

# EMPOWERING CHILDREN TO LIVE DRUG-FREE LIVES

## RESERVE TIME FOR FAMILY

Everyone is busy, but there is no substitute for family time. Kids who are close to their parents are less likely to engage in risky behaviors. The more involved you are in your teens' lives, the more valued they will feel, and the more likely they are to respond to you.

Establishing a regular weekly routine with your teen – even if it's just going out for ice cream – can help the family catch up and establish the open communication that is essential to raising drug-free young people. When teens know where their parents stand on drug use, they are more likely to think twice before experimenting. Of youth who reported that their parents would disapprove of marijuana use, only about 5 percent had used marijuana in the past month. However, of youth who did not perceive parental disapproval, 28 percent reported using marijuana in the past month.

Family time does not have to be a big event or require a lot of advance planning. Even a few minutes of conversation while you're cleaning up after dinner or right before going to bed is enough to let your teens know you're there for them and want to be involved in their lives. Whether you have five minutes or a full Sunday afternoon, take one of these tips for staying in touch:

### *Quick Catch-Up*

- Call or text throughout the day to check in
- Routinely schedule family dinner at home or at a favorite neighborhood restaurant
- Send a private message via their social networking site
- Leave a note on the counter that they will see when they get home from school

### *Day-Long Activities*

- Enjoy a trip to a local museum or gallery to try something new
- Even a day of window shopping at the mall can be a great bonding experience
- Take the family to a local sporting event like a minor league baseball game
- Encourage family activities like hiking, biking, or fishing

- Volunteer together at a local soup kitchen, animal shelter, or nursing home

## **ENFORCING RULES AT HOME**

We all want a peaceful household, but conflict will probably arise when your teen does not follow the rules. A question you might ask is: What is the consequence for breaking the rules? Dr. Ramirez has a few suggestions. The important point here is to not overreact; however, you should set a punishment that has some impact. Remember, you're the parent and you set the rules and consequences, which are not negotiable.

Here are some suggestions for reasonable punishments. Keep in mind that the punishment should not be much longer than three weeks. If it's too long, your child will forget why he's being punished.

- Restrict television or Internet use.
- Have your teen read and discuss information about the harmful effects of drugs, tobacco or alcohol.
- Suspend outside activities such as going to the mall or movies.
- Temporarily restrict friends from coming over to the house and don't allow visits to friends' homes.
- Have your teen perform a community service to encourage positive usage of time.
- Disallow telephone calls.

Here are suggestions for how you might deliver the punishment when they break the rules:

*"Because you stayed at a party where there was no adult supervision and where people were using drugs, you're not going anywhere — no mall, no movies, nowhere — for one week (up to three depending on whether the child lied and on how severe the act was)."*

*"You broke the most important rule — no drugs. We've talked about how I feel about that; here are the consequences of your behavior. You get no phone or television privileges for one week (up to three depending on whether the child lied and on how severe the act was). You do get Internet privileges, so that during that time, you can read a paper on the effects of drugs."*

*Source: The National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign's Behavior Change Expert Panel*