



# THE TEENAGE PHRASEBOOK

YOUNG PEOPLE AND ALCOHOL – Q&A





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IQ works to promote a smarter, healthier attitude towards alcohol throughout Swedish society. Our goal is to persuade more people to drink moderately and for abstinence to be an accepted norm behind the wheel, at work, and amongst children, young people and pregnant women. Find out more about IQ at iq.se.

This book contains numerous quotes from teenagers. All of the quotes are genuine, as are the ages and locations of the teenagers quoted. We have, however, changed all of the teenagers' names and the pictures do not show the teenagers quoted.

# THE TEENAGE PHRASEBOOK

YOUNG PEOPLE AND ALCOHOL – Q&A

ARE YOU AND YOUR CO-PARENT LIVING UNDER DIFFERENT ROOFS?

You can order extra copies, free of charge, at [tonårsparlören.se](http://tonårsparlören.se)

The entire book is also available in both Swedish and English as well as a Swedish-language audiobook.

**KEEP THIS!**



# YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

The teenage years are a very special time in your child's life. Teenagers are navigating the frontier lands between childhood and adulthood and there are a lot of new things to handle: school, friends, being allowed to stay out late, sex, parties and – not least – alcohol. And as if that weren't enough, many teenagers seem to have been cursed with parents who don't understand anything and who always do the wrong thing. Whatever they do...

But even if you, as parents, feel pretty helpless sometimes, there's still a lot you can do. As always, you can show that you care, that you're there for them, and that you're happy to listen to them. And sometimes it's important to be clear about what you expect of them. Because teenagers absolutely do care what their parents say – even if it doesn't always seem that way.

We've written this book in an attempt to make this period in your teenager's life easier – both for you and your teenager.

The Teenage Phrasebook is available in Swedish and English as well as an audiobook.

Kind regards, IQ



# SUMMARY OF ADVICE FOR PARENTS

## 1 DON'T OFFER TEENAGERS ALCOHOL AND DON'T BUY IT FOR THEM.

Teenagers who get alcohol from their parents drink more. You can't teach your child how to drink alcohol in moderation. The only thing you're teaching them is to drink.

## 2 BE INTERESTED AND LISTEN.

A good relationship is mainly about building confidence. Show that you're interested in what your child is thinking and experiencing and take them seriously.

## 3 SHOW THAT YOU CARE.

Being considerate or talking about your feelings with your teenager is never a daft thing to do. If you're worried, tell them why.

## 4 TRUST YOURSELF.

Try to listen to yourself, to what you really think about this and that. As a parent, you have the right to do what feels best for you.

## 5 BE CLEAR AND SET LIMITS.

The more clearly you show what you expect, the easier it is for your teenager to take a stand or to do what you say.

## 6 GET HELP FROM OTHER PARENTS.

It can sometimes be helpful knowing how other families tackle the "everyone else is allowed to" argument when it crops up in discussions with your teenager.

## 7 HELP THEM SAY "NO".

Parents can be a huge help to their teenagers by giving them good arguments to use. Tell them that it's absolutely OK to make up their own minds and say "no", even when everyone else is saying "yes".

## 8 REMEMBER THAT YOU'RE A ROLE MODEL.

Think about the sort of message and values you're conveying to your child.

## 9 HAVE THE COURAGE TO LET GO OF THE REINS.

Your teenager is starting to explore his or her adult identity. Be open to new things, and have the courage to let go of the reins. But show them that you're there for them and that you're happy to help them.

## 10 SHOW LOVE.

Your teenager needs to understand that you will love him or her, whatever happens. Closeness and love mean a lot, however old your child may be.





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# WHY DO TEENAGERS DRINK?

First and foremost, let's get one thing straight: every teenager is completely different. Some of them have had a few sips of beer, some have never drunk any alcohol at all, and others drink every weekend. Then, of course, there are those who have decided not to drink at all. But of those who do drink – and that's fewer than half of all teenagers – there are some reasons that come up time and time again when asked why they drink.

**TO BELONG.** We were all young once, and maybe you remember that being a teenager was far from easy at times. As a teenager, you sometimes feel a little lost and alone, and more than anything else, you want to fit in somewhere, to belong. And that's when alcohol can look very tempting, because it makes you feel like "part of the gang" when you're doing what everyone else does. If other people are doing something, it's often easier to just go along and do the same thing too – much easier than sticking to your guns and saying "no."

**TO SEE WHAT IT'S LIKE BEING GROWN UP.** When you're a teenager, you want to feel like an adult, not a child. And if you think about it, there aren't that many adult things that teenagers are allowed to do – things like living in your own apartment, being paid a monthly wage, or studying at university. Alcohol, on the other hand, is one of all these adult things that teenagers can get hold of, and it's often the desire to feel grown up that tempts teenagers to drink.

*You drink to get drunk,  
and because it's fun.*

*Konja, aged 16, Umeå*

**BECAUSE IT SEEMS EXCITING.** It's hardly surprising that teenagers are curious about alcohol. They've seen people drinking in films and TV programmes since they were small. And they've probably encountered the odd drunken adult or two on Midsummer's or New Year's Eve. So one fine day, they maybe decide to try it for themselves. To find out how it tastes, how it works, and how it feels to be drunk.

**FOR COURAGE.** The whole sex and intimacy thing can be a sensitive subject. And alcohol can feel like something that helps you

take that first leap into the unknown. Or in simple terms, it can make you feel a bit braver and a bit more attractive. And if it doesn't quite work out as you'd hoped, you can always blame the alcohol. Just like an adult.

**BECAUSE YOU THINK IT'S EXPECTED OF YOU.** There are a lot of unwritten rules about what you're supposed to do and how you're supposed to be. It's hard standing up in the face of other people's expectations – and that's true whether you're 14 or 44. And just like adults, teenagers naturally have their own norms when it comes to alcohol and drinking. If you don't drink on New Year's Eve or bring your own bottle to the party, people might think you're weird.

**BECAUSE IT SEEMS LIKE PART OF LIFE.** Films and TV programmes show people drinking quite heavily with no particular ill effects. Young people are inundated with pictures of extravagant drinks with Sunday brunch and glasses of wine against the sunset on social media and in blogs. And young people are also affected by alcohol advertising. They're a malleable target audience precisely because they haven't yet had the time to establish purchasing pattern or brand preferences. Which is precisely why some alcohol producers attempt to influence their potential customers before they're even old enough to legally buy alcohol. And the advertising is presented in the sort of places that young people hang out – such as social media.



*You drink to try something new and  
to see what it's like being drunk.*

*Johanna, aged 15, Umeå*



# WHY IS ALCOHOL DANGEROUS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE?

We probably all know that drinking a lot of alcohol isn't good for us. But what people perhaps don't know is that it is more dangerous to drink when you're young. Here are some of the biggest hazards associated with drinking in your teens.

**IT CAUSES GREATER PHYSICAL HARM.** We're probably all aware that alcohol damages the brain, whatever our age, but young people's brains are even more sensitive than adults, simply because this particular organ continues developing all the way up to the age of 25 or so. Body size plays a part, too. A small body contains less fluid with which to dilute the alcohol, which means you will get drunk more quickly.

**“Young people's brains haven't finished developing, which means they're hit substantially harder by the harmful effects of alcohol than someone who starts drinking at a later age.”**

**Sven Wählin**, Senior Physician, Stockholm Centre for Dependency Disorders

**THEY ARE LESS ABLE TO WEIGH UP CONSEQUENCES.** Most adults can see the consequences of their drinking. Young people are less able to judge when they've had enough, and often get far too drunk far too quickly. It often takes no more than a few years for teenagers who drink heavily to become addicted. For adults, it usually takes longer, and it can be easier for them to spot the warning signals and stop what they're doing.

**IT CAN DAMAGE THEIR SELF-ESTEEM.** As if it weren't enough that your body's developing at a rate of knots in your teens, it's a delicate time for your personality, too. Your teens are when you develop your self-esteem – how you think about yourself and your sense of who you are, in other words. If you get used to doing certain things a certain way – like always chatting to people, flirting and having fun with a glass or bottle in your hand – there's a real risk that you

will always need to get drunk before you have the courage to do these things. A lot of people might feel, initially at least, that the alcohol improves their self-confidence and makes things easier, but in the longer term, it damages their self-esteem. It can make them avoid doing the sort of things they'd actually like to do, but for which they don't quite have the nerve – or make them do things more for other people's sakes than for their own.

*You're scared that if you don't drink,  
people will slag you off to others. Tell  
them that you're boring, stuff like that.*

*Petrus, aged 16, Gothenburg*

**THEY CAN END UP IN TROUBLE.** Alcohol and violence go hand in hand. Alcohol is involved in almost 6 out of every 10 cases of physical violence in a public space – either the person committing the violence or the person being attacked (or both) are intoxicated. The risk of all sorts of serious accidents increases, because when you're drunk, your brain doesn't work as well as it usually does. Accidents involving falls, burns or drowning, to mention just a few examples. But alcohol can lead to potentially serious interpersonal problems, too: surveys show that many teenagers say that when they were drunk, they got into fights with their friends, had sex when they didn't really want to, or had unprotected sex.

**INCREASED RISK OF ROAD TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS.** The risk of an accident increases when the non-sober driver has a blood alcohol concentration of just 0.2 promille. So even if your teenager isn't the one driving, it's vitally important that he or she doesn't ride with a driver who's been drinking alcohol. 12% of ninth graders state that they have done precisely that. And when it comes to mopeds, there's another statistic that might give you pause for thought: in fatal accidents where the driver was under 18 years of age, half of all mopeds had been tuned up and three in every five moped riders killed was under the influence of alcohol. It's really important to stress to your teenager that they should never ride with a driver who's been drinking, and to make sure that they leave their moped at home when they're going to a party.

**EARLY DEBUTANTS CAN HAVE PROBLEMS LATER IN LIFE.** The vast majority of those who drink heavily in their teens cut down as they get older. But it's very easy for the alcohol habits you acquire as a teenager to stay with you throughout your life. And there's also an increased risk that teenagers who drink will also try other drugs, such as tobacco or narcotics. And on top of that, people who drink heavily in their teens are clearly overrepresented in the statistics for those who commit violent crimes.



# TALKING ABOUT ALCOHOL

With some teenagers, it's easy to talk about anything and everything. With others, they simply mutter something inaudible and shut themselves in their room as soon as you open your mouth. And not all parents are the same either, come to that. But there is something that's true of all children, whatever they or you are like: children that have a close relationship with their parents and who know what their parents expect are the ones who do best.

**BUILD UP A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP.** A close relationship isn't something you build, just like that, over the course of an afternoon on the sofa. It's more about building confidence and trust and about accepting the relationship on the young person's terms. A lot of parents feel that their teenagers are shutting them out of their lives, but that's not actually the case. They still need their parents as much as they ever did.

**BE PERSONAL.** The best way to win your teenager's confidence is to show that you care, that you're interested in what they think and what they're going through. You can talk about your own experiences, but you don't have to go into detail: it's enough to tell them that you understand.



**A teenager will listen to an adult who knows something and is happy to talk about it. It's as simple as that. They need the support that comes from the safety and security that an adult can provide and which they, themselves, lack."**

**Bengt Grandelius**, Registered Psychologist and family therapist

**TELL THEM WHY YOU'RE WORRIED.** Simply forbidding things and telling children that they're not allowed to do something is not an effective approach. If they're going to listen to what you say, they need to understand why you're saying it. Explain why you're worried, how it feels to be a parent, and what you're afraid of. At the same time, knowing that boundaries exist and where they lie is obviously important to your child, and reassuring too.



**AVOID CROSS-EXAMINATIONS.** Try not to make a big thing of your teenager's attitude towards alcohol, or to worry yourself sick about it. Talk a bit about it from time to time and show them that you understand what it's like when their friends are pushing them to try it. That'll help your child to talk about it on their own accord. And don't assume that all young people, or your particular teenager, drink. But if you are worried, air your concerns together with your teenager, rather than launching some kind of cross-examination – all that will do is create a distance between you. And trust that your teenager will listen to your concerns.

*My parents don't talk to me about alcohol very much. The only thing they've said is, "Of course, you know it's wrong."*


*Adrian, aged 15, Umeå*

**REASSURE THEM THAT IT'S OK TO TELL YOU THINGS.** It's important that your teenager understands that you will still love him or her, whatever happens. Children need to feel that they can be honest without their parents losing their temper or throwing a fit. This might sound obvious, but can actually be one of the hardest things about being a teenager's parent. On the one hand, you're worried about what might happen and really would prefer not to hear about drunken parties. On the other hand, you'd probably like to know

what's going on in your child's life. But you have to be prepared to handle the truth and the child has to feel that he or she did the right thing by telling you.

**WHEN YOU HEAR THINGS YOU'D RATHER NOT HEAR.** When your child tells you what's happening, you might get to learn about things that you'd really rather not have known. Sit down with your child and tell them how worried you are. Try and stay calm and determined, so that your child knows where they stand. Sometimes, that's just not possible, and you have to allow yourself to shout or cry for a while. But even if you don't always manage to stay calm, your child will understand that you care.

**DISCUSS EVERYTHING UNDER THE SUN.** The basis of a close relationship is often the fact that you are in the habit of talking about everything under the sun. It might be how their day went at school, what your child thinks about something, or how their friends are doing. Basically, anything at all that shows that you're interested. If you're in the habit of discussing things, talking about alcohol and other drugs without it being such a big thing becomes a lot easier and more natural.



# SHOULD YOU OFFER YOUR TEENAGER A DRINK AT HOME?

Some parents try to eliminate the “forbidden fruit” aspect of alcohol by offering their teenager half a glass of wine with their dinner or a beer in the sauna. Others think it’s OK to allow their children to see what alcohol tastes like in the belief that they’ll find it revolting. But whatever you think is the best approach, the research all shows the same thing: if you offer children alcohol, you’re telling them it’s OK to drink, even though you’re not an adult. You can’t, in other words, teach youngsters how to drink alcohol in moderation by offering them a drink at home. The only thing you’re teaching them is to drink.

