

Parental Denial of Teen Substance Abuse

Denial is a refusal to accept or acknowledge the reality or validity of a thing or idea. According to a recent survey, parents are often in denial about their own children's substance abuse behavior:

According to the *National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse XI: Teens and Parents*, an annual back-to-school survey conducted in 2006 by The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University, one-third of teens and nearly half of 17-year-olds attended house parties where parents were present and teens were drinking; smoking marijuana; or using cocaine, Ecstasy, or prescription drugs.

CASA's survey also revealed that teens who say parents were not present at the parties they attended were 16 times likelier to say alcohol was available, 15 times likelier to say illegal and prescription drugs were available and 29 times likelier to say marijuana was available, compared to teens who said parents were always present at the parties they attended.

"Teen drinking and drugging is a parent problem. Too many parents fail to fulfill their responsibility to chaperone their kids' parties. They have no idea how drug- and alcohol-infested their teens' world is," said Joseph A. Califano Jr., CASA's chairman and president (and former US Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare).

Further Parental Attitudes

The survey also found:

- 80% of parents believed that neither alcohol nor marijuana was usually available at parties their teens attended, but 50% of teen partygoers attended parties where alcohol, drugs or both were available.
- 98% of parents said they were normally present during parties they allowed their teens to have at home, but a third of teen partygoers reported that parents were rarely or never present at the parties they attended.
- 99% of parents said they would not be willing to serve alcohol at their teen's party, but 28% of teen partygoers have been at parties at a home where parents were present and teens were drinking alcohol.
- Only 12% of parents saw drugs as their teen's greatest concern, but more than twice as many teens (27%) said drugs were their greatest concern.



"Parents need to wake up and smell the pot and beer," Califano said. "If your teen is having a party at your home, you should not only be there, but be aware of what is going on. And if your teen attends a party at someone else's home, confirm that the parents will be present and that alcohol and drugs will not. The reality is that even when parents are present at a party, some kids will try to sneak in substances."

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Teen Drugged Driving As Common As Drunken Driving

Each day in this country, as many as 9,000 16- and 17-year-old drivers get behind the wheel of a vehicle. Driving-age teenagers have the highest overall crash rates of any age group, and traffic crashes are the leading cause of death for 15- to 20-year-olds. Research shows that drug and alcohol use compound teens' crash risks, and a recent study revealed that teens are just as likely to drive under the influence of marijuana as alcohol.

The National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign has partnered with Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) to warn parents about the prevalence and dangers of drugged and drunken driving.

Research shows that 13% of high school seniors reported driving while high on marijuana. That's nearly equivalent to those who reported driving drunk (14%), even though far more teens reported using alcohol (17%) than marijuana (7%) in the previous 30 days.

According to a SADD/Liberty Mutual survey, nearly 60% of teens who drive say their parents have the most influence on their driving, and teens whose parents enforce penalties for driving-law infractions are less likely to practice risky driving behaviors than teens whose parents do not enforce penalties.

Parents can make a difference with these simple steps:

- Set clear rules and enforce consequences against *any* drug or alcohol use;
- Know where your teen is going and what route he or she is using to get there;
- Reinforce safe driving practices by driving together; and
- Be a good role model.

The National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign provides parents with information about the risks of impaired driving. The campaign encourages parents to discuss the harmful effects of drug use and drugged driving with their teens. Visit www.theantidrug.com for more information.

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How Electronic Media Affect Adolescents

A series of studies published recently in the supplement to the *Journal of Adolescent Health* present the first collection of data examining how electronic media—blogs, instant messaging, chat rooms, e-mail, text messaging and the Internet—affect adolescents. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) funded this supplement. Key findings show:

- Adolescent aggression is not limited to the school yard. Although rates of electronic aggression are lower than rates of physical and verbal aggression, these rates seem to be increasing.
- In 2000, 6% of Internet users 10 to 17 years old said they had been subjected to online harassment; by 2005, the percentage had risen to 9%—an increase of 50%.
- Technology is useful for developing social and communication skills, but it can pose risks to adolescent health and safety.
- Adolescents who were harassed online were more likely to get a detention or be suspended, to skip school, and to experience emotional distress.
- Adolescents who received rude or nasty comments via text messaging were six times more likely to also report feeling unsafe at school.
- New media technology can create new areas of vulnerability to peer victimization for many adolescents. Sixty-four percent of youth who were harassed online were not harassed or bullied at school.

(Source: Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools [OSDFS])

‘Ur Ugly & U Suk!’

