



# Family Matters

*Making Family Life Easier*

## Teenagers and Alcohol

You get a text from your teenager, asking if it is okay if he stays out a little longer as he and his friends are really close to moving to the next level in Call of Duty, something they have spent a long time trying to achieve. It's the summer holidays so you agree to it, telling him to make sure that he is home before eleven o'clock, to call if he needs a lift and to enjoy himself! At half ten you hear the front door open and are delighted that he is home early, you call out to him but get no reply, so you go out to the hall to see what is going on. When you get there you find your son drunk and getting sick. In that moment you might feel anger, shock and fear rise up inside you, followed by disappointment and upset. Your initial reaction might be to shout and roar at him, ask him how he could be so stupid and what he was thinking of, to which you will most likely get no reply. So what can you do when your teenager arrives home drunk?

It is well-known that teenagers are in a stage of experimentation – working out who they are, what they like and what they don't like.

Most alcohol use by teenagers is likely to be experimental. Experimental use is usually short term and tends to be motivated by curiosity. Although experimentation with alcohol does not always lead to dependency, it can bring about problems and for this reason it is important for teenagers to have accurate information and guidance in relation to alcohol and other drugs.

Below are some tips on how to handle a teenager who arrives home drunk:

**Stay calm:** talking to a person who is drunk is futile, as alcohol impairs a person's ability to comprehend. It is also more difficult to communicate with your teenager when you yourself are experiencing overwhelming emotions. It is much better therefore to ensure your child gets to bed safely and to wait until they have sobered up before discussing the issue with them. The next day is usually the best time to talk to them.

**Communication:** it is important to remain calm when talking to your teenager about what happened. The aim of the conversation is firstly to understand why they were drinking; was it their first time, did they feel pressurised, or is this something that has been going on for a while and secondly to discuss with them the effects and the consequences of using alcohol.

Finally, it is also important that they face consequences for the bad choices they have made as well as continuing to talk to them about alcohol and other drugs.

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