

YC YOUTH CONNECTIONS MAGAZINE

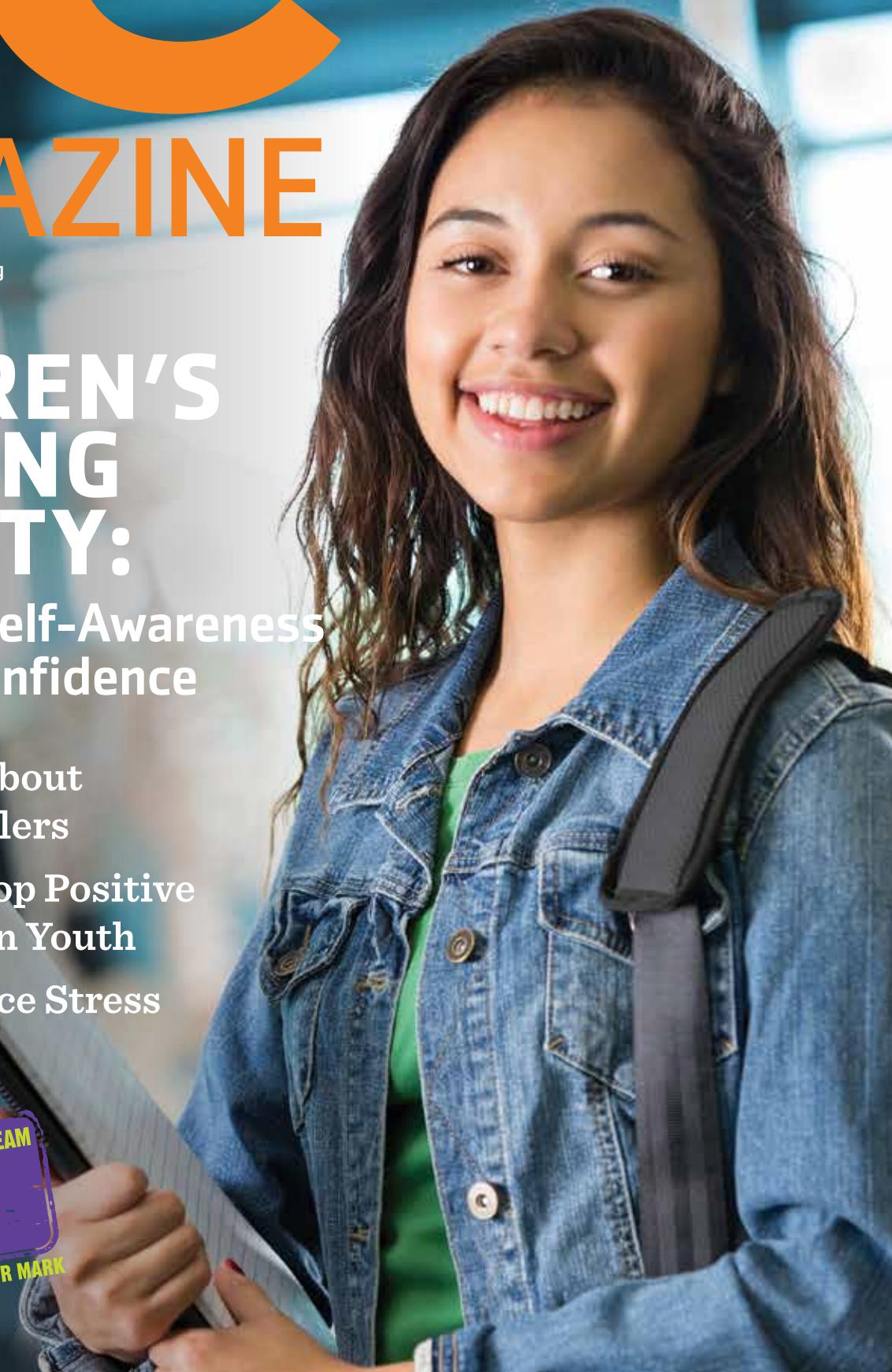
April 2020 | www.dupageplt.org

ALSO
*Dangers
of Marijuana
Edibles*

CHILDREN'S GROWING IDENTITY: Cultivating Self-Awareness to Inspire Confidence

- » Five Truths About Middle Schoolers
- » How to Develop Positive Self-Esteem in Youth
- » Ways to Reduce Stress

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APRIL 2020

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ABOUT THE DUPAGE COUNTY PREVENTION LEADERSHIP TEAM

The DuPage County Prevention Leadership Team (PLT) is a county-wide community coalition working together to prevent substance use and increase mental health among DuPage County youth, 18 years and younger. Our mission is to bring together a collaboration of leaders that assess and advocate for the use of best practices to reduce risk behaviors of youth leading to substance use, abuse and addiction to ultimately lead to our vision that DuPage County is a mentally and physically healthy, drug-free community.

The PLT came together in 2011 following a county-wide health assessment, which identified substance abuse and mental health as two of the top five health priorities facing DuPage County. This information led to a call to action among community leaders and the PLT was formed. In 2014, the PLT was awarded the Drug Free Communities grant and currently has over fifty active coalition members representing more than twenty organizations throughout the county, and continues to grow in capacity. The PLT is comprised of community leaders and key players in DuPage County who represent one of twelve community sectors; schools, law enforcement, businesses, parents, youth, youth-serving organizations, substance abuse organizations, religious/fraternal organizations, media, civic/volunteer groups, healthcare professionals and state and local government agencies.

The coalition utilizes data gathered from the Illinois Youth Survey, an anonymous, self-reported survey given to middle and high school students. This data source assists the PLT in strategic planning and helps the coalition identify the main issues youth are facing. Alcohol, marijuana and prescription drug abuse are the main substances the PLT are looking to address through multiple individual and environmental strategies. Coalition members acknowledge that pooling resources and working together will result in a larger impact at a county-wide level and will lead to achieving the common goal of reducing youth substance use and increasing mental wellness in DuPage.

FROM THE Director



DOUG PETIT

As I write this letter, we are in the midst of the Coronavirus pandemic. Schools and most businesses are closed, and we are all being instructed to stay home and isolated. It is most definitely a trying time, but also a time where I have found many coming together despite needing to stay six feet apart. I have seen neighbors wave to each other from across the street as they walk, friends drive by friends' houses to yell Happy Birthday from a safe distance, and children and grandchildren blow kisses to their elderly family members from outside the windows of a nursing home. If this pandemic teaches us anything, it's that we need each other and we'll find ways to support each other no matter the circumstance. For parents, it is a unique opportunity to show our children positive ways to cope during stressful times. I am hopeful that by the time this issue gets into your hands, we are back to living life as usual and able to hug our loved ones. But I find comfort in knowing that if we are all still dealing with this new way of living come spring and summer, we will continue to cope the best we know how, by staying positive and finding ways to connect. We hope this issue offers both!

Our feature article, "Children's Growing Identity: Cultivating Self-Awareness to Inspire Confidence," focuses on building our children's self-esteem. "Five Truths About Middle Schoolers" is a helpful reminder of what "tweens" may be dealing with in this point in their life.

Finally, we take great pride in the sections of this magazine that are customized to our DuPage County community. Our Assets in Action, Faces in the Crowd, and all ads are customized to our local community.

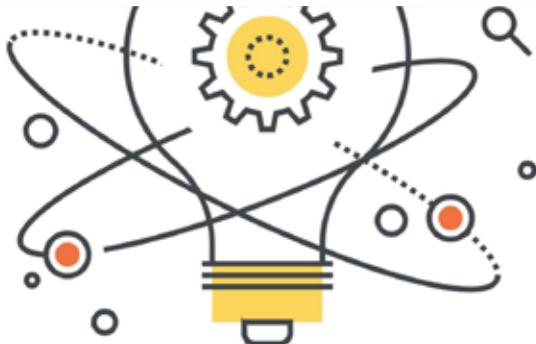
We hope you enjoy this issue of *Youth Connections Magazine* and hope you find the information valuable to help your teens and family thrive. As always, you can follow and interact with us on Facebook at DuPagePLT and on Instagram at LeaveYourMarkDuPage. Here's to staying connected!

DOUG PETIT

President, Parents and Teens Together
Co-Chair, DuPage County Prevention Leadership Team
2824 Wheatland Court Naperville, IL 60564
jpfunrun@sbcglobal.net (630) 999-0053



This project is funded by IL Dept. of Human Services/Office of Population Affairs



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CONFessions FROM THE KITCHEN TABLE

Editor's note: This is a continuation of a series from a family who struggled to keep their child mentally well.

The first submission can be read at: <https://www.youthconnectionscoalition.org/content/magazine/archives-2/> in the June 2019 issue.

As my daughter's red flags appeared, I worked hard as her mother to provide and seek effective interventions including:

COUNSELING. I was able to locate a reputable and helpful counselor for her as soon as the decline in grades and the cutting were present. Additionally, this prompted us to seek medical care for her new depression diagnosis and, for some time, we saw some improvement. However, she also learned how to further suppress any struggle while making sure she was pleasing the adults in her life with grades and involvement in limited extracurriculars. Options for in-school services were available, though I was not aware of them at the time. Day treatment options were not available to her.

ACUTE CARE. It was apparent we needed to seek the acute care of hospital intervention when her safety was an imminent risk. It is important to recognize that this is not a solution. Acute care is designed to provide safety in the short term. Through this process we saw her gain some clarity of logic; however, when she was discharged within the week, all the other factors were still at play. Additionally, returning to the school environment where she needed to face the curiosity and judgement of friends and teachers, in addition to attempting to make

up work, resulted in panic attacks and further mental health struggles.

HIGHER LEVEL CARE. As my ex-husband and I worked to co-parent a struggling child within the context of all the contributing factors while realizing that love and limits were not working, we made the most difficult decision of our lives to find a therapeutic boarding school that would allow her to tend to her mental health needs, first and foremost, in a positive culture without all the noise of her life that made it so difficult to navigate. As a mother who stayed at home to raise her children, this was the most heart wrenching decision I have ever made. Yet I knew moving her to a new school or trying to change the environment only, without consistent daily care to her mental health needs, would just result in more of the same.

Finally, in this process of seeking the proper care, I embarked on my own journey in which I struggled with guilt and self-blame, believing I could have done something to stop the devastation. I faced self-criticism and outside judgement as a mother who "sent her away," somehow indicating I was not a fit mother. Through the residential program, I was faced with looking at how I contributed to the relationship, while growing in understanding that I was not to blame. I began to understand that, as a parent, I was but one positive factor among many negative factors, including her genetics, a devastating

divorce at a critical point in her life, her own self-limiting thoughts and beliefs, her experience of hurtful peer interactions that fed the negative thoughts, her introverted personality, social media, and an addiction to an emotionally manipulative relationship. I began to understand that in all my life of caring for my children, I had forgotten to take care of myself.

With my daughter in a safe place, beginning her road to recovery, I could begin mine by eating right, exercising, spending time with supportive friends, joining a support group, and engaging in life, despite her absence. While it is true that I missed her beyond words, and I continued to care for the two siblings who suffered in her absence.

In this experience, we learned, as a family, that we could not control the situation. Instead, we sought lasting recovery which took us to depths unknown and initiated the healing process. We know there will continue to be struggles and bumps on the journey. We have an arsenal of new tools to use to support each other and the strength to resist blaming which keeps us stuck and helpless. I continue to monitor red flags, seek appropriate intervention, and care for myself before trying to assert control over the uncontrollable. The journey transitioned from a mom who thought it was her job to fix it, to a family who grew in awareness of support and responsibility for ourselves and to each other. We are embracing the process and hope to connect with those who face the same. ■

YOU CAN SUBMIT YOUR STORY AT: ycdupage@gmail.com

For many of us the kitchen table represents the typical family experience. We have laughed while having family game night. We have cried over our children's choices. We have blown out the candles on many cakes. We have argued our way out of doing the dishes. We have struggled through those "three more bites." We have learned hard lessons and celebrated many deserved successes. One thing is for sure though—if our kitchen tables could talk, there would be plenty of stories! So often it is in relating to others' stories that we realize there isn't always one answer, or even a right answer. Parenting is hard work! If you have a story or a lesson learned, we invite you to share it with our readers. Sometimes, knowing we aren't the only ones struggling to find the answer is all the help we need.

children's growing i

Cultivating Self-Awareness to Inspire Confidence

By JENNIFER MILLER, M.ED.



Identity



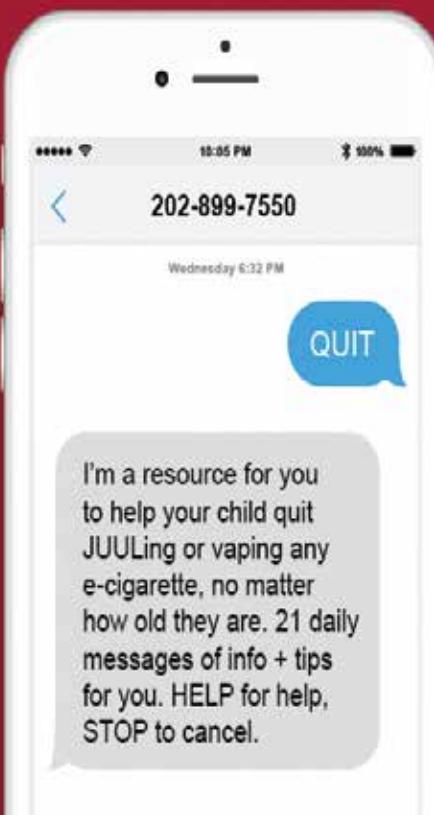
In those last sweet days of summer, Mom Margaret wanted to do something enjoyable with both kids in addition to the typical flurry of school supply shopping. But she hesitated to propose an outing when she noticed that ten-year-old Olivia was slinking around the house seeming down. When Margaret asked her about it, she snapped. "Mom! I'm fine."