By: Donna Clark Love

The recent tragic suicide of a 13-year-old girl demonstrates the great power of electronic communication ... a power that has proved to be lethal. This young teen faced the land mine of digital bullying, which is common to many of today’s teens. Can this land mine be defused, or do we just live with the explosions?



In some ways, cyber-bullying is to bullying what road rage is to violence. Just as road rage is a form of violence that incorporates the use of automobiles and trucks, cyber-bullying is a form of bullying that uses the Internet, instant communication, and text messaging to achieve its sordid objective. This generation is the first to grow up “plugged in.” The Internet has widened the generation gap between children and parents, fueling a digital divide where children are much more adept and experienced than parents. Cliques, clubs and other groups have moved from the school hallways and lunchrooms to chat rooms, social networking sites, online bulletin boards and cell phone circles. About 45 million American children, ages 10-17, are estimated to be online daily.

The i-Safe National Assessment Center surveyed 1,500 middle school students and found that 37% were threatened or bullied online.

Bullied by the Click of a Mouse!

When kids argue and friendships wane, it isn’t unheard of for students to steal others’ passwords and break into IM (instant messaging) accounts with the intent of sending destructive messages under an assumed name. Bullies use their cell phone cameras to take unflattering pictures and then beam them to others or download to the Internet for everyone to see. Some bullies set up websites to circulate rumors or target a particular individual for a smear campaign. MySpace, YouTube, Facebook, and Xanga are the most popular social networking sites where bullies post slanderous blogs and compromising photographs.

If young people find themselves on the receiving end of cyber-bullying, these are action steps that can help:

- Tell a trusted adult—parents, older siblings, grandparents, teachers;
- If you are being bullied, leave the area or stop the activity;
- If you are being bullied through e-mail or IM, block the sender’s messages. Never reply to harassing messages;
- Save any harassing messages and forward them to your Internet service provider;
- If the bullying includes physical threats, tell the police; and

- **Never give out personal identification information such as your home address, school name and location, Social Security number, or cell phone number online.**

Schools can reduce online bullying done **at school** by adopting several strategies:

- Get students to sign agreements to use e-mail and the Internet ethically.
- Set up guidelines for reporting online bullying incidents that have entered the school property via printed e-mails, accessible websites, etc.
- Educate parents about online bullying, cyber-supervision, “netiquette,” and the use of home computers.
- Amend anti-bullying policies and guidelines to include digital bullying.
- Encourage parents to keep computers with Internet access in open, family-used spaces.

When the digital bullying and harassment take place off school property, schools question how much jurisdiction they have. In order to take action, schools need to answer the following questions:

1. Is there a disruption or disorder at school?
2. Is the material causing a substantial interference with the school’s operations?

As the best-selling author Thomas Cahill postulates, “There are turning points—very hinges of history upon which the whole of mankind swings.” Are we committed to teach the skills to navigate the virtual world as we have taught children the skills to cope in the physical world? How many more tragedies will it take?

Donna Clark Love is a nationally recognized expert and trainer in the areas of Bully Prevention and Student Assistance Programs (SAP).

Depression Contributes to Alcohol and Other Drug Use

Youths and young adults who experienced a major depressive episode (MDE) in the past year are more likely to have also used alcohol or illicit drugs for the first time in that past year, according to a recent analysis of data from the *2005 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH)*. Among youths ages 12 to 17 who had not previously used alcohol, those who had experienced a past-year MDE were more than twice as likely to have used alcohol for the first time in that past year as those who did not experience an MDE (29% vs. 14%). Likewise, youths who experienced an MDE in the past year were more than twice as likely to initiate illicit drug use (16% vs. 7%). A similar relationship was found for young adults.

Note: A major depressive episode is defined using DSM-IV diagnostic criteria, which specifies a period of two weeks or longer during which there is either a depressed mood or loss of interest or pleasure and at least four other symptoms that reflect a change in functioning, such as problems with sleep, eating, energy, concentration, and self-image.

(Source: *CESAR Fax 16.49*)



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Compared to 13-year-olds, 14-year-olds are:

- Four times likelier to be offered prescription drugs;
- Three times likelier to be offered Ecstasy;
- Three times likelier to be offered marijuana; and
- Two times likelier to be offered cocaine.

By the time a teen reaches age 17:

- Twenty-seven percent will have personally witnessed drug sales in their neighborhoods;
- Seven out of 10 will have been offered an illegal drug; and
- Almost half (46%) will have attended a party at which teens were drinking alcohol, smoking pot, or using cocaine, Ecstasy or prescription drugs while a parent was present.

It is crucial that parents and other adults become aware of the dangers that their adolescents are exposed to on a daily basis. **Denial is no longer an option.**

For more information, contact: