

The American Counseling Association's "*Counseling Corner*" Weekly Columns

Don't Let The Teen Party Season Overwhelm You

from the American Counseling Association

If you have a teenager living under your roof, then odds are pretty good you're facing the worries that go along with the teen parties that dominate this time of year. Whether it's end-of-school or graduation celebrations or parties celebrating the beginning of the summer pool season, this is when the teen party scene is usually the liveliest.

It's natural for parents to worry about their teens' activities, especially when off partying, but some simple rules and guidelines can reduce both teen and parental stress.

First, insist that that you are given the name, address, phone number and parent names for any party your teen will be attending. If you don't know the family, call the parents to make sure an adult will be present and no alcohol will be available. Make your call an offer to help and you can get your questions answered through a casual conversation without embarrassing your teen.

You also want to clarify driving arrangements and restrictions. Riding with someone who's been drinking or taking drugs is always forbidden. In such cases, your teen should know they can call you at any time for a ride, or that you'll cover cab fare home and that there will be no repercussions or blame.

You want your teenager to understand that he or she is really only responsible for himself or herself. Make it clear there won't be punishment just because others at a party get out of control and act irresponsibly.

Teens should also agree to contact a parent should a party's location be changed. Suggest excuses they can use to call ("I forgot my key") so they won't be embarrassed by checking in.

If your teen wants to sleep over at a friend's, make it clear that you will want to call the parents to confirm they'll be home and that this plan has their blessing.

And be sure to be there when your teen gets home to ensure all is well.

You and your teen should work out the rules together. Get your teen's input and offer suggestions on how to handle situations responsibly. You and your teen should agree on penalties when rules are broken.

Your goal is not to over-parent and ruin your teen's fun, but, rather, to ensure that the upcoming party season is safe and enjoyable for your teen and less worrisome for you.

"Counseling Corner" is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to ACAcorner@counseling.org or visit the ACA website at www.counseling.org

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