**IT SENDS THE WRONG SIGNALS.** The law does not prohibit you of-  
fering your own children a small quantity of alcohol, provided it’s  
done in a controlled manner. It’s not illegal, in other words, to offer  
your teenager a splash of wine at the dinner table. But even if the  
law says it’s OK, it sends your teenager the wrong signals. If you  
explain that alcohol can cause physical harm and that it’s actually  
dangerous, isn’t it going to look a bit odd if you offer them a glass  
now and then? It can actually give the impression that you, as a  
parent, don’t care.

*My parents let me have a taste  
when they’re drinking wine.  
They don’t really mind that much.  
They just laugh and think it’s fun.*

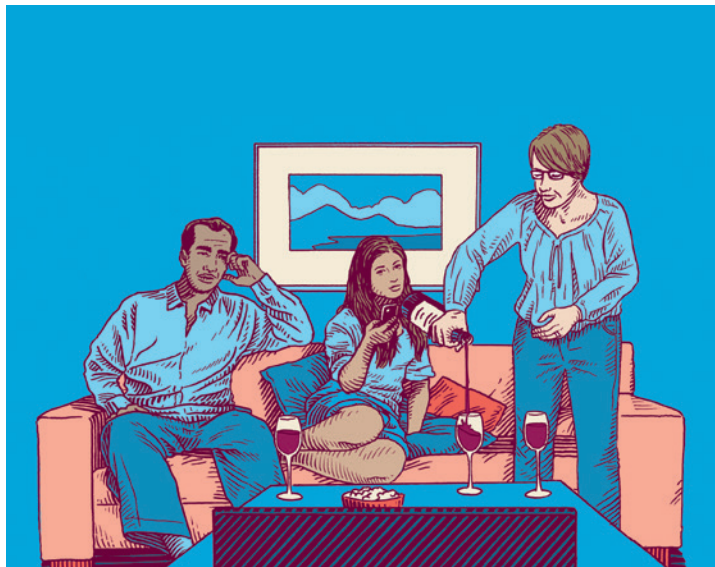
*Majken, aged 15, Örebro*

**IT DOESN’T MAKE TEENAGERS DRINK LESS.** Teenagers are seldom  
interested in a relaxed, moderate approach to alcohol. Teenagers  
who drink don’t do so to relax or because it tastes good. Young  
people primarily drink to get drunk. There is no research showing  
that a teenager who drinks half a glass of wine at home drinks less  
when they’re out later that evening with their friends. There is, how-  
ever, research showing that teenagers who are offered alcohol at  
home drink more in general. If you’re allowed to drink at home, it’s  
like a permission slip to drink when you’re out too.



**YOUR ATTITUDE MATTERS.** Your attitude is very important in determining whether your teenager drinks. One in every five ninth graders whose parents think it's OK for teenagers to drink alcohol binge drink alcohol every month. If you ask ninth graders whose parents say "no", fewer than 6% have been drunk that often.

**PRESENT A UNITED FAMILY FRONT.** Try and make sure that all of the adult members of the family have the same attitude towards offering teenagers alcohol at home. Come to an agreement with the other parent or the new partner as to where the boundary lies.



*When my parents drink, I usually take a quick swig when they're not looking. Because that way, you know what it tastes like and can sort of get used to it.*

*Sanna, aged 15, Gothenburg*



# SHOULD YOU DRINK?

Teenagers will often say, "But you drink!" when you make it clear that they shouldn't. But the fact of the matter is that adults are allowed to drink alcohol and that teenagers below the age of 18 aren't. Just because your teenager isn't allowed to drive a car, it doesn't mean you shouldn't drive, and it's the same with drinking alcohol. Your attitude to and relationship with alcohol will, however, affect the way your teenager views it. Just remember: you're a role model for your kids.

**TALK ABOUT IT.** Tell your children what you think about alcohol and drinking. Talk about why you drink and about why adults are allowed to drink but children aren't. Also having a glass of wine with your meal is one thing; getting drunk is another. Make it clear that you're open to a discussion so that you can help your child develop their own opinions.

**HAVE THE COURAGE TO BE AN ADULT.** Be clear that teenagers mustn't drink. The fact that adults do is another matter entirely – they're old enough to take responsibility for themselves. Don't give way because you're worried about a potential row, or because conflict makes you uncomfortable. You're the adult – which means your opinions are important and that you have to take responsibility by taking a decision.

**GET HELP IF YOU NEED IT.** Drinking habits can easily be passed on to the next generation. Children who grow up in families where alcohol is abused or is a problem are at risk, and their consumption can be influenced both by their family's situation and genetic factors. One in five ninth graders has experienced one or more of their parents drinking too much alcohol and 1 in 10 say that they wanted to hide or pour away the alcohol in the house. If a member of the family is a problem drinker, help and support is available, both for the teenager and for the adult. Visit the [alkoholprofilen.se](http://alkoholprofilen.se) and [1177.se](http://1177.se) websites and answer a few simple questions to get an idea of the situation when it comes to your own consumption levels. It's a test worth doing and the results can be interesting for a wide range of reasons.



# SHOULD YOU BUY ALCOHOL FOR THEM?

A lot of children ask their parents to buy alcohol for them. And it's hard for a lot of parents to refuse. Most probably want the best for their children, and they'd like to show their teenager that they trust them, or perhaps they think that this way, they can prevent them buying alcohol from illegal sources. Sadly, it seldom works out as they hope. What follows are some arguments that you might find helpful if you're in doubt.

**TEENAGERS SAY IT'S WRONG.** Surveys show that the majority of teenagers think that it's wrong for parents to buy alcohol for their children. It's not uncommon for teenagers to nag sometimes, just to see where the boundaries lie, and it doesn't actually mean that they want their parents to give in to them. Because if you do, your teenager might well start to wonder what you actually mean when you warn them about alcohol but, at the same time, are willing to buy it for them. Setting rules and sticking to them is a way of showing you care. Breaking the rules can be interpreted as meaning that you don't care.

*Everyone knows someone who knows someone who'll buy it for you. All they want is the money - they don't care that you're too young.*

*Liv, aged 15, Gothenburg*

**IT'S ILLEGAL.** Selling alcohol to anyone under the age of 20 is, as you're undoubtedly aware, prohibited – unless they're being served in a restaurant or buying "folköl" (medium strength beer), where the minimum age is 18. Anyone buying alcohol for minors can be fined or imprisoned – it's the person supplying a minor with alcohol who commits the crime, not the minor for whom it is bought.

**IT'S NO GUARANTEE THAT THEY'LL DRINK LESS – QUITE THE REVERSE.** A lot of adults think that they'll have a better idea of what their teenagers are drinking if they buy the alcohol for them. They think that a few ciders are better than a bottle of spirits. But teenagers' drinking is usually more about getting drunk than about sipping a cider. A teenager who's given a couple of bottles of beer or alcopop

by their parents is unlikely to be satisfied with that. It's more likely to be a bonus, given that they're planning to drink anyway. There is no evidence to show that young people avoid contacting illegal dealers, for example, just because their parents have given them a few beers.

#### **NO. EVERYONE ELSE'S PARENTS ARE NOT GIVING THEM ALCOHOL.**

Many parents are worried that their children will be left out. Young people are very prone to believing that everyone else is allowed to do things or is doing things that they, themselves, are not allowed to do. It's a concept that's called "majority misunderstanding". In reality, the vast majority of teenagers have the same discussions with their parents, and the vast majority of parents are just as worried that their children will be excluded from the group. The solution is to talk to other parents of your teenager's classmates or friends and agree on a "one rule for all" solution.







# PREARRANGED TIMES?

Most adults would probably agree that rules and prearranged times are a good idea when you have teenagers in the family. And most teenagers will understand that parents do worry and that they have to be home by a set time. But making the concept work in practice can be a bit tricky sometimes. Here are a few ideas that might help.

**REACH AN AGREEMENT.** It's often a good idea to sit down and discuss a suitable "home by" time with your teenager. Be clear about why prearranged times are important and the sort of things you worry about. Listen to what your child thinks, to their opinions. You don't absolutely have to agree – children expect parents to have the final say. But once you've talked about it together, most teenagers say they find it easier to stick to an agreement and come home on time.

**“As adults, we have a shared responsibility for creating the climate in which our children grow up. It's not always easy, but if the parents discuss the issues before problems arise, it does make life considerably easier.”**

**Lotta Hjalmarsson Österholm,**  
Drug Prevention Coordinator, Östergötland County Council

**TALK TO OTHER PARENTS.** One of the most commonly used arguments by teenagers on the subject of why teenagers don't like prearranged times is that "everyone else is allowed to...". But that's usually just a perception that a lot of teenagers share. One way of dealing with this can be to talk to the parents of some of your teenager's friends about establishing a shared set of rules. This also makes life easier for your teenagers, because they can all come home together. But you don't have to do what everyone else does – the most important thing is you stick to your principles.

**PRESENT A UNITED FRONT.** It's important to be consistent if you're going to ensure that your teenager doesn't lose respect for the whole prearranged time thing. If one parent says that the teenager can come home at 01.30 when the other has said 11.30, it sends mixed signals. It's worth striving to present a united front, even if you share custody of a teenager.

**“A good relationship between parents and their children is the most important thing in ensuring a child doesn't start drinking. Clarity is also incredibly important. Your child has to know what the rules are and what you expect of them.”**

**Håkan Fransson,**  
Drug Prevention Officer, Öckerö Municipality

**SET AN INTERVAL.** The whole “coming home at a precise time” thing can be difficult, and that's not just true for teenagers. Something could happen en route – the bus might be late or the walk home might take longer than expected. So try and show a bit of tolerance when your teenager is 15 minutes late home.

*I sometimes tell my parents that  
I'm going to see someone they know  
so that I can stay out longer.*

*Simon, aged 16, Umeå*





## YES OR NO?

Being a parent often means handling tricky decisions. You've been a Mum or Dad for a while now, so you know what we're talking about. You want to show your kids that you trust them, but at the same time, you don't want them to get into trouble. No one else can tell you where you should draw the line for your teenager from one context to another. You're the one who has to decide what is OK and what is not OK.

**HAVE THE COURAGE OF YOUR CONVICTIONS.** Listen to yourself and trust your opinions. As a parent, you have the right to decide what you think is the best thing to do. The more clearly you show your teenager what you expect, the easier it is for your teenager to accept it. And try to stand by what you think, even if someone ends up getting angry.

**EXPLAIN WHY.** If you say "No" to something, tell your teenager why you've said it. It's not about your son or daughter deciding whether you're right or wrong. It's about him or her understanding that there are good reasons why you've said "No" and that you're not just saying it for the sake of saying it.

*Getting whatever you want  
doesn't make you happier. You have  
to long for some things, too.*

*Elina, aged 15, Örebro*

**ENCOURAGE DEBATE.** Teenagers are in the midst of developing their own ideas and opinions, so it's important that they know what their parents think about things. The best thing you can do is to stand up for what you believe and tell them why you want things to be a particular way. Over and over again, if necessary. If you start quarrelling, it's not the end of the world – it can sometimes be

good for both of you to get things off your chest and it's also a way for teenagers to establish where you draw the line.

**IF IN DOUBT, THINK ABOUT IT.** You can't always be absolutely certain, right from the get-go, or be prepared when an unexpected situation arises. If your teenager asks you something and you're not really certain what you think, you can try saying that you'd like to think about it and maybe talk to someone else about it before you give them your answer. It's about showing respect for your teenager and showing them that taking a stand isn't always easy.


**BEING A PARENT ISN'T THE SAME AS BEING A FRIEND.** Letting things go doesn't make you a nicer or a better parent. Teenagers don't need another friend – they need an adult they can rely on. The trick is to be close to your child, be able to talk about anything and everything, to share confidences – and, at the same time, to be an adult.

*If your parents just say OK all the time, they don't really care.*

*Eddie, aged 15, Umeå*







# HOW MUCH SHOULD YOU WORRY?

A lot of teenagers would probably like it if their parents didn't worry all the time. But the vast majority of them, in their heart of hearts, probably want someone to show that they care. Worrying yourself to death, on the other hand, doesn't help anyone or anything. Try and turn your worries into something constructive instead.

**AGREE ON SOMETHING THAT WILL MAKE YOU WORRY LESS.** Talk about the best way to resolve your worry issues together. Maybe your teenager could call or message you during the evening while they're out? Maybe you could agree on a time when they'll call or text so you avoid calling a phone that no one answers and getting more and more worried.

**TELL THEM HOW YOU FEEL.** However good your intentions, even the most caring reminders can be boring and sound like nagging. Teenagers can, just like everyone else, attempt to empathise with another person's feelings, so tell them how worried you are, what it's like being a parent, and how it feels when you don't really know they're OK. By telling your teenager this sort of thing, you show them that you trust them to be able to be responsible.

**KIDS DON'T EVER WANT TO MAKE THEIR PARENTS UNHAPPY.** It might sometimes feel as though your teenager wants to hurt you, but you have to try and look past this tough shell and remember that behind it, there's a child. No teenager really wants their parents to be unhappy. The chances of a teenager taking slightly better care of themselves increase when they know that they have a parent who cares.

**YOU CAN'T CONTROL EVERYTHING.** If a teenager has made up his or her mind to drink, then he or she will probably do precisely that. It's regrettable that it's so easy for teenagers to get hold of alcohol, but that's not something that you can prevent all by yourself. So shouldering all of the blame and thinking you're a bad parent is pointless. You can, of course, influence your teenager through the positions you take, but you can't eliminate all the other factors that also exert an influence.



# WHAT IF THEY BREAK THE RULES?

If you've agreed on a rule and they break it, then it's important to put your foot down. Some parents use grounding as a punishment, while some content themselves with a thorough telling off. It's up to you to decide what the best approach is. The most important thing is that your teenager understands that what they did was wrong and that they learn from the experience.

**TELL THEM HOW WORRIED YOU WERE.** Showing that you care or talking about your feelings with your children is never ridiculous or stupid. It must be made crystal clear to your teenager that he or she makes you very worried when they drink alcohol or come home late, for example.

**ESTABLISH THE CONSEQUENCES OF BREAKING THE RULES.** Parents and teenagers alike tend to feel better if they've agreed in advance what the consequences will be if they break the rules. Why not have an open discussion about what will happen if he or she comes home late, for example. It's good if it feels like a mutual agreement.

**TALK ABOUT IT TOGETHER.** If your teenager comes home late and you haven't already decided on the consequences, then you really do need to say something. If you say nothing and simply impose a punishment, there's a risk that your teenager will close themselves off and that the punishment will have the opposite effect of what you intended. Talk to your teenager about what he or she thinks is a reasonable consequence and about what you both can do to ensure it doesn't happen again.

**AVOID EMPTY THREATS.** Sometimes, your patience runs out and you simply can't handle a talk right now. When this happens, it's very easy to simply impose a punishment without having really thought about it. And you might regret that when you've calmed down a bit. Or you might even forget about what you said in the heat of the moment and it becomes an empty threat, rather than something that enables the teenager to learn from their mistake. And too many empty threats mean that teenagers lose respect for what their parent says. So try and stand by what you've said and what you've agreed. If you've said something in haste and now regret it, then say so. The most important thing is that you talk about it.

*My parents haven't told me what I am and am not allowed to do. I do what I want and deal with the consequences, whatever they may be.*

*Axel, aged 15, Umeå*



*If you get punished, you just get annoyed and angry. You don't learn anything from it.*

*Melissa, aged 14, Örebro*





# NEW FRIENDS

The teenage years are often a time when you make new friendships. A lot of this is due to the fact that many teenagers change school at this age, of course, but it's also because, as they grow older, they outgrow their old friends. And who you socialise with is particularly important at this age. As a parent, it's important that you don't attempt to control their friendships – rather that you provide support, when necessary.

**DON'T FEEL LEFT OUT.** If your teenager makes a load of new friends, it's very easy for him or her to be swallowed up by all the novelty. As a parent, you can feel unimportant, excluded, which can sometimes be a bit painful. But don't forget that a parent is always important to a child. Be curious, instead, and happy about all the new friends that your son or daughter has made.

**BE OPEN.** You might feel that your teenager's new friends are not the sort of friends you would have chosen, but try and keep an open mind and not to lecture them about who is a suitable friend and who isn't. After all, it's your teenager who will be spending time with them, not you. It's better to tell them that their friends are welcome in your home, so that you have the chance to get to know them. And talk about it with your teenager too – talk about why they've chosen to be friends with these particular people. Listen, but don't judge.

*If your friends freeze you out because you don't drink, they're not real friends.*

*Emmanuel, aged 16, Umeå*

**ASK FOR A NAME AND A PHONE NUMBER.** There's nothing at all strange about asking for the phone number of the friend or the friend's parents. Ask your teenager or look it up yourself. Make sure you explain why you want the number. It's not because you don't trust your teenager: it's because it's good to have if something happens. And if your teenager is going to be sleeping over at a friend's house, it's always a good idea to check with the friend's parents that it's OK. Your teenager might complain a bit, but you can be sure that in their heart of hearts, they appreciate you keeping an eye out for them.





# YOUNG PEOPLE WHO DON'T DRINK

Virtually no parent likes their teenager drinking. But at the same time, a lot of people say that it's part of growing up, which is a little odd. Talking about drinking as some sort of phase that all young people go through is like saying it's a natural part of their development. And it very definitely isn't. Nowadays, over half of all ninth graders and one in five 2<sup>nd</sup> year upper secondary school students don't drink at all.

**YOUNG PEOPLE ARE DRINKING LESS AND LESS.** Both the amount consumed on each occasion and the number of teenagers who drink at all are falling. And the number who drink a fairly large amount of alcohol every month has declined too. The number of ninth graders who have been drunk before the age of 13 has fallen from 20% in 2000 to just over 4% in 2017. But the fact that the trend is moving in the right direction doesn't mean that you, as a parent, can sit back and relax. Your job now is to make sure that this trend doesn't reverse.

**SOBER ISN'T THE SAME AS BORING.** Attitudes towards young people who don't drink are often judgemental. Some people delude themselves that choosing to be sober means you're a wimp or boring, and that you don't know how to have a good time, when in fact, a teenager who has chosen not to drink is just like anyone else, albeit perhaps a little better informed.

**DOUBLE STANDARDS.** Some adults remember their own teenage years as a time when you drank to be sociable and to give you "courage". Society's norms often say that you should drink alcohol, but that you should do so with moderation. Most of us warn our teenagers, but silently, we probably expect them to do the same sort of things we did. You might like to think about what sort of message you are sending your teenager. If, on the one hand, you ask your teenager not to drink and then, on the other hand, say that adults who don't drink are bores, you're displaying a double standard. And it can be very difficult for your teenager to decipher or understand what you actually mean.

**YOUNG PEOPLE WHO SAY "NO".** Just over 500 young people aged between 15 and 17 were asked whether it was difficult to say "no" to

alcohol. 24% said that it was difficult and 13% said that it could be very difficult. The most common reason they give for this difficulty is peer pressure. A massive 61% drink because other people do. Unfortunately, it turns into a somewhat idiotic and vicious circle when a lot of people drink because "everyone else" is doing it. A little bit of help from you, as their parent, can make it easier for your teenager to say "no". Tell them that you found it hard to say "no" when you were young, that it's completely OK to do so, and that having the courage to go against the flow often wins you a lot of respect. And you might also like to tell them that it isn't true that all young people drink.

*I'm a little scared of getting drunk. You don't want to embarrass yourself, after all.*

*Mikaela, aged 16, Gothenburg*

**DISCUSS YOUR OWN DRINKING.** Not every adult drinks, of course, but almost 9 out of every 10 do. Talk about your own experiences with alcohol without going into details about the sort of things that might embarrass you. Drinking is a taboo subject in some families, but try and keep an open mind when it comes to your own alcohol consumption. And be prepared for criticism and to be questioned.

*Not drinking is strong.  
It shows you have self-respect.*

*Jasmine, aged 16, Umeå*





# WAITING UP?

Should you stay up at night, waiting until your teenager saunters in through the door, or can you rely on them coming home as planned? This is obviously going to differ from one family to another, but the important thing is that you, as a parent, are happy with the situation. Some teenagers like their parents being up when they come home, while others feel that if their parents go to bed, it shows that they trust them. But the one thing they all have in common is that they all want their parents to notice if something's gone wrong.

**RELAX WHILE YOU WAIT.** If you decide to wait up, it's perfectly OK to just relax and be there. Once your teenager comes home, then you can be alert and ready to listen if he or she wants to talk.

**ASK THEM TO WAKE YOU.** If you simply can't stay up late, there's nothing wrong with that. It doesn't have to mean you don't care. Ask your child to come into your room and gently wake you to let you know that they've come home. That way, you'll know that everything is OK and you can relax and go back to sleep.

*I get annoyed for a while when my parents worry, but afterwards, you realise it's because they care.*  
Ella, aged 15, Umeå


**SET YOUR ALARM CLOCK.** If you'd rather not be woken up and don't like the idea of lying awake, worrying, you could set an alarm clock to ring in the hall outside your bedroom. Say you set it for half an hour after the time when your teenager's supposed to be home, if they come home on time, they can simply turn the alarm clock off and you can continue to sleep undisturbed. Otherwise, you'll wake up and can start investigating why your teenager hasn't come home.

**KEEP IN TOUCH.** Ask your teenager to call or message you at some point in the evening, to check in. Agree a time when you'll be in touch and what he or she should do if they're delayed.



**IF THEY DON'T COME HOME.** The first and most important thing is, of course, to find out where your teenager is. But if he or she isn't answering the phone, you need to contact their friends, or the friends' parents. If you don't get an answer, it might be time to go out and start searching, partly because it's incredibly stressful just sitting and waiting and getting more and more worried, and partly because it can help you worry less if you're actively doing something constructive. It can also act as a clear signal to your teenager that you care and that the time you agreed actually means something. On the other hand, you can't run around all night long looking for them, so make sure you agree in advance what you will do, if necessary.





# IF YOUR TEENAGER COMES HOME DRUNK

However much you've talked about and discussed things, however much information you've given them and however much you've shown them that you care, your teenager might still come home drunk. In one sense, you can be glad that your teenager has come home, because at least, at home, there's someone who cares, which is far from certain if they ended up somewhere else. But what do you do when you have a teenager standing in your hall, about to be sick?

**THE DISCUSSION CAN WAIT.** You might well have drunk too much, yourself, at some point in your life, and you know just how bad you can feel. When that happens, you don't feel big or strong, however old you might be, and it's nice to have someone there to help you and to talk calmly to you. Throwing a fit and starting a row is not the right thing to do – not there and then. Make sure your drunken teenager drinks some water and put a bucket beside their bed. Let them sleep for a few hours and sober up before you talk about it. But you can still let them know that this is not OK and that you want to talk about it tomorrow.

**TELL THEM HOW YOU FEEL.** If it's unacceptable to you that your son or daughter is drinking alcohol, then you need to say so, straight out. It's better to show your feelings than to worry yourself sick and get wound up in silence. That'll just make things worse. Being silently aggrieved is worse than saying what you think.

*I never come home on time.  
As long as I come home, my parents are happy.  
Ted, aged 16, Umeå*

**THERE'S A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BEING STUPID AND DOING SOMETHING STUPID.** Coming home drunk doesn't mean that your teenager is stupid. What it means is that he or she has done something stupid. Teenagers are particularly sensitive to what people think about them because they're in the process of building their own identities at that age, and being judged to be stupid can hit them very hard. And being stupid is also a lot harder to change than behaving stupidly. Say, "What you did was stupid," not, "You were stupid to do that."

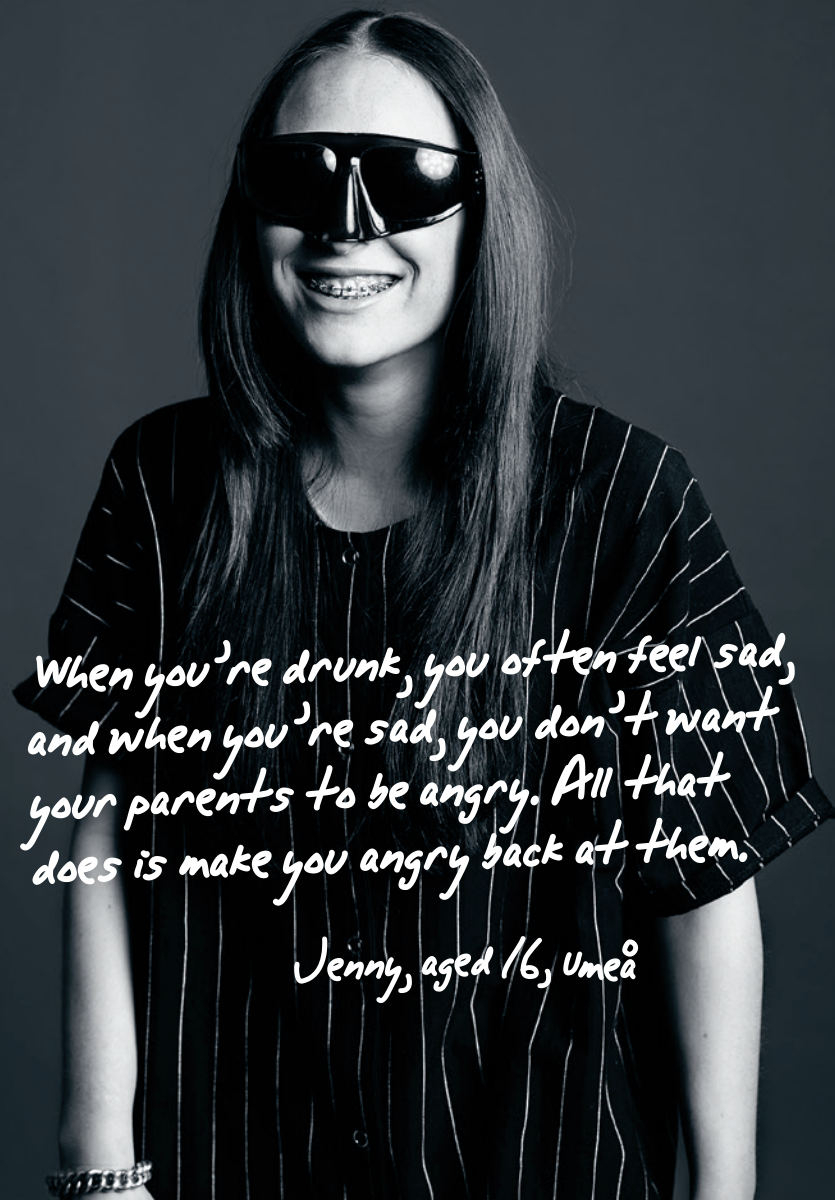
*My Mum says she'll film me if  
I come home drunk, and then show  
me so that I'm ashamed.*

*Molly, aged 16, Gotenburg*



*When you're drunk, you often feel sad,  
and when you're sad, you don't want  
your parents to be angry. All that  
does is make you angry back at them.*

*Jenny, aged 16, Umeå*





# HOME ALONE

Leaving your teenager home alone is no guarantee of a mega-party, but you might, as a parent, find it helpful to be aware of the sort of situations your teenager may face when there are no adults present. A lot of young people do feel group pressure when it comes to parties and partying. They're often not ready to throw a party, to go to a party, or to drink alcohol, but they end up in these situations all the same.

**CALL HOME TO SEE HOW THEY ARE.** If your teenager is going to be home alone, you can call home during the evening to see how things are going. Calling home shows that you care. It's a good idea to tell your teenager in advance that you're going to call them so they understand why you're doing it.

**WORD SPREADS – FAST!** Teenagers live in an increasingly connected world, and news spreads fast and easily online. If your teenager posts that they're home alone or invite people to a party, the information can very easily end up in the wrong hands. Not paying attention or being cautious on social media increases the risk of ending up in unexpected situations. It's a good idea to talk to your teenager about what posting content on social media can mean.

