk of injury to self or others) and from the long term health consequences of regular drinking (such as increased risk of cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, liver disease and addiction problems).

## CURRENT LONG-TERM DRINKING GUIDELINES<sup>10</sup> TO LOWER YOUR RISK ADVISE:

### For young people:

- **Not drinking** is the safest option for young people under 18 yrs of age.
- Try to **delay drinking** for as long as possible.
- If under 18 year olds do drink, they should **always be supervised**, drink infrequently and at levels usually below and never exceeding 2 standard drinks.

### For adults:

- 2 standard drinks a day for women and no more than 10 standard drinks a week
- 3 standard drinks a day for men and no more than 15 standard drinks a week



# ALCOHOL AND YOUNG PEOPLE .... WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL ?

"IT'S ONLY ALCOHOL"

"IT DIDN'T DO US ANY HARM."

"IT'S A RITE OF PASSAGE."

"KIDS ARE EXPECTED TO EXPERIMENT."

Alcohol is a huge part of kiwi culture and it would be hard to find any social gathering where alcohol does not play a significant role. Be it a christening, wedding, funeral, birthday party or dinner party, our kids see that alcohol is usually there AND often consumed in excess. Is it any wonder that they regard alcohol as important to their gatherings and celebrations as well?

Although experimenting with alcohol and other drugs can be common among teenagers, it's not always safe - or legal. So it's important to start talking about alcohol and other drugs with them from an early age and to keep talking about it as they grow up. As a parent you have a major influence on your teenager's drinking behaviour and you can help prevent them from drinking alcohol or from its' harmful use. Your influence on your their attitudes and decisions about alcohol is greatest before they start drinking.

Being such a common product it is easy to forget that alcohol is also a depressant drug that may cause serious side effects, particularly for young people. While small amounts of alcohol may be social and fun – larger amounts can be dangerous and even fatal. Alcohol affects young people differently to adults because they are still developing - physically, mentally, and emotionally. It affects the brain's ability to function efficiently and perform complex tasks such as driving, operating machines etc. This is particularly important for teenagers while they learn some of these tasks.

**EARLY DRINKING** Young people are often pressured to start drinking socially but the earlier they start the greater the chance of problems later. Research has found that **young people who started drinking alcohol before the age of 14 were more than 5 times more likely to have problems with alcohol addiction or abuse, compared to those who first used alcohol at age 21 or older.**



**THOSE UNDER 15 YEARS OF AGE ARE AT THE GREATEST RISK OF HARM FROM DRINKING AND NOT DRINKING IN THIS AGE GROUP IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT.**

**THE LAW AND SUPPLY OF ALCOHOL TO MINORS** The minimum legal age for purchasing alcohol in New Zealand is currently 18 years, but there is no legal drinking age in this country. It is however illegal for anyone under the age of 18 years (a minor) to buy alcohol. Under the new Sale and Supply of Alcohol Act 2012, it is also illegal to supply alcohol to a person under 18 years of age unless:-

- **the supplier is the parent or legal guardian of the minor - and the alcohol is supplied in a responsible manner,**
- OR**
- **the person supplying the alcohol has the express consent of the parent or guardian of the minor (as defined in the Care of Children Act 2004), and supplies the alcohol in a responsible manner.**

Parents are encouraged to talk with other parents about alcohol and their kids. As 'a person' who has been given express consent to supply alcohol, (e.g. a parent who is organising an occasion), consideration should be given to responsible supply and hosting practices such as food provision, non-alcoholic options, the strength of alcohol supplied, arrangement for transport and the nature of the occasion. (See the "Parties" section for more ideas).

**YOUNG DRIVERS** Drivers under 20 years of age are subject to a zero-alcohol level. This means they must not drink any alcohol or they face serious penalties. For young drivers the task of driving is more demanding than for experienced drivers. Alcohol reduces your ability to pay attention when you are driving - even when you have had only a little to drink. As young drivers have to spend more of their attention to the driving task than experienced drivers, the effect of alcohol on their driving performance is greater.

