



Tips for Parents on Dealing with Parties and Drugs: What Strategies are Available and What Are Their Likely Consequences? (Page 1)

Strategy 1: Doing Nothing or "Don't Ask, Don't Tell"

Parents decide that there is nothing they can do and they can't control their child, who is on the way to adulthood. The likely consequence though is that your child will feel ignored and abandoned in some way and will feel that the unspoken bond of trust has been betrayed, since children usually expect their parents to watch out for them and their safety, even if they rail against it.

What Long-term Lessons are Being Taught?

1. When you have to confront someone you care about, the best strategy is to just ignore things and hope for the best. They probably can't do the right thing, even if they know what it is.
2. It's pointless trusting or consulting my parents because they won't get involved or will feel burdened anyway.

Strategy 2: Doing Everything or "No @\$@ Way"

Parents decide that there is no way that they can trust their child to do the right thing. They forbid party-going and constantly check their child for drug and alcohol use. The child must answer to every inquiry and the parents verify every answer.

What Long-term Lessons are Being Taught?

1. I can't be trusted to do anything on my own; I'm untrustworthy and can't mess up in order to learn.
2. I am not capable of taking responsibility in a difficult situation. People think I shouldn't have choices, just limitations.
3. I'm still a child and need to be micro-managed or I'll be out of control.
4. I need to act like a kid, to prove my parents right OR I need to be "hyper-adult" to prove I'm not a child (and thus, may in fact get in over my head as I attempt to take on too much adult responsibility).

Strategy 3: "Its All In Good Fun" or "I'm my teen's best friend!"

Parents might smoke or drink or use drugs in the house or might bond with their child by telling them about their "good old days" in the 60s and 70s when they too got busted by the cops or pulled over for drunk driving or snuck out of the house and fooled their parents or had a party when grandma and grandpa went away. The idea is that this bonding will encourage the child to share information about sex, drug use and parties and will keep it all from becoming a big deal. Plus, if it goes on in the house, they can keep an eye on it all, right?

What Long-term Lessons are Being Taught?

1. My parents may be more concerned with what I want than what I need.
2. I can be trusted no matter what I do and my parents are really my friends, so if I mess up, it's not such a big deal (and, consequently, I can't really go to them).
3. Something is wrong if someone close to me has more power than I do.
4. The line between freedom and responsibility is blurry and difficult to figure out, because there are never really clear limits or boundaries around potentially dangerous activities.

©2005 Michael Y. Simon, MFT