*If you're throwing a party, you have to keep a really tight lid on it. If you post it on Facebook, everyone will turn up.*

*Elliot, aged 15, Örebro*

**ASK OTHER ADULTS FOR HELP.** One of the problems with parent-free parties is that if they get out of hand, young people are sometimes too scared to contact an adult in time. Maybe they've been drinking and are afraid of being found out, or they're so embarrassed that they don't dare ask for help. Which is why it can be a good idea to reassure your teenager that it's always best to call you or another adult if the situation starts getting out of hand. You can also ask an adult in the neighbourhood to drop by during the evening and check that everything is OK.





**HELP SAYING “NO”.** The majority of teenagers don’t actually want to throw a party, just because their parents are away. But they often feel pressured by friends or people around them, and that makes it hard for them to say “no”. Explain that it can sometimes feel a bit awkward saying “no”, but that that is actually the mature, smart course to take. If saying “no” still feels too difficult, maybe you can agree that your son or daughter lay the blame on you?


*I was at a party once where  
they broke all the windows.  
It was chaos.*

*Victor, aged 15, Umeå*

**REMOVE THE ALCOHOL.** If it’s party time, and you know about it, it can be a good idea to put away anything that poses an unnecessary temptation. If you’ve got alcohol in the house, it might be a good idea to remove it to avoid the risk of your teenager or one of his or her friends helping themselves. By no means every teenager has a sneaky drink at home without their parents’ knowledge, but around 11% of all ninth graders say that they’ve taken alcohol from their parents without permission. You might also like to think about other sorts of things that could be lying around at home which could be dangerous in the hands of a teenager. It might, for example, be a good idea to keep an eye on your medicine cabinet if you know that it contains strong sleeping or painkilling tablets.

**YOU DON’T HAVE TO LEAVE YOUR TEENAGER HOME ALONE.** If you decide not to allow your teenager to be home alone, it doesn’t have to mean that you don’t trust your son or daughter. Spending time together as a family outside the home is good too, and it’s by no means certain that your teenager will find it boring – which he or she might, initially, pretend. And learning to compromise is an important skill, too.





# HOW MUCH CAN YOU TRUST TEENAGERS?

Parents of teenagers often wonder how much they can trust their children. A lot of teenagers will, undoubtedly, withhold some information from their parents, but you shouldn't assume that young people are lying. Every teenager is, of course, different and the extent to which you can trust your specific teenager depends to a large degree on what has gone before. The best thing you can do is to talk to your teenager and show consideration.

**TELL THEM HOW YOU FEEL.** Being a parent of a teenager can mean swinging between hope and despair. One moment, everything in the garden is rosy and you trust your child. And then the next moment, you feel uncertain or that they've let you down. That's completely normal, but not talking about it is a risk. Silence is the biggest barrier to a close relationship and simply results in suspicion on the part of adult and teenager alike.

*I talk to my Mum about everything, so she trusts me. Some things are a bit awkward, but she wants me to be honest.*

*Tim, aged 16, Umeå*

**STRAIGHT ANSWERS.** If your teenager tells you something spontaneously, you can be fairly sure that it's true. If you have to drag the information out of them, by contrast, there's a much bigger risk that what you're hearing is the censored version. If you've encouraged your child to feel safe in telling you anything at all and assured them that you're there to listen, you've laid the best possible foundations for being told the truth.

**TRUST YOUR FEELINGS.** You can usually tell when something doesn't sound or feel quite right. Tell your teenager that you're a little doubtful whether what they've told you is actually true. There's a risk that your son or daughter will get angry, but in the majority of cases, that feeling you're getting is accurate. And if it isn't, at least you've been honest about your feelings.

**ACCEPT THAT YOU'RE NEVER GOING TO KNOW EVERYTHING.** *Many* parents want full insight into their teenagers' lives, but being told everything is an awful lot to ask. Teenagers also need to be allowed to keep some things private. The important thing is that your teenager knows that he or she can tell you the truth, even when it's an uncomfortable one, without being judged or yelled at.



*My parents can always  
tell if I'm lying, so there's  
no point in even trying.*

*Dennis, aged 15, Örebro*

# SOCIAL MEDIA

The online world is where the vast majority of teenagers live out a large part of their social lives. For many young people, the Internet gives them a great deal: it's a place where they talk to their friends, watch movies, listen to music and learn about a variety of subjects. But there are also a lot of online pitfalls too, of course, and it's important that you, as a parent, keep a look out and teach your teenager how to handle and avoid them.

**A LOT OF YOUNG PEOPLE BIG THEMSELVES UP WITH ALCOHOL.** Party-ing, going out, and alcohol are common themes when young people are creating their image on social media. For many of them, showing themselves in settings with alcohol signals that they have an outgoing, successful lifestyle. This means that young people who use Facebook, Instagram, or Snapchat, who read blogs or who watch video clips, often encounter images or status updates of young people drinking alcohol.



**ALCOHOL-RELATED ADVERTISING AND MESSAGES.** Social media has created new ways for alcohol-related advertising and messages of reaching out to young people. The Internet offers previously undreamt of opportunities for exposure for people marketing beer, wine and spirits. The sort of thing that is usually defined as advertising, with a clearly identified advertiser and message urging you to buy a specific product isn't quite how online alcohol advertising works these days. Teenagers are often exposed to alcohol advertising online, even if targeting this kind of advertising at people under the age of 25 is illegal. A lot of them are also the recipients of alcohol messages from their

older friends and acquaintances, or when they follow celebrities on social media. The Swedish Consumer Agency is the authority responsible for supervising alcohol advertising and they're the people you should approach with questions or if you want to report alcohol advertising.

**HELP YOUR TEENAGERS LOOK AFTER THEMSELVES.** Over 90% of all Internet users aged between 12 and 15 use social media on a daily basis. The Internet isn't actually a dangerous place, but it's important that teenagers can take care of themselves in the digital world. Talk to your teenager about how important it is to protect their integrity and not to hurt anyone else's feelings or allow themselves to be hurt. That they shouldn't, for example, write nasty things about people, post pictures of someone else without their permission, or do things in other people's names. You should also make it clear to them that not everything written and said online is true. It's important that they learn to understand who is writing things and why. This way, you will teach your child to understand and enable them to avoid or handle situations for themselves.

**BE CURIOUS AND INTERESTED.** A lot of teenagers feel that their parents don't always keep up with what's happening online or know how social media works. And as a result, they may avoid turning to adults if they run into problems online. This is why it's important that you get involved and keep up to date with what teenagers are doing, mainly so you know how it works, but also so that you can be there if something goes wrong. That having been said, it doesn't mean that you have to be looking over your teenager's shoulder all the time. It's more about taking an interest and talking about it now and then.



**KEEP UP TO DATE.** Why not check out some of the places where a lot of young people hang out, such as Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, Kik, ASKfm, or YouTube, and familiarise yourself with the way social media networks and websites work? You'll find the most widely read blogs at bloggportalen.se. Or you could ask your teenager. The vast majority of young people are experts on the Internet and are happy to show you where to hang out or the latest video clip. You can also read up on how the various sites work and what you can do if your teenager runs into trouble. It's also important to remember that even if your teenager knows more about the net than you do, you're still the one with the greatest experience or norms, rules and dangers.

**SET LIMITS AND SET THE RULES.** As a parent, it's you who decides what is OK and what is not. It's never a good idea for them to visit sites that are not appropriate for young people. Be clear about what you think is reasonable, and set time limits, if you think it's necessary. And talk to them about the sort of information they should and shouldn't post. A lot of social media sites require some personal information as security or to give access to the site. Make sure your teenager is aware of how and when they should provide personal information. One simple tip is to decide that your teenager is not allowed to provide personal details such as their address, school, phone number, or to post pictures of themselves, without checking with you first.

**IF YOUR TEENAGER GETS IN TROUBLE, REPORT IT.** If you find out that your teenager has been exposed to or the victim of something online, it's important that you are there for them and support them. Whatever the problem is, don't judge or blame them. Listen to what your teenager is telling you and try not to let your own feelings take

over. If whatever has happened is unacceptable, then you should absolutely report it. The vast majority of websites have a button you can click on to report a comment or image. If the problem involves something illegal, you can report it to the police. You can also, to the extent that it's possible, talk to those involved.



**REMEMBER THAT EVERYTHING IS POTENTIALLY PUBLIC.** Social media are growing like wildfire and different forums cooperate with one another. Which means that you can end up sharing your pictures and thoughts with a virtually unlimited number of people. Anything you post online can stay around for a very long time, and it's often very difficult to get rid of it. Even if the picture is deleted, you have no control over who may have used it or shared it. This is why it's so important to understand what posting something actually means and why it's a good idea to discuss with your teenager what is – and is not – appropriate.





**IT'S ALSO A SOURCE OF ALCOHOL.** There's a relatively new but worrying trend of alcohol being bought for other people via social media. It's pretty easy for a teenager to use a social network to get hold of beer, wine or spirits. Posting a request on Snapchat or Kik, for example, tends to result pretty quickly in "help" from someone who knows someone. On Instagram, for example, there are dealers who advertise via anonymous accounts that young people can follow and use to contact the dealer. As a parent, it's important that you're aware of this.



# TRAVEL

Teenagers mature at different rates. But even if your son or daughter is very mature for their age, it might be a good idea to stop and think for a moment when they start talking about going away with their friends.

**ADULTS ON HOLIDAY.** Think about what you do when you're away on holiday. An awful lot of adults see partying and alcohol as a natural part of their holiday. Once the bags are checked in, the airport bar tends to fill up pretty quickly, even if it's only 6 a.m. And once you're on the plane, spirits, wine and beer are on sale, and then, once you've reached your destination, how about a celebratory drink on the balcony? The norms in relation to alcohol that apply back home often disappear when you're on holiday. Some adults will think nothing of having a beer with their lunch, or a few drinks in the afternoon, when they're on holiday, but would never do that at home. OK, that's not the way it is for everyone when they're on holiday, but it's very common, so it's hardly surprising if teenagers think about alcohol when they think about travel. So think about what you're doing and remember that you're a role model for your child.

*Everyone was drinking like crazy when we went on an All Inclusive. You could just go up to the pump and help yourself to beer. Even the kids were doing it. No one was keeping track.*  
Sasha, aged 15, Örebro

**THERE'S NO ONE TO SAY, "ENOUGH".** A lot of organised trips are designed to appeal to party-mad young people. Alcohol and drugs are both widely available and there are no adults standing in their way. And as a result, the youngsters often pile into the first bar they see and drink themselves stupid. And this is equally true whether they head for the party town of Ayia Napa, to a ski resort in the Alps, or to Malta to study English. Even if your teenager would rather not drink, travelling without adults is risky, so it's up to you, as a parent, to

weigh up the positive experience of independent travel against the risk of something going wrong.

**TALK ABOUT THE RISKS.** You're the parent, so it's obviously you who decides, but you don't have to automatically say, "No!" without thinking about it. Travelling independently can be both exciting and educational. Discuss what might happen and how important it is that they take care of themselves. You also need to make it clear to your teenager that people from different cultures may have a completely different attitude towards alcohol and that the way they handle drunken youngsters might be a lot different from what they're used to.

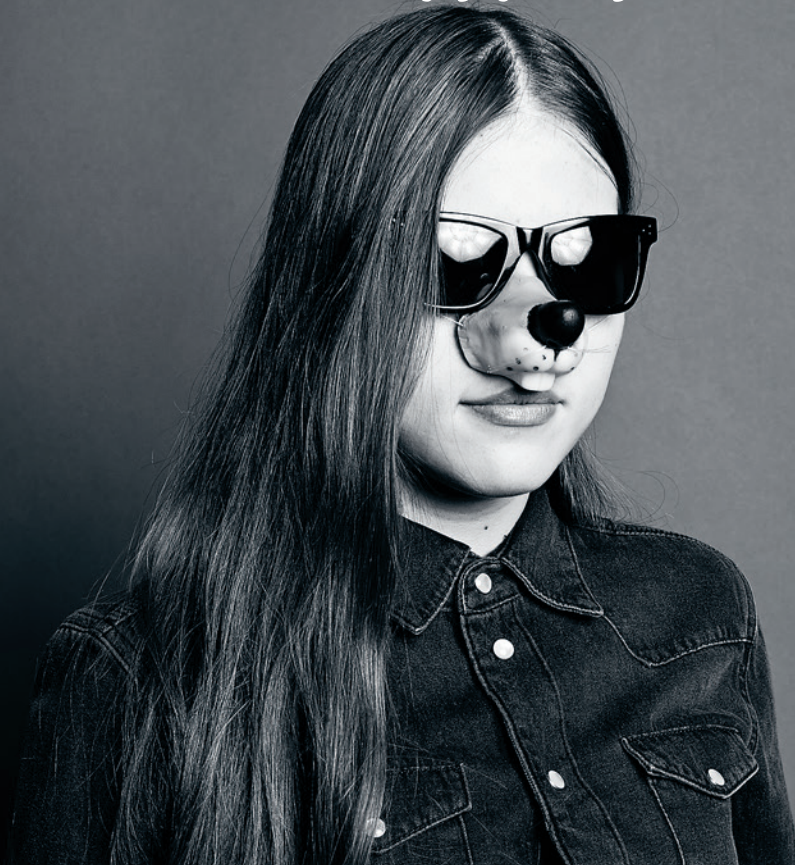
**LANGUAGE COURSES.** Most of the big language course travel firms have a total ban on alcohol and narcotics. Anyone caught with either alcohol or drugs will be sent home at their own expense and will not get a refund for the course. But it's worth bearing in mind that the organisers can't keep an eye on every single teenager, 24/7.

**CHARTER TRIPS.** Most travel firms have an age limit of 18, but travelling unaccompanied when you're under 18 is still possible if you can show a signed authorisation from your parents. That signature means that if something happens, it's the parent's responsibility, not the travel firm's.

