

Talk early and often about alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. Even when it gets tough.



Click here to print a PDF of this article so you can start a conversation with your child

Talking regularly with youth about the dangers of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs reduces their risk of using in the first place.

Know! encourages you to share this Parent Tip with friends and family.

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Start Talking!

Building a Drug-Free Future



Teachers - You are encouraged to share the following information with your parent network.

Know! To Get YOUR Cell Phone Use In-Check

Teens spend an average of nine hours a day on their smartphones. Yes - you say - you've heard it before, you know it's unhealthy for them for a number of reasons, and you have rules in place to reduce their screen time. Very good; you've got your child's phone use in check, but how about yours?

According to Common Sense Media, the average parent spends nearly as much time on their phone as their tweens and teens – and no, it's not all about work. Adults reportedly spend about 1 ½ work-related hours on their phones each day, but as for the other 7 ½ hours, we're spending it just like our children; texting, playing games, watching videos, listening to music, shopping and checking in on social media.

Picture this; the school day has just ended and parents are lined up in the parking lot, waiting for their children. One child jumps into her dad's car, excited to tell him about acing her math test. But before she can even speak, dad gives her the "hold-on-a-minute" signal and continues on with his phone conversation. In another car a mom scrolls through Facebook, liking and commenting on her "friends" pictures and posts, while her younger child in the back seat tries over and over again to get her attention. In yet another car sits a mom and dad together, waiting for their child. But instead of talking to each other, one is texting and the other is checking email. Sound familiar?

While cell phones are fantastic at keeping us connected, entertained, up-to-date and a whole lot more, they can also serve as a huge distraction in our daily lives, our work and specifically in our parenting, as seen in the above examples. In fact, many experts agree that cell phones are ruining families' lives. The reasoning behind it comes from studies like the one led by Catherine Steiner-Adair EdD, a clinical instructor in the department of psychiatry at Harvard. Based on interviews with more than one thousand children ages four to 18, she tells us:



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Empowering Parents To Raise Their Children To Be Substance-Free



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Kids hate our screens: Children say they feel frustrated, sad and angry that they are regularly having to compete with digital devices for their parents' attention. Being "put on hold" by a parent, for example, so that he or she can continue on with a casual phone call or catch up with "friends" on social media, basically says to a child that the person on the other end of the phone or post is more important.

Just because we can connect to work 24/7, doesn't mean we should: Being a good employee shouldn't mean your employer has instant access to you at any given time; yet this is a common reason parents give for remaining "plugged-in," during family time. But feeling like you're always "on-call" makes it hard to relax and even enjoy time spent with family – and that may put your other job at risk – your job of being a good parent.

Screens aren't good for marriages, and that's not good for kids: When you and your significant other are together with a moment of a free time, do you find yourselves on your phones instead of interacting with each other, like the couple in the example above? If so, you're not alone. But if such behavior is regular and ongoing, it can cause problems to arise in your relationship. This not only affects you and your partner, but your children as well. Plus, research has proven time and again that children learn behaviors modeled by their parents. This is not likely an example you'd want your children to follow in their personal relationships.

HOW DO WE FIX IT? Balance and Boundaries in both our personal and professional lives alike – setting reasonable and appropriate limits on our phone use for the good of our families and ourselves. Because as we know, the time we have to parent and raise our children is limited. And when that time is gone, it's gone.

Are you addicted to your smartphone? Keep an eye out for the next Know! Tip and take the quiz to see how much control your phone has over you.

Sources: CNN: Kelly Wallace - How much time do parents spend on screens? As much as their teens. Dec 2016. HelpGuide.org: Smartphone Addiction - Tips for Breaking Free of Compulsive Smartphone Use. Huffington Post: Lori Leibovich - 8 Ways Screens Are Ruining Your Family's Life. Sept 2013. Your Tango: 5 REAL Ways Your Cell Phone Is Ruining Your Life. Feb 2015.

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