



Parents Who Host Lose the Most

Celebrating Graduation During Covid-19

Each year, we re-launch our *Parents Who Host Lose the Most* campaign, reminding parents of graduating Seniors about the dangers of hosting parties that serve alcohol to underage youth. This year, however, with the Covid-19 outbreak, we're taking a slightly different approach.

Graduation is usually an exciting event, and you want to make sure your graduating Senior gets the celebration he or she deserves (despite quarantine). We recognize that this is a difficult time for our Senior class, so we as a Coalition want to provide safety information and party tips to make this season just a little bit easier.

With limited celebration options, we're sending you a friendly reminder that, while high school graduation is a right of passage, underage alcohol use should not be. In other words, we need to ensure that we do not overcompensate for a Senior's disappointment by allowing unsafe and illegal activity.

Drinking is a greater risk for your teen than it is for you, and there are creative ways to celebrate graduation that do not involve alcohol.

The risks of alcohol use are particularly high for youth. Especially during the 16-20 age range, teenagers' brains undergo significant developments. Youth also go through drastic transitions in relationships as they mature into adulthood, and these experiences can leave them feeling emotionally vulnerable.

On a daily basis, teens see positive media portrayals of alcohol use through social media, ads, and commercials, which can even subconsciously affect their views of underage drinking.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, youth actually

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experience side effects of substances differently than adults; they have a lower sensitivity to cues telling them they have had enough. An adult may feel a buzz, for instance, and decide not to order another drink, but a teen is less likely to feel this warning signal.

So, teens who drink have the likelihood of consuming more alcohol than the average adult due to their lowered inhibitions and decreased sensitivity. As you can see, this phenomenon could create issues with consuming too much alcohol, leading to other potentially disastrous consequences.

1. Teens with the following factors are at a particularly high risk for Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD):

- **Family history of AUD:** It's the old nature and nurture situation. If someone in your family has AUD, your teenager is more susceptible due to similar genetics and the influence of that family member.
- **Lack of sleep:** If a teen doesn't get enough sleep on a regular basis (8-9 hours), he or she is more likely to turn to substances to combat the negative effects of long-term fatigue.
- **Teens with older friends:** According to research, a teen in a relationship with someone a couple of years older will have increased access to alcohol and, especially in the case of females, is also more likely to become a victim of sexual abuse under the influence of a substance.
- **Increased stress and demands:** As teens progress in high school and transition into college, their responsibilities increase. Without enough support, a teen may soon become overwhelmed and use alcohol as a coping mechanism.
- **Lack of understanding regarding consequences:** Many teens struggle to see the big picture when making decisions. Having fun with their peers at a party can be a strong incentive for alcohol use, especially if they do not understand its negative effects.



2. Research shows that alcohol has disastrous effects on a developing brain (brain development continues until around age 23):

- Youth who drink alcohol experience decreased memory and learning capacity.
- Teens who drink exhibit poorer, riskier decision-making and goal-planning skills. (Admittedly, the causation could work the other direction: Risk-taking teens are more likely to drink.)
- Youth who drink during the 18-20 age range are at the highest risk for developing Alcohol Use Disorder.
- Alcohol reduces executive functions in the developing brain, causing a more limited ability to think about consequences and a lower likelihood of benefiting from prevention programs.
- Adolescent years are crucial for learning self-regulation (becoming less impulsive and exerting self-control). Alcohol disrupts this process.
- Teenagers who engage in underage drinking demonstrate a greater propensity for turning to other substances such as illegal drugs and for developing Substance Use Disorder. (Remember their reduced ability to feel the effects?)
- Alcohol in a developing brain disrupts the creation of new nerve cells and contributes to neurodegeneration.
- Youth who drink compromise their brains' white matter, which is responsible for operating the nervous system (causing poorer motor skills).



3. Practical and safe celebration tips:

- Host a video call graduation party with friends and family (everyone could decorate their own homes for the occasion!)
- Do an outdoor photo shoot with your graduate
- Encourage your graduate to create a bucket list for things to do after quarantine
- Hold your own Commencement ceremony at home
- Host a drive-by graduation parade
- Build a fort and watch your graduate's favorite movie or show as a family
- Create a video tribute for your graduate
- Use an extension like [Scener](#) (Virtual Movie Theater) to watch a show with friends and family who live elsewhere
- Decorate the front door with graduation photos and streamers
- Order in from your graduate's favorite restaurant

This is a great opportunity to teach your kids that they don't need alcohol to have a good time!



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