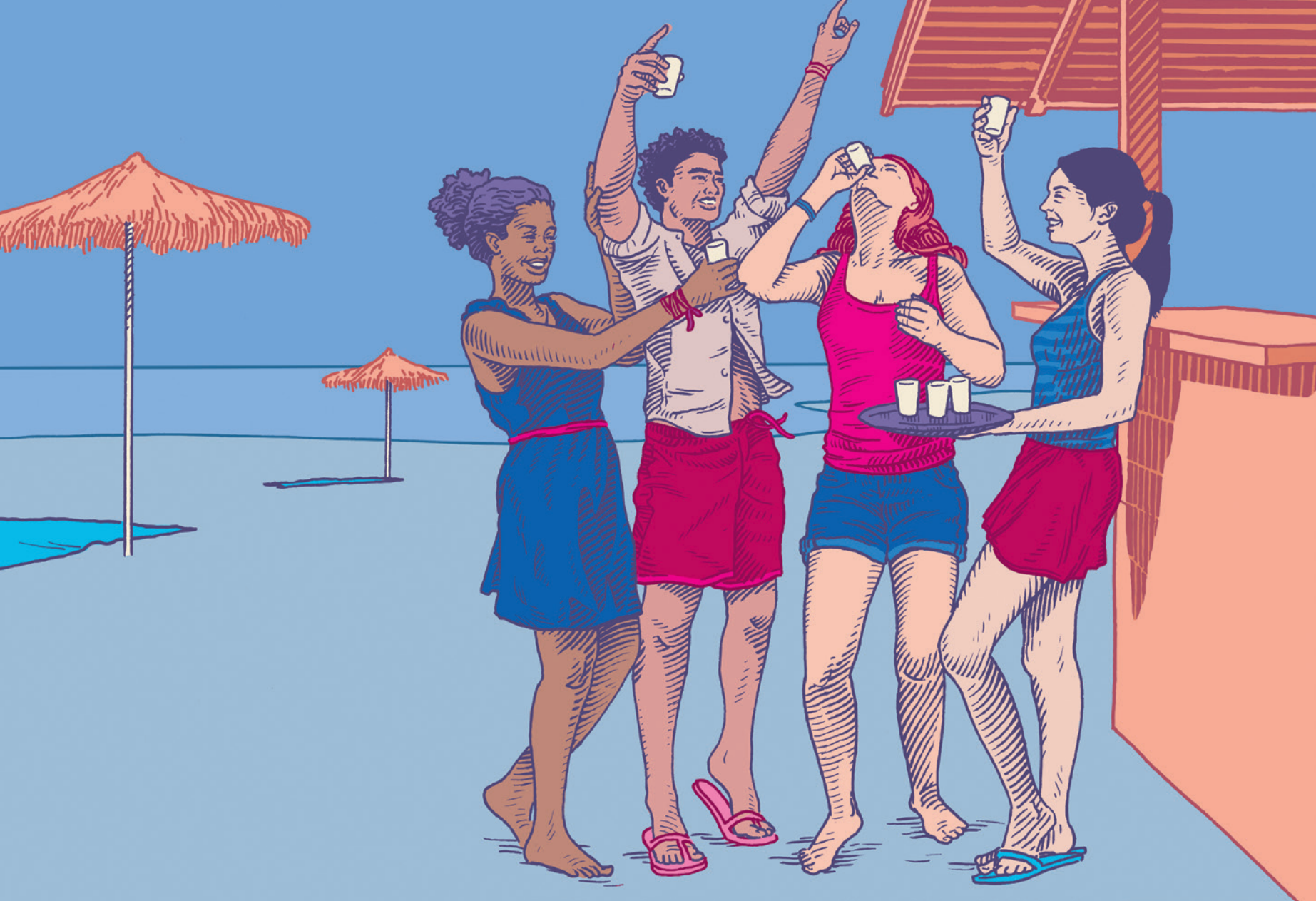
**NO, EVERYONE ELSE DOES NOT GET TO GO.** There's nothing odd or wrong about saying "No" to a teenager who wants to go on holiday with his or her friends. You have every right to refuse. You're not a cruel parent, even if your teenager's friends are being allowed to go and you have said, "No." Try thinking about how often that's actually true – that everyone else is allowed to do something – and about how often that's just what every child says to their slightly dubious parents.

*When you're abroad, you can just party as much as you want. There's no one there that you know and who you'd rather didn't see you in that state.*

*Saga, aged 16, Örebro*









# FESTIVALS

Going to a festival can be a real adventure. Heading off with your friends, seeing your favourite band, meeting like-minded people, and sleeping in a tent. For many youngsters, it's the best thing ever. But there's a dark side, too.

**ALCOHOL AND FESTIVALS OFTEN GO HAND IN HAND.** Alcohol is an important ingredient of a lot of the big festivals for young people. Drinking alcohol is often prohibited in the concert area, but there are a lot of enclosures selling beer and wine. There's a minimum age limit in these enclosures and the checks are thorough, but the fact that alcohol can only be drunk in a particular location doesn't mean that they are the only place you'll find people who've been drinking. There are an awful lot of people moving around in front of the stages and a lot of them will have drunk too much. And alcohol tends to flow freely in the camping areas, too – there's no one there checking whether the people drinking are of age to drink or whether they're drinking too much. Nor does there tend to be anyone checking how much alcohol you bring in with you, which means that teenagers who want to drink can do so, completely undisturbed. And if they haven't brought any alcohol with them, there will be plenty of people willing to share. And on top of that, a lot of festivals are also sponsored by alcohol manufacturers, thereby signalling that alcohol and festivals do, indeed, go hand in hand.

*I'd never be allowed to go to a festival.  
They're full of drunks and anything  
could happen.*  
*Moa, aged 15, Umeå*

**FIND OUT WHAT THE RULES ARE.** Every festival has different rules about age limits and alcohol. Find out what the rules are for the festival that your son or daughter wants to go to. There are actually a lot of drug-free events organised specifically for young people.



**KEEP IN TOUCH.** Make sure that your teenager has a phone with them or that you have a means of contacting them if they're at a festival. Mobile coverage can sometimes be poor when there are lots of people in the same place, and getting through can be difficult. The music can be loud too, making it hard to hear when the phone rings, so it can be a good idea to agree on times when you can be in touch.

**TALK ABOUT THE RISKS BEFOREHAND.** Prepare your teenager for the risks in and around the festival. It's not just about the fact that there will be alcohol and people who are drunk. There are large numbers of people in the same place at festivals and it's hard, for both security personnel and visitors, to keep an eye on what's happening. It's a good idea to talk about the sort of things your teenager may encounter there, such as sexual approaches or harassment, drugs, violence, and theft.

*My parents want me to tell  
them everything. But they'd  
have a heart attack if I did.*

*Mona, aged 15, Umeå*

**MAKE IT EASIER FOR THEM TO SAY, "NO."** Help your teenager by giving them reasons why he or she shouldn't drink. Be clear about what you feel and what your concerns are. Your teenager might choose to drink anyway, but studies show that what you say does matter in terms of what happens and how things turn out.

**GO TOGETHER.** If you don't want to let your teenager go to a festival by themselves, why not suggest that you go with them? It could be a fun, shared experience and good for your relationship. You don't have to stick to them like glue and tag along with them everywhere they go, but you being there can act as a safety net in case something happens.

**STAND UP TO PEER PRESSURE.** Don't let your teenager go to a festival just because everyone else is allowed to go. Many parents are worried about their teenagers being excluded from their social group if they don't go, but there's no guarantee that this will be the case. No one – however old they are – can do everything, and it might be useful to learn this at an early age.





*My parents drink so much on  
New Year's Eve that they never  
notice if I nick their alcohol  
and drink too.*

*Gabrielle, aged 16, Gothenburg*

*A lot of people drink at the end  
of term. People want to celebrate  
and there's nothing much else to do.*

*Josef, aged 15, Örebro*





# HIGH DAYS AND HOLIDAYS

Most of us probably associate alcohol with celebrations. A lot of adults can't imagine a New Year's Eve without some bubbly, and a lot of young people associate partying and celebrations with the end of the school year. These are the days when a lot of young people drink for the first time. They're also the days when a lot of them get into fights and have accidents because they're drunk. As a parent, there's a lot you can do.

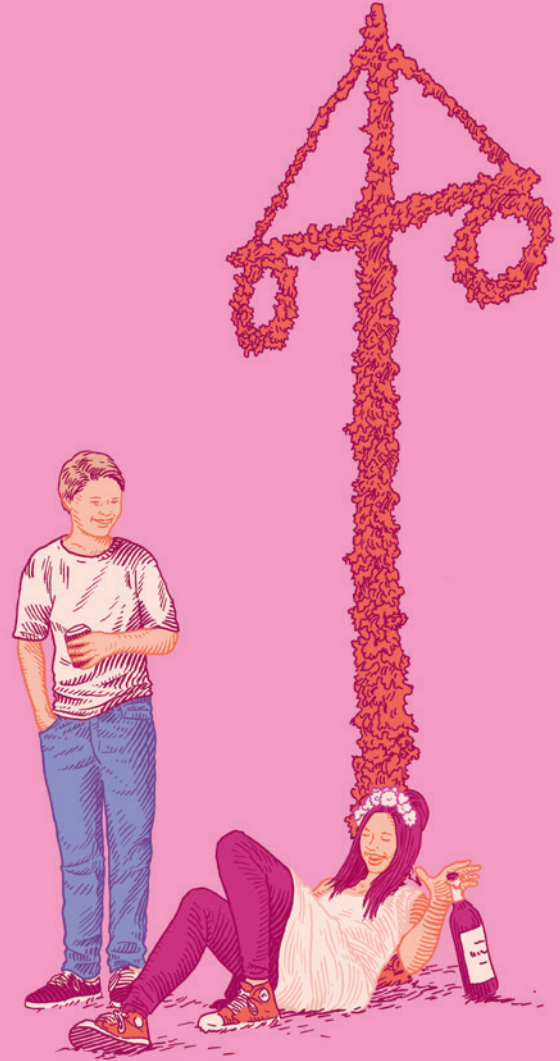
**TALK ABOUT IT.** Ask your teenager about their plans for the evening, whether people are going to be drinking alcohol, and what he or she thinks about that. Tell them what you think about drinking and that it's unacceptable to you that he or she drinks alcohol. Teenagers care what their parents say – even if it doesn't look that way at the time. Show them that you're there for them, whatever happens. It's always better that your teenager knows he or she can come home drunk, even if that's unacceptable to you.

*It's chaos on New Year's Eve. Everyone's drunk. People are throwing up and running around town.*

*Greta, aged 15, Umeå*

**DON'T BUY THEM ALCOHOL.** Young people who are given alcohol by their parents drink more. And if you buy for them, you're also telling them that it's OK to drink, even if you're not an adult. Some parents think it's OK to give their teenagers alcohol on special occasions, e.g. at the end of the ninth grade or over Midsummer. But warning them about alcohol and then helping your child to drink makes no sense, even if it's only for one evening. Teenagers always feel best if you're clear and consistent.

**TALK TO OLDER SIBLINGS AND FRIENDS.** The commonest way for teenagers to get hold of alcohol is through their boyfriend or girlfriend, or through friends or their friends' siblings. Talk to the ones who are aged 20 or more and who are around your teenagers, and help them say "no". Say that you expect him or her to be mature enough to act responsibly.



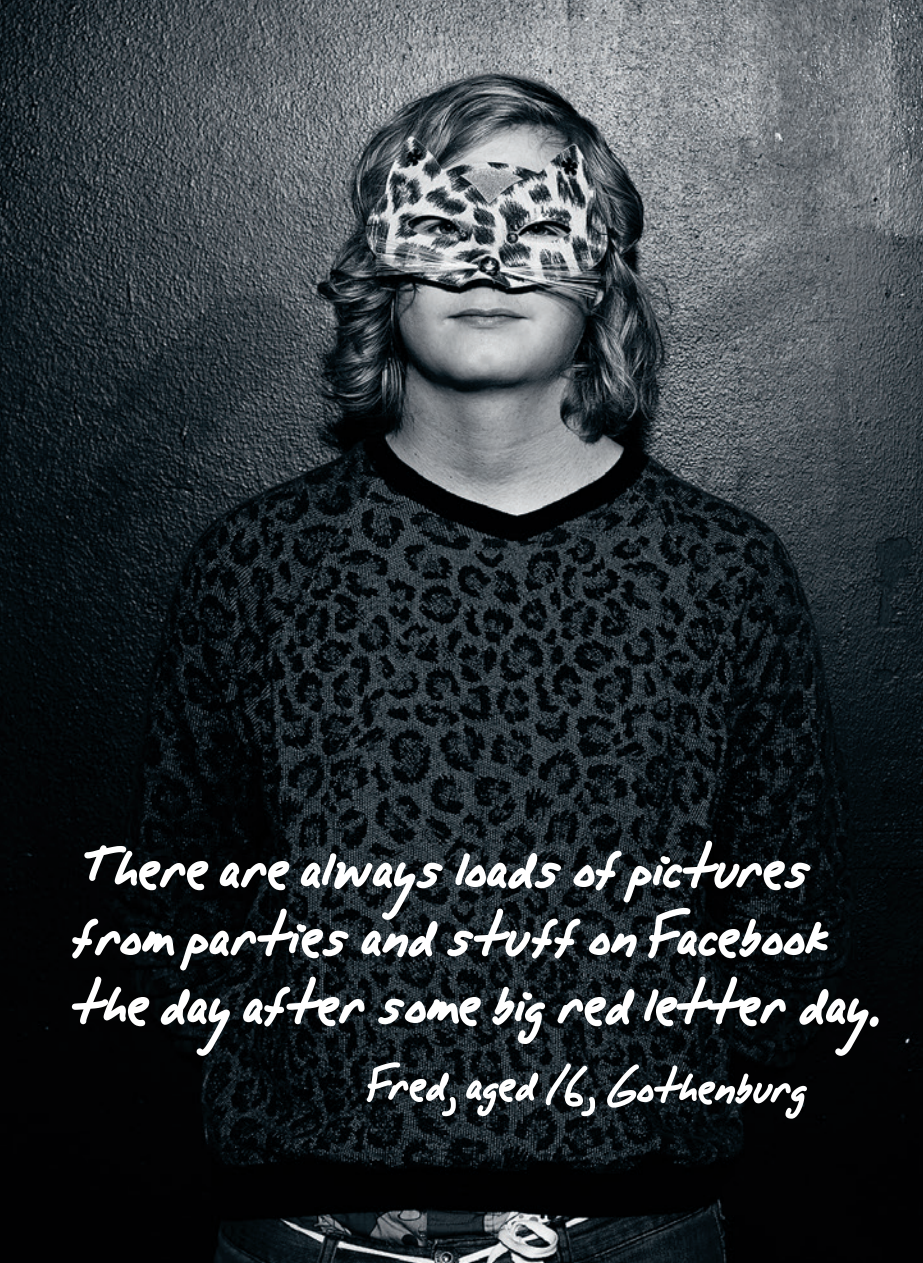


**KEEP AN EYE ON THINGS.** Make sure that your teenager has their mobile with them, or that you can get in touch with them in some way during the evening. Maybe you can agree in advance some times when you check in? And ask your teenager to let you know if they go on somewhere else or if their plans change. Make sure that you, or another adult, are sober so that there is someone who can come and get them or help them, if necessary. Maybe you can also visit the places where your teenager or other young people tend to hang out? Get together with other parents and show yourselves out and about that evening. But talk to your teenager about it first so that he or she understands that you're not spying on them – you're just there for them if things go bad.

**TALK TO OTHERS.** Talk to other parents about the do's and don'ts of high days and holidays. If your opinions differ, you don't have to change your mind because other people think differently. You're the parent, and as such, you're always the one who decides what goes for your child. It isn't the end of the world if not every parent is in agreement. The important thing is that you have talked about it and that you and your teenager know where other families stand.

**SUGGEST ACTIVITIES.** There are lots of things young people can do on high days and holidays. If there's an agreed activity for them to look forward to, there's less of a risk of them wandering aimlessly around town.

**FEEDBACK AFTERWARDS.** It's a good idea to be awake when your teenager comes home, or to get feedback the next morning, but don't turn it into a cross-examination. Try and show them, instead, that you're interested and that it's important that you talk to each other about what they got up to and how things went.



*There are always loads of pictures  
from parties and stuff on Facebook  
the day after some big red letter day.  
Fred, aged 16, Gothenburg*





# WHEN OTHER PEOPLE'S KIDS ARE IN TROUBLE

If you find out or suspect that someone else's teenager is drinking, doing drugs, or in a bad place, you can try to do something about it. But you have to handle it sensibly, even if it's not your child who's involved. Here are a few things you need to bear in mind.

**DON'T GO BEHIND PEOPLE'S BACKS.** If your teenager tells you something about a friend and you don't think it's right to keep quiet about it, you have to explain why you feel that way. It's not about telling tales – it's about caring what happens. Your teenager has chosen to tell you, so they're probably hoping, in their heart of hearts, that you'll intervene. Let your son or daughter know what you're intending to do, so that he or she doesn't feel that you're breaching their trust.

**DON'T TAKE ON THE ROLE OF GUIDANCE OFFICER ALL BY YOURSELF.** Get help from other adults. First and foremost, you need to get in touch with the teenager in question's parents. If they don't address the situation, you can always contact the school's guidance officer or the social services. The important thing is that someone reacts quickly. No teenager should have to suffer without any adult caring what happens.

*Why should I tell your parents about things that involve my friends? They're not my parents' friends, after all.*  
Hannes, aged 16, Umeå

**TALK TO OTHER SENSIBLE PEOPLE.** If something's happened, there are numerous organisations that are used to talking to both teenagers and their parents about all sorts of issues and concerns. You'll find some suggestions on pages 134–135. Maybe you also know someone who has experience of something similar.

*My friends drink a lot when I'm out with them because they know I'll take care of them when they're drunk and throwing up, and stuff.*

*Nadia, aged 16,  
Gothenburg*



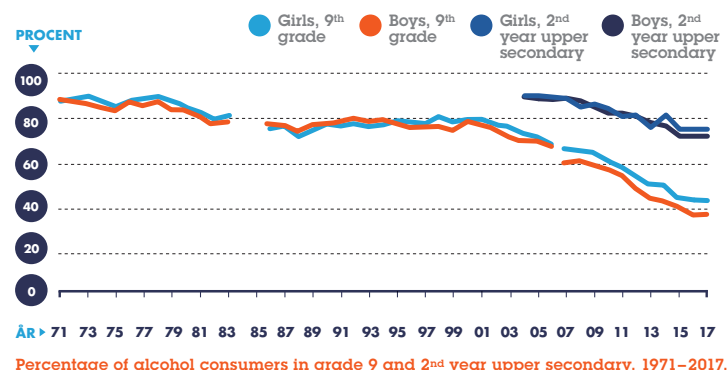
*If I had a friend who drank a lot, I'd tell my parents. But I don't think they'd do anything.*

*Nellie, aged 15, Gothenburg*

# YOUTH DRINKING – THEN AND NOW

The Swedish Council for Information on Alcohol and Other Drugs (CAN) carries out a survey of school students' drug habits every year. The study examines, amongst other things, how many ninth graders and 2<sup>nd</sup> year upper secondary school students drink alcohol, and if so, how often and how much.

**THE PERCENTAGE WHO DON'T DRINK IS INCREASING.** The number of ninth graders who drink has fallen sharply since 2000, and in the latest survey, there were more drinkers amongst the girls than the boys, at 43% of girls and 37% of boys. These figures are the lowest recorded since the survey began in 1971 and mean that there are now more ninth graders who choose not to drink than ones who do drink. The percentage of 2<sup>nd</sup> year upper secondary school students who drink has also fallen from almost 90% (in 2004) to 74% (in 2017). It is not, in other words, true to say that "everyone else drinks".



**FEWER ARE GETTING DRUNK BEFORE THE AGE OF 13.** Another trend that is moving in the right direction is the age at which young people first get drunk. The percentage of ninth graders who got drunk before reaching the age of 13 has fallen from about 20% (2000) to 4% (2017).

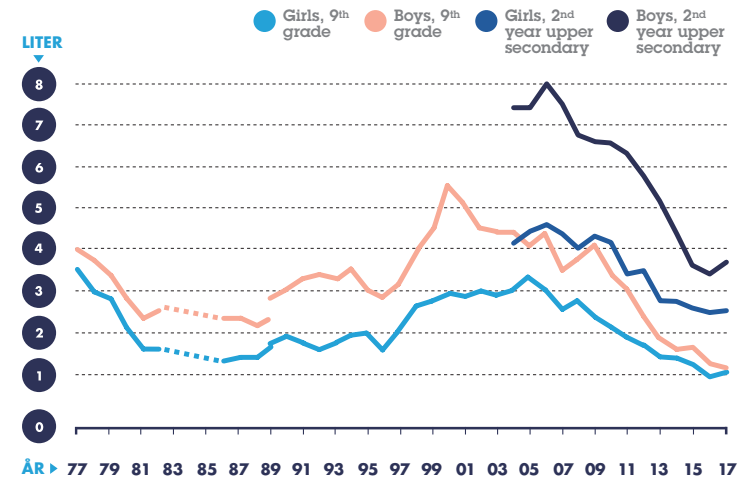
**THE ROLE OF PARENTS IS IMPORTANT.** The fact that the trends are moving in the right direction doesn't mean, however, that everything is sweetness and light. The only way that the percentage of young people who drink will continue to fall is through the efforts of parents and society as a whole. Your role as a parent is very important in ensuring this trend is not reversed.



# HOW MUCH DO TEENAGERS DRINK?

The amount of alcohol that teenagers drink on a yearly basis goes in waves. Sweden has been carrying out surveys of the annual consumption of ninth grade girls and boys since 1977.

**ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION IS DECLINING.** Drinking levels fell in the late 1970s and early 80s, but in the 90s, they rose again, and by 2000, boys in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade were drinking 5.4 litres of pure alcohol per year, which is the highest volume ever measured. The figures for girls peaked in 2005, when they drank 3.3 litres of pure alcohol (apart from the first year of 1977 when the volume was even higher). Annual consumption has fallen over the past 10 years from 4.4 litres in 2006 to current levels of 1.1 litres for boys. Consumption levels amongst girls have fallen from 3.0 litres to 1.1 litres during the same period. Yearly consumption amongst students in year 2 of upper secondary school has also fallen over time, totalling 3.1 litres in 2017.



The estimated average annual consumption, measured in litres of pure alcohol (100%) in year 9 and 2<sup>nd</sup> year of upper secondary school, and by gender, 1977–2017 (1997–1989 are estimated values).

**THE PERCENTAGE WHO DRINK HEAVILY AND OFTEN IS DECREASING.**

The amount that young people drink every year doesn't show the whole picture, however: it's equally important to look at how many are drinking in a risky way and when they're drinking. When the survey's respondents are asked about monthly heavy consumption (one bottle of wine, or a half bottle of spirits, or four strong beers in a single session), 8% of ninth graders said that they binge drank. The corresponding figure for students in year 2 of upper secondary school in 2017 was 25%. These figures are considerably lower than was the case 10 years ago, and are the lowest levels since measurements began.

“Consumption has fallen by more than half in just 10 years. It's young people who are showing the way. Not adults.”

Håkan Leifman, The Swedish Council for Information on Alcohol and Other Drugs (CAN)

**THE COMMONEST PROBLEMS.** The Swedish Council for Information on Alcohol and Other Drugs (CAN) also asks, as part of their survey of school students, about the sort of problems young people have experienced in connection with alcohol. Here are some of the most common responses in 2015 from ninth graders and 2<sup>nd</sup> year upper secondary school students who have drunk alcohol during the past 12 months:

	9 <sup>th</sup> grade		2 <sup>nd</sup> year, upper secondary	
	Boys (%)	Girls (%)	Boys (%)	Girls (%)
Arguments	15	23	26	28
Fights	9	6	13	4
Lost money or valuables	13	20	21	24
Been photographed in compromising/offensive situations	14	20	18	18
Damaged possessions or clothing	16	24	29	32
Problems with friendships	9	19	11	6
Had an accident or been hurt	10	13	14	14
Had sex they've regretted the next day	9	12	16	15
Ridden a moped, driven a car, or other vehicle	16	9	12	6
Ridden pillion on a moped, or been a passenger in a car when the driver had been drinking	11	14	11	11
Got into trouble with the police	5	4	7	2

Perceived problems in conjunction with alcohol, students in year 9 and 2<sup>nd</sup> year of upper secondary school, by gender, 2017.





# WHAT DO TEENAGERS DRINK?

Ninth graders and upper secondary school students nowadays usually drink spirits, strong beer, alcopops, or cider. It's worrying, of course, that teenagers are drinking so much spirits – if a young person finds it harder to judge the effects of alcohol in general, they're hardly going to find it any easier with 40% spirits in their body.

**SPIRITS AND STRONG BEER ARE MOST POPULAR WITH BOYS...** followed, in the main, by cider and alcopops. Wine and medium-strength beers (2.25%–3.5% by volume) are, by contrast, not particularly popular.

**GIRLS USUALLY DRINK ALCOPOPS, CIDER OR SPIRITS.** They usually drink considerably less strong beer, medium-strength beer and wine. It's very common for girls to drink spirits with mixers, and spirits are more popular with girls than boys.

*Most people drink spirits.  
It gets you drunker and you don't  
need to drink so much.*

*Jesper, aged 15, Umeå*

**SMUGGLED AND HOME-DISTILLED SPIRITS.** The percentage who have drunk smuggled spirits has increased slightly over the last five years and in the 2017 survey, 21% of 9<sup>th</sup> graders and 40% of 2<sup>nd</sup> year upper secondary school students stated that they had drunk smuggled spirits. The percentage who drink home-distilled spirits is falling: 5 years ago, around 8% of ninth graders had drunk home-distilled spirits but that figure has now fallen to 6%. The perceived availability from Systembolaget has fallen steadily amongst 9<sup>th</sup> graders and 2<sup>nd</sup> year upper secondary school students during the same period.

**MEDIUM-STRENGTH BEER IS STRONGER THAN MANY THINK.** When teenagers start drinking stronger and stronger stuff, there's a risk that they will regard weaker drinks as harmless. Getting drunk on medium-strength beer can seem almost impossible, but the fact is that it is actually perfectly possible. A six-pack of medium-strength beer contains almost as much alcohol as 6 normal drinks.

*A lot of people  
pretend to be  
drunk because they  
don't want to  
stand out from  
the crowd.*

*Max, aged 16,  
Gothenburg*





# WHERE DO THEY GET THE ALCOHOL?

It's actually remarkable just how easy it is for young people to get hold of alcohol. Not only is it illegal to buy alcohol for them, but most adults think that alcohol is something teenagers should be avoiding. So where are teenagers getting their alcohol?

**FRIENDS OR OTHER ADULTS.** Teenagers most commonly get their alcohol from a boyfriend or girlfriend, or from a friend or friends' siblings – 18% of boys and 20% of girls in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade mentioned these sources in 2017. The corresponding figures for 2<sup>nd</sup> year upper secondary school students were 27% of boys and 46% of girls. In second place comes another adult who buys on their behalf, with 18% 9<sup>th</sup> graders and 19% of upper secondary school students.

