

# Family Communication

Being a parent brings great joy — and responsibility. It is rewarding and fulfilling, but occasionally very frustrating. Every day as a parent is important, and every day seems to bring new possibilities and new challenges.

Perhaps more than anything, the parenting years are a time to share and prepare ... a time of getting a child ready to face the world alone. This takes place in steps and stages, of course. But successful parenting means, ultimately, letting go — after helping children become self-sufficient and good decision-makers.

During these years, there is much for children to learn — everything from basic facts about the world in which they live to the difference between right and wrong. Schools play a large role. So do churches, synagogues and other places of worship. Friends and relatives, both old and young, are extremely important. But most important to children are their parents.

Some subjects are difficult for parents to talk about with their children. The purpose of this series of articles, based on the Family Talk parent guide by Anheuser-Busch, is to help parents teach children to make sensible choices about drinking — which means not drinking until they are of legal age, and then, if they choose to drink as adults, to do so responsibly.

The Family Talk program encourages straightforward communication between parents and children about drinking. This communication includes everything from having a discussion with your children, to setting a good example, to showing interest in their lives. Sometimes it means doing things that have nothing at all to do with drinking ... things like praising a child to build self-confidence, or sharing activities together as a family.

There are many other sources of advice — your parents, for example, along with close friends and trusted professionals, including a family physician, a member of the clergy, or a school counselor. We urge you to talk to them as well about this and other subjects in child-raising.

## **Taking the emotional charge off alcohol**

Alcohol and drinking need to be put in proper perspective. More than two-thirds of American adults drink alcohol beverages, and the vast majority — 95 percent — do so responsibly and in moderation. Yet drinking can be an emotional subject, and that emotional "charge" can be counter-productive.

For those adults who drink responsibly, the practice is a normal part of life ... a simple pleasure that complements a good meal or a good conversation. Drinking is not all-important and is not an end in and of itself.

Children who become responsible adult drinkers tend to come from families where alcohol is treated matter-of-factly and unemotionally... where drinking has its proper place.

In the following articles, you'll find some suggestions and techniques for beginning this important dialogue with your children. Americans can take pride in the significant progress that has been made in the fight against underage drinking and teen drunk-driving fatalities. Education and awareness initiatives have contributed to this progress, as have the efforts of teens themselves.

*This article was derived from the Family Talk guide for parents, developed by an advisory panel of authorities in the fields of education, family therapy, and alcohol treatment, and through conversations with parents and teens. The full guide may be read online or downloaded by clicking on Document Library on [www.familytalkonline.com](http://www.familytalkonline.com).*

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