**FOR YOUNG PEOPLE UNDER 18 - THE SAFEST OPTION IS TO DELAY DRINKING FOR AS LONG AS POSSIBLE.**



### If you choose to supply young people with alcohol, then ...

- ✱ To minimise the risk of harm to young people aged 15-17, it is best not to supply alcoholic drinks with a combined total of more than 2 standard drinks. In practise – this means just 2 regular sized cans of beer (4%) or premixed spirit (5%).
- ✱ You could also provide lower strength products instead, such as “light beers” of 2.5% alcohol or less. This means you could supply no more than 4 regular size cans or bottles under the current guidelines.
- ✱ There are also a number of non-alcoholic beers on the market that are commonly available through supermarkets and liquor outlets. These may be supplied in moderation with little risk of harm due to their minimal alcohol content.

## BINGE DRINKING

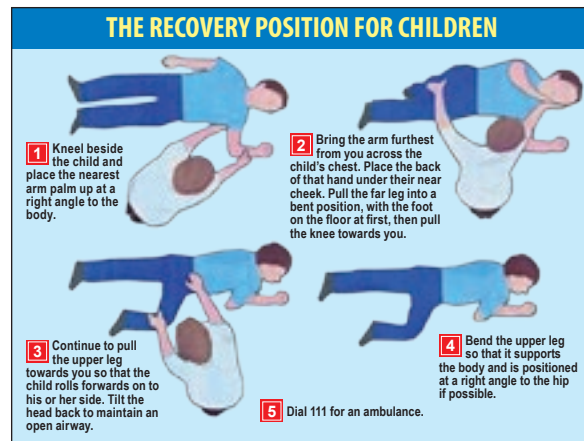
This is one of the most dangerous types of drinking and one of the most common in New Zealand. It is classed as drinking more than 5 standard drinks per occasion (usually a 4 hour period). It also refers to the rate of drinking - that is - consuming drinks in quick succession. It has also been called “drinking to get drunk” or “preloading” – which means people drink to get drunk **before** they go out on the town or to a party. In New Zealand nearly half of drinkers aged 12 to 24, usually drink more than four standard drinks on a single occasion, at least doubling their risk of injury in the six hours after drinking.

The main risks to young people from drinking too much include being involved in violence, other crimes, sexual assaults, unprotected sex, accidental injury, and alcohol poisoning (which can cause death).

## ! IF THINGS GO WRONG...

In recent years there have been a growing number of young people who have died because they drank too much alcohol. As a result – an Auckland coroner<sup>11</sup> commented that parents and caregivers should be aware of the following ...

1. At very high levels, alcohol can cause a person to become unconscious. As a result that person has less control of their breathing and is in danger of their airway becoming blocked. That person may also throw up and breathe in the vomit - and die as a result. If your teenager becomes unconscious, **place them in the recovery position as shown to right below.**
2. **If a person becomes unconscious due to the effects of alcohol, the safest first aid treatment is to dial 111 for an ambulance.** If an ambulance is not available someone will need to keep watch over the unconscious person until they have recovered.
3. If you drink 250mls (1/4 of a 1 litre bottle) or more of 40% spirits over 30 to 60 minutes, you may have consumed a potentially fatal dose of alcohol without feeling drunk. If you then become unconscious, you will need medical assistance immediately.



**DRINKING JUST 250ML OF SPIRITS IN A SHORT PERIOD CAN KILL A TEENAGER.**



## **STRATEGY:**

## **LOOK FOR OPPORTUNITIES TO TALK ABOUT DRUGS**

### **OTHER DRUGS**

From an early age, we are given medicine (drugs) to ease the pains of colds, the flu and other childhood illnesses. We usually trust what we are given and believe that it will make us feel better. Using a drug to solve a problem becomes second nature. However, all drugs have a degree of risk connected with their use, and we need to make that very clear to our kids.

Younger children should never take any medicine without an adult knowing. They should understand that they might get hurt or become even sicker if they have too much. If we can help younger children to understand the risks from drugs – such as aspirin or antibiotics – then we are in a better position to discuss issues about alcohol and other types of drugs in their teenage years. Try to use opportunities like these to talk with your kids about the drugs you are giving them and why they should always be careful no matter what type of drug they are taking.

A useful time to talk about drugs with older kids is when they begin to ask questions or make comments about them. TV, movies, magazines, newspapers – these all provide a starting point for discussion. So is the time when they have to be given medications for illness. Whether the drugs are medicinal, legal or illegal, our children should be aware of the risks associated with their use. Get them to read the labels and read out the side effects if listed. From this – you can discuss the fact that some drugs can cause different reactions and that is why it is important to take care even when taking medicines. Make sure they understand that as with many things, a little might be good but more is not always better – and in fact could be dangerous!

## Ways to help your teens with peer pressure over alcohol or other drugs.

Talk with your teens about ways they can say no to alcohol or other drugs, without them losing face with their friends.

Suggest some ways for them to say no like: -

- ***“No ... I’m in training for my team.”***
- ***“No ... I have a big exam tomorrow.”***
- ***“No ... it makes me feel sick.”***
- ***“No ... I’m allergic to it.”***
- ***“No ... I’m happy enough without it.”***
- ***“No ... I have to be up early in the morning.”***
- ***“No ... not my scene.”***
- ***“No thanks.”***

Also discuss strategies for when their friends want to bring alcohol or other drugs in to your home. Make clear rules about this and explain your reasoning.



***“We told our daughter that she wasn’t allowed to drink alcohol or use drugs in our home with her friends. The only time she is allowed to drink at home is during a family meal or a celebration and then we as her parents decide how much is safe for her to have. Then we talked about the ways she could respond to her friends if they brought drugs or alcohol in to our house”.***





## STRATEGY:

## BE INFORMED ABOUT DRUGS

Encourage your kids to talk with you if someone is pressuring them to take drugs or alcohol. Be pleased that they want to talk with you and avoid getting angry or growling at them.

For some families, knowledge of drugs is second nature. Young people have seen their parents smoking drugs or taking pills – and sometimes this has happened for generations. But for many families, newer drugs such as “party pills” and “herbal highs” are something that they don’t know a lot about.


The internet can be a good source of information about drugs with many websites providing accurate information about the effects of various substances. The New Zealand Drug Foundation has a good home page where you might start to find out more .....

**[www.drugfoundation.org.nz](http://www.drugfoundation.org.nz)**

**You can also phone the free Alcohol Drug Helpline Ph 0800-787-797 for advice**

Take the opportunity to talk with other parents and share what each of you knows. Being aware of what other families are facing can be supportive when dealing with drug and alcohol issues.

Remember to keep your own prescription medicines in safe places where young people can’t get them. Abuse of prescription drugs by young people has become common overseas. If you no longer need the drugs – return them to your local pharmacy – or dispose of them safely (like flush them down the toilet).



**PARTIES ARE PART OF  
THE FUN IN GROWING  
UP AND A GOOD WAY  
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## **PARTIES**



## **STRATEGY: NEGOTIATE THE RULES WITH YOUR TEEN BEFOREHAND**

### **PARTIES**

Parties are part of the fun in growing up and a good way for young people to be able to mix with others. Providing some structure about how they can do this will reassure not only yourself, but also your kids that you are there for them, that you care about them, and that they have some say about their life and how they go about living it.

### **PARTY - AT YOUR HOME**

***You both should agree on some key issues. These might include:***

- What time the party will start – and end.
- Who will be coming.
- If alcohol will be allowed – and if so – how it will be controlled.
- The type of behaviour that will not be acceptable.
- What will happen if the rules are broken.
- Who will supervise.

You may also want to agree on the area you want the party to happen. For example, that the party stays on the property and does not spill out onto the street, that guests only party in the garage, or that no one goes into the bedrooms. Agree on the consequences if these aren't followed – and stick to them, even if it means cancelling the party.