*If you're outgoing, it's no problem at all getting hold of alcohol. You just have to know the right people.*  
Kevin, aged 15, Umeå

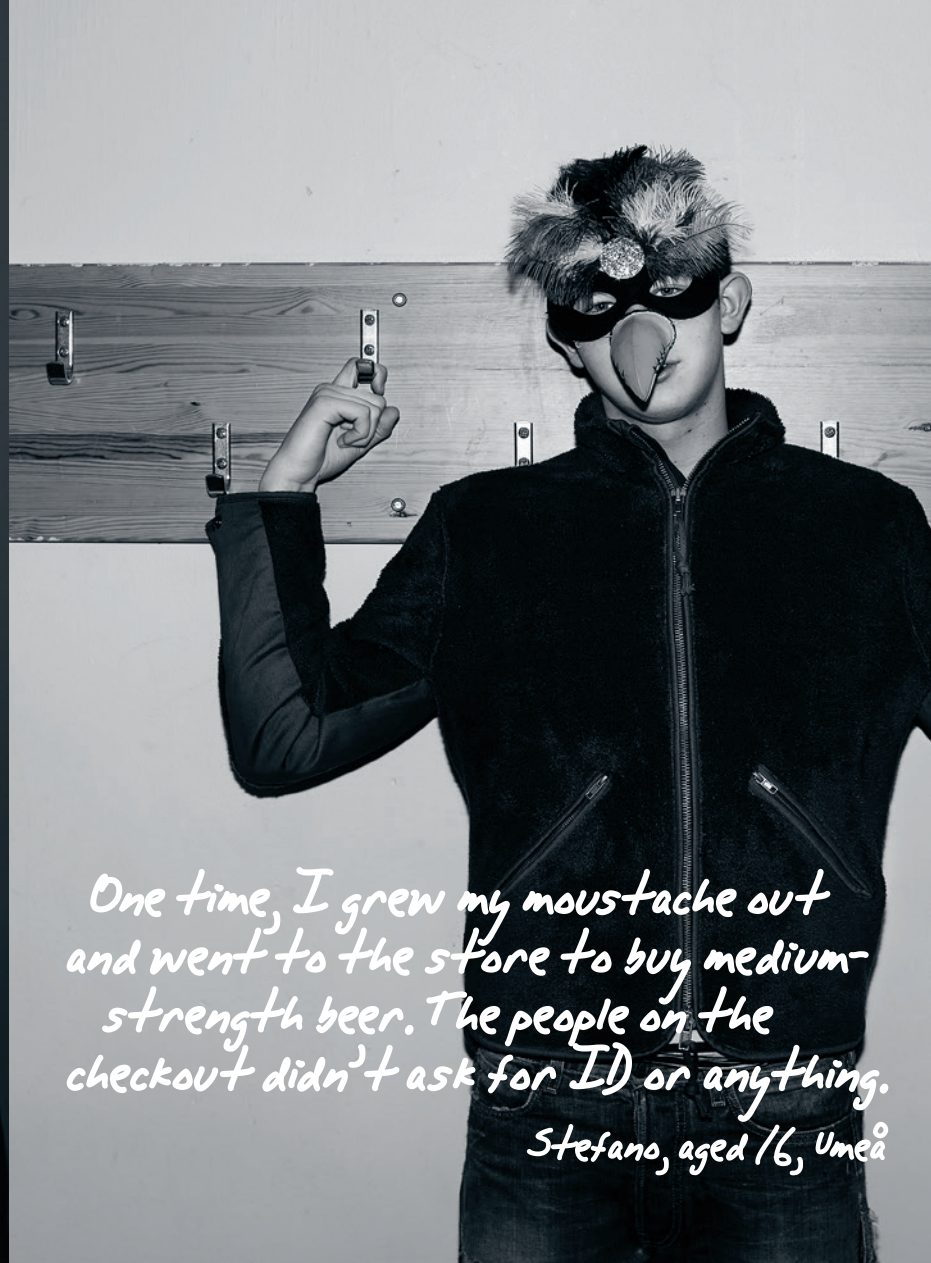
**FROM HOME.** In third place come the teenagers' own parents. 10% of boys and 9% of girls in the ninth grade, and 20% of 2<sup>nd</sup> year upper secondary school students had got it from their parents.

**SPIRIT SMUGGLING.** 31% of the ninth graders who had drunk smuggled spirits had got it from their boyfriend or girlfriend, or from friends or friends' siblings. 33% acquired alcohol from another adult who would buy or sell. The alcohol is usually cheap, which means the teenagers can buy more of it. Find out more about illegal alcohol in the next chapter.



*My sister asked me if I wanted  
her to buy for me. I said no,  
but then she asked me again if I  
was absolutely sure.*

*Nicole, aged 14, Örebro*



*One time, I grew my moustache out  
and went to the store to buy medium-  
strength beer. The people on the  
checkout didn't ask for ID or anything.*

*Stefano, aged 16, Umeå*



# ILLEGAL ALCOHOL

In the past, young people often bought home-distilled alcohol from someone they knew. Nowadays, they buy from illegal dealers selling alcoholic drinks that have been smuggled into the country. One in every five 9<sup>th</sup> graders or 2<sup>nd</sup> year upper secondary school students buy smuggled alcohol.

**PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS AND CRIMINAL NETWORKS.** The people engaging in this illegal trade are both private individuals and a range of organised criminal networks, with large amounts of alcohol brought into the country through buying trips by car to countries where alcohol is considerably cheaper than in Sweden. The car trunks are usually packed to the brim with beer, wine, and spirits – when stopped by Customs, it's not uncommon to find over 1,500 litres there. If they're not stopped, once they're back on home ground, they sell the alcohol to anyone at all. It doesn't matter whether it's to an adult or to a child.

*You just post on Facebook, asking if anyone can get hold of some spirits. And then, like one second later, someone messages you and asks you what you want.*

*Wille, aged 16, Gothenburg*

**24/7 SALES.** The dealers usually keep substantial stocks of the illegal alcohol at home, in their cellars, garages or other storage areas. And they are open 24/7 to anyone at all. Their mobile numbers are spread around schools and, in particular, online. All you need to do is send a message and the seller will deliver directly to the address of your choice.





**THEY SELL TO ADULTS. AND THEY SELL TO KIDS, TOO.** Some adults buy cheap alcohol from the same illegal dealers who sell to teenagers and the sort of signals they're sending to their children probably never even cross their minds. But if parents buy from a garage, they'll find it hard to be credible when talking to their teenagers about the law and age limits. And by buying alcohol in this way, they're also encouraging a business that makes it easier for young people to get hold of alcohol.

*I don't know where the alcohol comes from. It's my friends who fix us up.*

*Petra, aged 15, Gothenburg*

**IT'S NOT JUST THE ALCOHOL THAT CAN BE DANGEROUS.** Selling alcohol illegally is a serious crime punishable with heavy fines or prison sentences. If a teenager buys alcohol from a dealer, in other words, he is doing business with a criminal who is often involved in other forms of illegal activity. Which means not only that they're encouraging an illegal trade, but that the relationship itself can be directly hazardous.



# OTHER DRUGS

Alcohol and tobacco consumption have both declined amongst teenagers during the 2000s. Narcotics usage levels, however, have stayed fairly constant. It's sometimes said that alcohol is a gateway drug to narcotics. That anyone who drinks in their teens will look for stronger kicks and will eventually try heroin. Fortunately, this isn't the case, and trying narcotics never even occurs to most teenagers who drink. What we do know, however, is that almost everyone who tries narcotics for the first time does so under the influence of alcohol. And we also know that it's far more common for heavy alcohol users, or tobacco smokers, to try smoking cannabis as well.

**TOBACCO – QUICKLY ADDICTIVE.** Tobacco is like alcohol, in that it increases your body's production of dopamine, which makes you feel happy and feel good. But nicotine is even more addictive than alcohol. It was previously thought that to get addicted to nicotine, you had to use tobacco every day, but research has shown that teenagers can become addicted to nicotine even if they only smoke or use moist snuff at weekends. Nicotine increases your heart rate and your blood pressure, and damages your overall fitness. Memory and learning abilities are also negatively affected.

**SMOKING AND SNUS USAGE.** 8% of boys and 13% of girls in the ninth grade – and 23% of underage upper secondary school students – are classified as smokers. More than 6 out of every 10 smokers want to quit, but the majority of them said that they would do so "at some point in the future". It's hard for teenagers to understand that quitting will get harder and harder for every year that passes and that it may eventually become one of the hardest things they could do. The percentage using snus has fallen steadily over the past ten years. According to the 2017 survey, 9% of boys and 2% of girls in the ninth grade are classified as snus users. The corresponding figures for upper secondary school students are 22% of boys and 6% of girls.

**PARENTS AND TOBACCO.** If you're an adult who smokes or uses moist snuff, you can, of course, choose to continue to do so. But you should still try to convince your teenager that they shouldn't start using, too. Who knows? Maybe, if you have that discussion, it'll persuade you to try quitting yourself?

**CANNABIS – THE MOST COMMON NARCOTIC.** Cannabis (marijuana or hash) is by far the most common narcotic in Sweden. The percentage of youngsters who smoke cannabis has remained more or less constant since the 1990s, and in the 2017 survey, 7% of boys and 5% of girls in the ninth grade had tried narcotics. It is almost three times as common among 2<sup>nd</sup> year upper secondary students (20% of boys and 14% of girls) to have used narcotics than among 9<sup>th</sup> graders. And more than 9 out of 10 of these had smoked cannabis.

**ALL NARCOTICS ARE ILLEGAL.** In Sweden, it's illegal to buy, sell, use, produce or possess narcotics. A few other countries nowadays have a more liberal attitude towards cannabis, but in Sweden, it's illegal – however old or young you may be.

**WHERE DO THEY GET THE NARCOTICS?** Ninth graders who have used narcotics most commonly say that they got them from friends or from their girlfriend or boyfriend. Half of 9<sup>th</sup> graders and 64% of upper secondary school students mentioned this as their source. The second most common source is dealers or acquaintances. And the more commonly people use narcotics, the more likely they are to buy from dealers or to order online.

**HOW IS YOUR BODY AFFECTED?** Cannabis and other types of drugs affect the brain. You have problems concentrating, your memory is poorer, and you find it harder to learn things. That's not good for anyone, but it's perhaps worst of all for anyone who is in school. Not only that, but young people's brains are particularly sensitive, so drugs will cause more damage in young people's brains than in adults'.

**CAN YOU GET ADDICTED?** Absolutely. Approximately 1 in 10 people who ever use cannabis and 1 in 6 of those who start using cannabis at an early age, become addicted. And 1 in 3 of those who use it daily will develop an addiction.

**PHARMACEUTICALS.** Many pharmaceutical products are classified as narcotics because they can give you a rush and cause addiction. 4% of 9<sup>th</sup> graders have, at some point, used a sleeping tablet/tranquilizer or analgesic that was not prescribed for them. Around 3% of 9<sup>th</sup> graders and 5% of upper secondary school students have combined alcohol with OTC or RX pharmaceuticals in order to become intoxicated. Doing so is almost twice as common amongst girls as amongst boys.

You'll find suggestions on organisations you can contact for information about other drugs on pages 134–135.



# SPORTS AND ALCOHOL

Sports aren't just about performing well on the pitch, on horseback, or in the swimming pool. They're about being part of a team, a group, and about having a captain or team leader. Most people would agree that sports and alcohol are a bad combination. Sports are a good forum for talking to young people about alcohol because approximately half of all teenagers are regularly involved in sport.

**A LOT OF TEENAGERS DRINK TO FIT IN.** It's very common in your teens to be really curious about all the things you haven't tried. Plus you want to have fun and to fit in. So if your teammates have a beer in the sauna, you might worry that you'll be seen as boring if you don't join in. For many teenagers, it's that beer that is their first contact with alcohol. But alcohol and sports don't belong together, either for adults or for children. Talk to your teenager and help them come up with reasons that make it easier for them to say "no". If the team or club has a permissive attitude towards alcohol, it's a good idea for you, as a parent, to raise the subject with the leaders or with the parents of the other teenagers on the team.

*The first time I got drunk was at  
a training camp in Germany.*

*Jacob, aged 15, Gothenburg*

**ALCOHOL HAS MANY NEGATIVE EFFECTS.** The vast majority of young people know that alcohol affects the body, but far fewer of them are aware of the effects of alcohol on sporting performances. Drinking substantially harms your performance – and not just when you're drunk, but the next day too – and alcohol also prevents your body from building muscle or from recovering as easily. Playing badly because you're hung over means letting your teammates down.



**IT'S EASIER TO SAY "NO" AS A TEAM.** Two thirds of young people agree that teams and sports clubs should talk more about the risks associated with drinking alcohol in conjunction with sport.

As a parent, you can ask your child's team leaders to talk to the team about alcohol and drinking. Ideally, the club should have a unified stance on what is and isn't allowed and should write these rules down in the form of a policy. Over half of all young people say that it would be considerably easier to say "no" to alcohol if there was a shared agreement not to drink.

*You're not allowed to smoke or drink in my club. If you do, they contact your parents and you might get kicked off the team.*

*Nimo, aged 16, Gothenburg*

**TALK AND DISCUSS.** Formulating a policy on paper is one thing, but theory needs to be put into practice. Keep the conversation between the team leaders and teenagers alive: what do you do if you see a teammate drinking and how might the group suffer as a result of drinking? Some team leaders find it easy to talk about this sort of thing with young people, but some have no idea how to approach the subject. Which is where it is good if you, as a parent, are able to help out.





# ALCOHOL AND SEX

Alcohol affects both your emotional life and your judgement. Many people feel more relaxed after a few beers, that a few drinks help get the conversation started, and that those around you are both more attractive and better company after a couple of drinks. But alcohol and sex are a bad combination.

**UNPROTECTED SEX.** Many people believe that the majority of young people are drunk the first time they have sex, but surveys show that the majority are actually sober when they make their sexual debut. Unprotected sex is, however, more common amongst those who were drunk when they first had sex and amongst those who have been drinking before having sex.

**SEX YOU REGRET.** Sadly, young people do have sex against their will when they're drunk. 10% of girls and boys in the ninth grade and 16% of 2<sup>nd</sup> year upper secondary school students say that they've had sex when drunk and regretted it later. As an adult, it's important that you talk to your teenager about this and make it very clear that they should only have sex if they really want to. And that there are, of course, no excuses whatsoever for sexual assault.

*If you're trying to get off with someone but get turned down, you can always blame it on being drunk.*

*Hanna, aged 16, Gothenburg*

**PHYSICALLY AND EMOTIONALLY, IT'S WORSE.** Alcohol can not only lead to someone having unprotected or unwanted sex, it can also affect their body and their emotions. It's hard, when you have alcohol in your system, to feel the shared closeness that happens during physical intimacy with another person.

**IT CAN DAMAGE SELF-ESTEEM.** Many people find it easier to have sex when they've been drinking alcohol. They feel relaxed and braver. But if you start making sure you're drunk when you get physical with anyone, there's a real risk that over time, this will feel natural and right to be that way and that you won't dare have sex without being drunk.



