

SMOKING DRINKING SEX

PARENTING CHALLENGES ★ PAGE 1 OF 2

You teach most by what you model. If you smoke, drink alcohol to "chill out" and watch programs with elicited sex, you are sending a "follow me" message to your children.

SMOKING:

Talk to your children. Show them programs designed for quitting smoking (to quell the myth it is not addictive), get pictures of lungs filled with tar. Have them hold their breath too long and then think about not being able to breathe. Smoking can kill you, period. Be sure your child has that information.

DRINKING:

The body is not designed to assimilate alcohol. Talk to your children about things people have done when they were under the influence of alcohol. Contact M.A.D.D. (Mothers Against Drunk Driving) for pictures, videos of accidents that have happened because one driver was drunk. My friend was killed by a drunk driver when we were in high school; I was in the car. "I'm so sorry" doesn't cut it when a life has been taken away in such a senseless manner.

Teach your children to have agreements that are kept between themselves and their friends—my kids had a "keymaster" at a party. The keymaster didn't drink and decided if each person was capable of driving home—or that person would call home and sleep on the couch. Some parents think that giving the kids the idea of keymaster condones drinking—I see it as an alternative to making a choice that could cost a life. "I do not want you to drink and I really don't want you to drink and drive!" That's the rule. My children knew that if they chose to drink and drive, they would never drive my car again—and if they had a car themselves, it would be sold the next day.

SEX:

If you want your child to abstain from sex, talk to him/her about that standard. Talk about how to get out of a difficult situation. Talk about how to say no. Remind him/her that it is more difficult to say no if you have been drinking alcohol or doing drugs. Be sure your child knows about the use of condoms (that they do not guarantee you won't get pregnant), and know that sex without a condom in today's world can bring a lot of scary health problems with that choice.

I have been told by more than one teenage boy that he didn't use a condom because she was on the pill. HIV and several other transmittable diseases are passed to males who thought they were safe. Talk to your children about these things or let them learn from the street—the message from the street is "Do it! Nothing bad will happen to you!" We have an epidemic of transmittable diseases in the United States; will your child become another

USE OF BOREDOM

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statistic?

Some people think that telling their children about condoms condones having sex. In all the research I've done with teenagers, the number one reason that kids get into trouble is they couldn't think of anything else to do, and the number two reason is they did not think of the consequence of their choice. Children with no information make bad choices. Talk to your children—or find someone who can!