## Alcohol and other drugs

Not every teenager has alcohol at their party, especially younger kids. It is quite OK to say **NO** to alcohol being available. However, if you do agree that alcohol will be allowed, you need to be aware that you will be responsible for supervising those who drink it on your property. In fact – **the law requires this**. In order for things not to get out of hand, some parents have used this strategy:

- Get the names and phone numbers of those attending.
- Talk with their parents about the alcohol issue.
- If their parents agree to alcohol being consumed – get them to indicate how much they agree their teenager may have. Better still, get them to drop their teenager off with the alcohol and to meet you at the door. Getting to know other parents is useful, particularly if problems arise and you need them to collect their teenager.
- Set a limit on the type and amount of alcohol that you will permit – and stick to it.
- Let everyone know what will happen if the rules are broken.
- If alcohol is allowed, make sure that you have plenty of food available throughout the party.
- Have plenty of non-alcoholic drinks on hand and let them know its OK to help themselves. (This is something teenagers may not bring, or feel embarrassed to bring due to 'peer pressure').
- Make arrangements or provisions for safe transport or if you have teenage guests planning on sleeping over, make sure that you have talked this through with their parents first. In the event of a party with a sleepover, be firm on the end time of the party.





## STRATEGY:

## STAY IN CONTROL

If as host you have decided that you do not want guests to use illegal drugs at the party, and you think that drugs are being taken, you need to take action. This could include speaking with the person(s) concerned in private, making clear your 'no drugs' policy and/or informing parents. If you are unable to contact parents, you'll need to be sure that the young person is in a fit state and able to get home, before asking them to leave. If you feel a responsibility to keep them at the party/under your care, you'll need to find out what drugs they have taken and in what quantity. **Don't hesitate to call an ambulance** if you think one is needed (remember that ambulance officers are not required to call the Police for overdoses or drug incidents).

As a parent – you are not just responsible for your own teenager – but also for your guests while they are on your property. Make sure you have additional help from neighbours or friends to actively supervise the party. If it's a larger party – consider hiring security – it might be cheaper than having a trashed house in the long run.

- ✓ Be involved so you can see what is going on. An easy way to do this is to prepare lots of food, and offer this personally to guests throughout the night. By talking with them, you will soon get an idea if anyone has had too much alcohol or been taking drugs.
- ✓ Deal with issues before they get out of hand.
- ✓ Invite other parents over – they could help you serve food and will be able to assist with security if necessary
- ✓ Have one or more people at the entrance to your property to stop problems before they enter. Uninvited guests, those trying to smuggle in alcohol or drugs, or even those who are already drunk or aggressive – are all problems you can do without and should be turned away.

- ✓ Keep the alcohol in a central place, under your control. Even if it means individually labelling each drink and to who it belongs to, this will ensure that you are in control of the amount of alcohol consumed. If you think someone has had enough, then say so and tell them that you will return the remainder of their alcohol to them at the end of the evening.
- ✓ If things do go very wrong, don't hesitate to call the Police as soon as possible.

**It wasn't me!** Although your teenager may be willing to follow the rules for the night, other teenagers may not be as responsible or willing. Have a strategy in place to deal with those that may break the rules of your house. Make the consequences clear at the outset – broken rules means eviction from the party.

### **Remember ...**

**Plans and boundaries help to keep your teenager safer.** You should expect all these things from the parents of your teenager's friends if they were hosting a party with alcohol as well. If you aren't up to providing all of these things – you probably shouldn't be hosting a party with alcohol at your home.





## **STRATEGY: NEGOTIATE THE RULES WITH YOUR TEEN BEFOREHAND**

### **PARTY - AT OTHER PEOPLE'S PLACE**

***Be informed. Your teenager should be able to tell you at least the following:***

- Whose party it is and where it is being held.
- The phone number of the parents hosting the party.
- The time the party will start and finish.
- How they plan to get there – and back home.
- Who they will be going with.
- If there will be alcohol. If so, how it will be provided and monitored.
- If the party will be supervised – by whom – and how?

**If they can't tell you these things – they shouldn't be going until they can.**

Better still, you should phone the parents of the youth who is having the party and get them to provide answers to these questions. Having had contact with other parents helps to keep you informed and make it easier to deal with any problems if they do crop up. It also affirms how much you care about your kids and their safety. An easy way to break the conversation is to phone and ask for directions. That done, you have the chance to discuss your concerns.

It is important to discuss what you expect with your kids and come to an agreement on 'rules' - and the consequences if they are broken - *before* you let them go to a party. In particular, you should also discuss:-

**CURFEW:** You can't control the end of the party – but you can agree on a time for your teenager to be home. Make sure they understand this, that they know the consequences of not being home on time. You should wait up to check they are in on time – and that they are ok – which means not roaring drunk, or with obvious signs of injury. It gives you a chance to ask how their night was, and to show your support for them coming home as agreed.