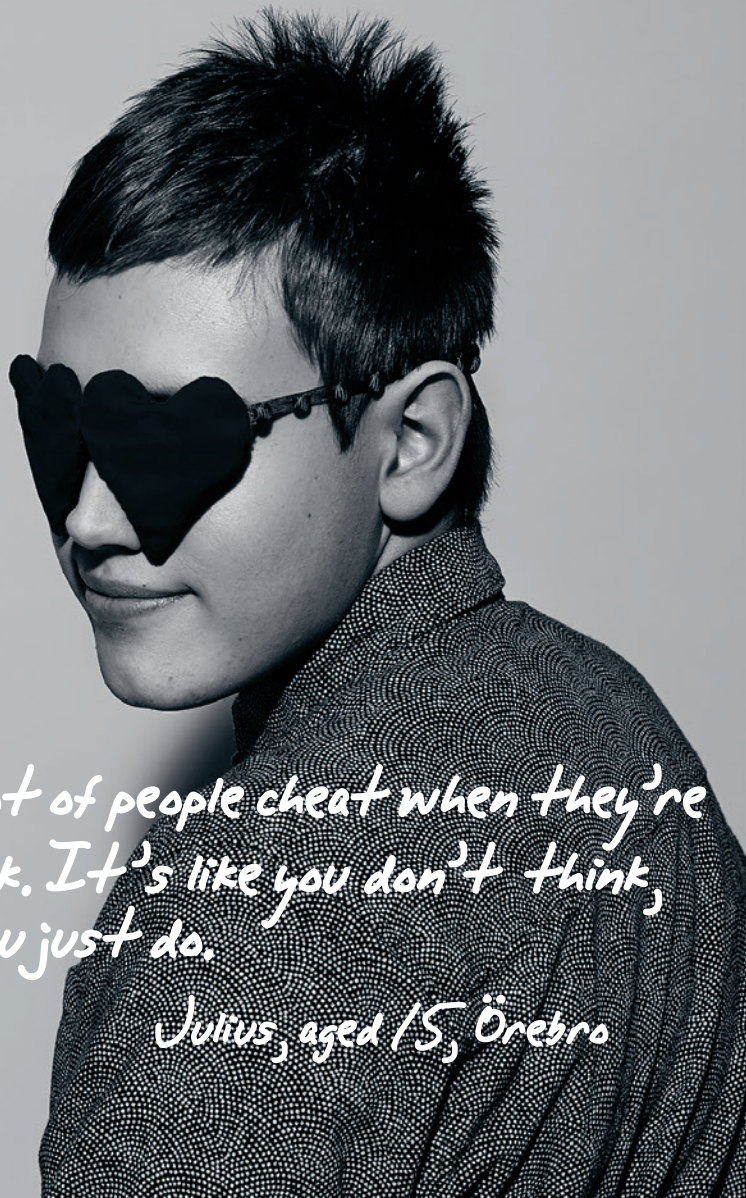
*Sometimes, the guys hassle you and say you're boring if you don't want to do something, which makes you feel stupid and scared that they'll spread rumours about you.*

*Sabina, aged 16,  
Gothenburg*



*A lot of people cheat when they're drunk. It's like you don't think, you just do.*

*Julius, aged 15, Örebro*





# ALCOHOL AND VIOLENCE

There's no doubt that alcohol and violence go hand in hand. In over half of all cases of assault, the victim had the impression that their attacker was under the influence of alcohol or drugs. In 31% of cases, the victim had been drinking, too. And it's often young people who are involved.

## **YOU'RE MORE LIKELY TO GET INTO FIGHTS WHEN YOU'RE DRUNK.**

People who are drunk are more likely to fall victim to unprovoked violence than those who are sober, maybe because you aren't as good at keeping an eye on things when you're drunk. If you were sober, you might avoid eye contact or take a different route if you encounter someone who wants to fight. When you're drunk, your protective mechanisms may not work as well as they normally do.

**IT'S USUALLY BOYS.** Boys are more commonly involved in violence than girls, with 13% of boys and 4% of girls in year 2 of upper secondary school who drink alcohol saying that they have ended up in a fight when they've been drinking.

**“One of the major facts for success in our work with alcohol-related violence has involved interventions with young people who've got hold of alcohol illegally. Police seizures of alcohol have been shown to have a clear impact on the number of violent crimes in the areas studied.”**

Peter Ågren, Södermalm District Police Commissioner, Stockholm

**MOST FIGHTS HAPPEN IN TOWN.** Most fights involve two young males of more or less the same age. The reason for the fight is often trivial – supporting a different football team or accidentally barging into someone. Much of the violence takes place in and around food outlets that are open late at night or on public transport. It's also common in the sort of places where a lot of young people gather – at parties, in parks, or during festivals. Talk to your teenager about this and tell them



the sad facts of life. It can be useful for your son or daughter to know the truth to ensure they don't expose themselves to unnecessary risks.

**STAYING SOBER REDUCES THE RISK.** Not drinking alcohol is a good way of avoiding fights. Alcohol not only lowers your awareness of what's happening around you, it reduces your ability to interpret a situation, making it harder to spot that someone is getting upset or is spoiling for a fight. Most people also feel bigger and tougher when they're drunk, and they say things they wouldn't otherwise have said. Equally, it's easier to get mad and take offence when you're drunk. But even if it's usually drunken teenagers who end up in trouble, being sober doesn't mean you're risk-free – it is often, sad to say, about being in the wrong place at the wrong time. You might like to suggest to your teenager that they avoid hanging out in places where violence might flare up. Think about the time of day, too – the majority of cases of assault occur between 1 a.m. and 3 a.m., which means that if you avoid wandering around town at those hours, you reduce your risk of getting caught up in violence.



*All your emotions come to the surface when you're drunk and you tell people what you really think. And then some people get mad and you end up with a fight.*

*Paulina, aged 15, Örebro*



# IF YOU WANT TO DO MORE

There's a lot you can do to support and be there for teenagers. Maybe you can take part in night-time patrols, or make it easier for them to say "no", or help promote a smarter approach to alcohol in some other way. Read on for a few examples of how you can help.

**GET OUT AND ABOUT.** It can be helpful if there are adults around when teenagers get together. A lot of young people don't have very many adults to talk to, or find it easier to talk to someone they don't know. Many towns in Sweden have set up organised night-time patrols – check with your local authority or school, or search online – but you don't have to be part of an organised night-time patrol to be out and about. The more adults there are on the streets in the evenings, the better. Maybe you could just go for a walk or go to the cinema...

**TALK TO OTHER PARENTS.** Talking to someone else in the same situation can often be hugely helpful. It's also important for young people to know that there are adults who care. If the parents at a school agree that alcohol is not OK, their teenagers are likely to drink less. The school's Parent-Teacher Evening can be a good opportunity to talk about this. Maybe you, the parents, can also all agree on reasonable curfews, on how your teenagers should be picked up, on what to do if a teenager is home alone, that sort of thing?

**TAKE INSPIRATION FROM OTHER PEOPLE'S INITIATIVES.** A great many people across Sweden are involved in activities designed to prevent or limit the harmful effects of alcohol. IQ brings many of these initiatives together on the iq.se website in the form of different IQ projects. It doesn't matter if the scale of the activity is large or small. The goal is to inspire more people to do something. And many of these initiatives are specifically aimed at young people.

**JOIN IQ'S NETWORK.** If you're working to promote a smarter approach to alcohol, you can become part of IQ's network. IQ holds meetings and helps you spread the word about your experiences and those of other people. Everyone is welcome, whether you're working in the voluntary, private or public sector.

## USEFUL CONTACTS

It can sometimes be good to talk to someone who knows a bit more about teenagers and alcohol, or about anything else, for that matter. See below for a list of some of the organisations you can contact when you feel that you need help. Some of them are aimed at adults, others at young people.

### FOR ADULTS

#### Social services

The place to contact social workers who are used to talking to teenagers and parents about all sorts of issues. You'll find contact details on your local authority's website.

#### Childhood and adolescence psychiatric services (BUP)

This is the place to go if you want support from a psychologist or doctor. Search online and contact your local clinic.

#### The Alcohol Line: tel. 020-844 448

The Alcohol Line is for anyone worried about their own or someone else's alcohol consumption. Open: Monday–Thursday, 11 a.m.–7 p.m. and Friday 11 a.m.–4 p.m. Find out more at [alkohollinjen.se](http://alkohollinjen.se)

#### BRIS Adult helpline: tel. 0771-50 50 50

BRIS (Children's Rights in Society) takes calls from adults who want to talk about matters involving children. Open: Monday–Friday, 9 a.m.–12 noon.

#### Parents' Helpline: tel. 020-85 20 00

Talk to sociologists and psychologists who are there to support and help in your role as a parent.

Open: weekdays: 10 a.m.–3 p.m. and Thursdays from 7–9 p.m.

Find out more at [mind.se](http://mind.se)

#### Save the Children's Parents' Helpline and Parents' Email Support: tel. 020-786 786, [foraldrar@rb.se](mailto:foraldrar@rb.se)

Talk to parents across Sweden and get help with issues relating to children and parenthood.

The Parents' Helpline is open

Monday–Thursday, 6–9 p.m.

Find out more at [raddabarnen.se](http://raddabarnen.se)

### FOR YOUNGSTERS

#### BRIS helpline: tel. 116 111

Anyone under the age of 18 can call the BRIS (Children's Rights in Society) helpline and talk to a counsellor.

Open: 7 days a week, 2–9 p.m.

You can also email them or chat online via [bris.se](http://bris.se)

#### Youth guidance centres (UMO)

Open to anyone aged between 13 and 25 years of age. Find answers to your questions about relationships, alcohol, drugs and other subjects. Go to [umo.se](http://umo.se) for a list of phone numbers to every UMO clinic in Sweden.

#### "On-call buddy"

A Red Cross chat helpline where young people can chat to an "on-call buddy".

Online chat: [jourhavandekompis.se](http://jourhavandekompis.se)

Open: weekdays, 6–10 p.m. and

Saturday–Sunday, 2–6 p.m.

## USEFUL WEBSITES

### FOR ADULTS

[iq.se](http://iq.se)

Information and facts about alcohol and about IQ's communication and network.

[tonarsparloren.se](http://tonarsparloren.se)

Online and audiobook version of The Teenage Phrasebook. Can also be downloaded as a pdf. Information available in other languages.

[folkhalsomyndigheten.se](http://folkhalsomyndigheten.se)

(Public Health Agency of Sweden). Facts, news and statistics about alcohol and other drugs.

[can.se](http://can.se)

The Swedish Council for Information on Alcohol and Other Drugs – CAN. Facts about alcohol and other drugs.

[1177.se](http://1177.se)

1177 Health Care Helpline with a self-test and information on a range of subjects, including alcohol.

[alkoholhjalpen.se](http://alkoholhjalpen.se)

Tips and advice for anyone worried about their own or someone else's alcohol consumption.

[systembolaget.se](http://systembolaget.se)

Information and facts about alcohol and health, including some focusing on young people.

[tobaksnolla.se](http://tobaksnolla.se)

A Non-Smoking Generation. Information and support aimed at persuading young people not to use tobacco.

[fmn.se](http://fmn.se)

Parents Against Drugs Association. Information and support for family of narcotics users.

[cannabishjalpen.se](http://cannabishjalpen.se)

For anyone affected by cannabis.

[trafikverket.se/ddd/](http://trafikverket.se/ddd/)

(The Swedish Transport Administration). Don't Drink and Drive – promoting sober driving and helping prevent young people from being injured in traffic.

### FOR YOUNGSTERS

[umo.se](http://umo.se)

Youth Guidance Centres online. Information and support for young people on a range of issues, including alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

[drugsmart.com](http://drugsmart.com)

Information and a discussion forum on alcohol, cannabis, tobacco and other drugs.

[bris.se](http://bris.se)

Children and young people can call the BRIS (Children's Rights in Society) helpline on 116 111, or email them (BRIS mail) or chat online (BRIS chat) via [bris.se](http://bris.se).

[killfragor.se](http://killfragor.se)

Online chat buddy for boys. Chat: Monday–Thursday and Sundays, 7–9 p.m.

[tjejjouren.se](http://tjejjouren.se)

Support and online chat for girls. You can also email, call or drop in to tjejjouren clinics around the country.

[tjeizonen.se](http://tjeizonen.se)

Support for girls, including “Big Sister” support. Chat Sunday–Thursday, 8–10 p.m.

[cannabishjalpen.se](http://cannabishjalpen.se)

For everyone affected by cannabis.

[trafikverket.se/ddd/](http://trafikverket.se/ddd/)

(The Swedish Transport Administration). Don't Drink and Drive – promoting sober driving and helping prevent young people from being injured in traffic.



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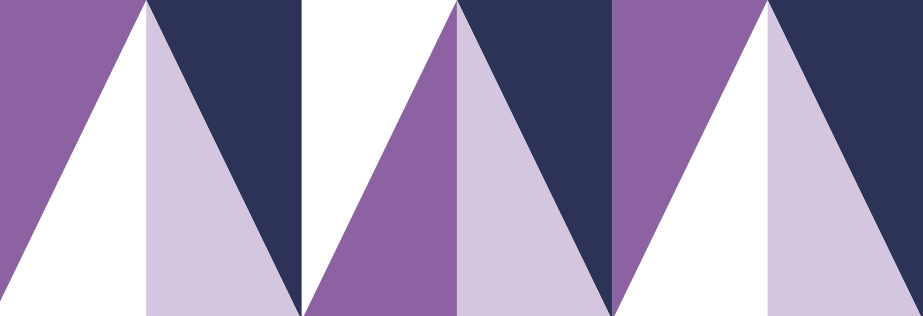
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**Should you offer teenagers alcohol at home?  
Should you sit up and wait for them to come home  
at night? What do you do when your teenager  
doesn't stick to an agreement? What do young people  
think about drinking? Being a teenager's parent isn't  
always that easy. This book is full of tips, arguments,  
facts and figures that you might find useful.  
Make life a little easier: read it!**

**TONARSPARLOREN.SE**