**ALCOHOL:** If you agree that they can drink, set a limit on how much they are allowed and what sort of alcohol they can drink. Lesser strength products (1 standard drink per bottle or 2-5% alcohol) are preferable. Avoid stronger products – or they will get drunk much quicker with inevitable problems. Also make sure that they have had something to eat before they head out to the party. They should fully understand that if they don't follow the rules – there will be consequences. Always follow through with this if they break them.



*"We made a rule that if Maddie felt a party was 'getting out of hand' that she would text us – and then we would call her back straight away no matter what time of the night. She would say 'do I have to come home?' and we would say 'yes'. She would act grumpy with us, but we would come and pick her up. It was our way of letting her blame us, but keeping her safe and letting her keep face with her mates."*



**LOCATION:** Sometimes parties end up 'moving'. Make sure that you know where your teenager is and, should the party location change, make it a rule that they let you know.

**SLEEPOVERS:** Very often sleepovers are part of a party. It's always a good idea to meet with the parents of the youth who is having the party, and check the sleeping arrangements, and if there is a curfew time and how it is going to be invoked.

**BACK-UP:** You can help them to cope with situations that get out of hand, if you arrange before hand some simple strategies:-

- A buddy. Encourage them to go with a friend or buddy – and to look out for each other throughout the party.
- A "safe" word or sign. If they get into trouble or want to leave, being able to communicate the urgent need for your help can save them from losing face in front of their friends.
- A mobile phone with credit for use in an emergency.

While your teenager is out partying, there should be someone who will be available to be called upon if they need help – no matter what time or what happens. If your teenager calls you for help, no matter what time, be available, understanding and calm. Unless your teenager is clearly distressed, the time for questions is the next day, after a good night's sleep.



**EVEN WITH THE BEST  
PARENTS IN THE  
WORLD, YOUNG PEOPLE  
CAN STILL GET INTO  
TROUBLE**

**WHEN THINGS GO WRONG**

Most teenagers will experiment with alcohol and getting it wrong is not uncommon.

While some young people may periodically drink heavily, most get through it okay!

### **WHAT IF YOUR TEENAGER ...**

- goes to a party when you have forbidden it?
- steals alcohol from your drinks cupboard?
- comes home drunk, vomiting?
- is completely wasted and you have to collect them from a party?

### **Remember ...**

- Go back to any agreements you had made earlier. If consequences were agreed upon, they must be carried out. Give them the opportunity to explain what happened.
- Don't try to reason with a drunken teenager. Wait until the morning when they are sober and you are less angry.
- Explain to them why their behaviour is unacceptable to you and how you feel about it.

If your teen does get very drunk, is unconscious or vomiting continuously, don't leave them alone. Put them on their side in the recovery position, make sure they are breathing and their mouth is empty. Keep them warm.

### **IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO WAKE THEM, DIAL 111 FOR AN AMBULANCE IMMEDIATELY.**

If you are concerned that your teen has a drinking problem, seek out professional help and advice. **The Alcohol Drug Helpline** is a great place to start and is free to phone between 10am and 10pm daily on **Ph 0800-787-797**.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

**Alcohol Advisory Council of New Zealand – ALAC - [www.alac.org.nz](http://www.alac.org.nz)**

Now part of the Government's Health Promotion Agency. The website provides access to a wide range of alcohol-related resources and information.

**New Zealand Drug Foundation - [www.drugfoundation.org.nz](http://www.drugfoundation.org.nz)**

Their free Drugs in Focus booklets are aimed at parents, older teenagers, treatment workers, schools, public health units and other agencies needing good, factual and honest drug information. These can be ordered from their website, which also has a range of alcohol and drug related information.

**[www.parentingstrategies.net](http://www.parentingstrategies.net)**

Free personalised online parenting strategies designed to prevent adolescent alcohol misuse.

**[www.teentools.co.nz](http://www.teentools.co.nz)**

A site that gives parents tools, guidelines and local contacts to assist in your children having a safe and happy journey through the teenage years.

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