After giving Olivia a little time and space, Margaret approached her gently, "Seems like you've been worried or upset lately. Are you okay?" Despite her delicate prodding, Olivia shrugged her shoulders and innocently looked at her mom. "I don't know," she said genuinely perplexed. "Are you upset about your friends?" She had been hanging out with neighbors all summer long and maybe they had an argument, Mom guessed. But no, that wasn't it. "Could it be," asked Mom, "anticipating the school year starting and all that goes along with it?" Olivia was no longer quiet but launched into her many worries. Ah, jackpot. Would she like her new teacher? Would she fit into her old group of friends or could she make new ones? What if she failed the new advanced placement math class they moved her in to?

Frequently as parents, we feel like we have to poke, prod, and pry — but not too hard, and not too obviously! — in order to discover the true feelings our children are evidencing through their words and actions. We know something's wrong. But what? Many times, children are not aware themselves, as was the case with Olivia. Her mom allowed her the safe space to reflect on what was really going on, and she was able to figure it out with her support.

At each age and stage, children are growing their self-awareness. The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning defines self-awareness as "the ability to accurately recognize one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior. The ability to accurately assess one's strengths and limitations, with a well-grounded sense of confidence." This includes approaching challenges with the intent to learn from them and the optimism that, with hard work, one can meet any challenge. And children are not born with the ability to identify, understand, and articulate their emotions. That skill is built over time.

continued on page 9



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Join other parents, high school and middle school students and professionals to learn about issues facing today's youth.
The Glenbard Parent Series engages top experts, parents and school staff to become proactive and informed in pursuit of the mutual goal to strengthen our communities. Programs are free and open to the public, no registration required. **Details at glenbardgps.org**

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 26 at 7pm
Ron Lieber, NYT Journalist
The Challenges of College Costs

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 12 at 10:30am
Frank Palmasani
Right College/Right Price

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, noon & 7pm
Dr. Lisa Damour, author of Untangled and Under Pressure
Strengths vs. Stressors: Untangling the Teen Years

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 7pm
Jason Reynolds, Library of Congress Youth Ambassador
Community Read: Long Way Down

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 13
Debbie Reber
Differently Wired: Nurturing Unconventional Children in a Conventional World

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 20, 7pm
Dr. Christine Carter, author of Today's Adolescence & Raising Happiness
Raising Happiness: Simple Steps for Today's Teens

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 17 at 7pm
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18 at noon
Ken Ginsburg, M.D., author Raising Kids to Thrive & Reaching Teens
Reaching Teens: Healthy Decision Making and Strength-Based Strategies to Help Teens Thrive

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 1 at 7pm
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 2 at 9:30am & noon
Dr. Catherine Pearlman
Ignore It: Increase Parenting Satisfaction by Selectively Looking the Other Way (Children 3-10)

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 7 at 7pm
Dr. Devorah Heitner, author Screenwise
Documentary Film Screening: Like

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Check our website for updates/confirmation: GlenbardGPS.org

For questions, contact Gilda Ross at (630) 469-9100 or gilda_ross@glenbard.org

through interactions with parents/care givers. The more intentional parents become about teaching children what and how they are experiencing emotions, how they can interpret situations — and realize they have choices in how they interpret situations — the greater the child's self-awareness becomes.

Self-awareness is equally important to grow in ourselves as parents yet is perhaps one of the most under-appreciated skills. In fact, a recent poll of Montana parents statewide were split on the issue, half saying they had a strong sense of self-awareness and half saying they had low-to-moderate self-awareness. Consider that no one person has total self-awareness. In other words, we all have blind spots to our feelings and our thoughts and how they impact our actions. But helping our child(ren) grow, their self-knowledge will impact every other critical social and emotional skill as they grow in their competence, confidence, and ability to develop healthy relationships with others.

Because children learn social and emotional skills first by watching the caring adults in their lives, parents can become more intentional about growing their own self-awareness as an important step. Post feelings words or photos of facial expressions on the refrigerator as a reminder to articulate them. Also, write down and reflect on the most challenging parenting moments when we get angry or upset. What triggered the feeling? Why did it feel so strongly? Did we react in a constructive way and if not, how can we choose a better reaction the next time? These reflections can strengthen our own self-awareness modeling the skill we want to promote in our child(ren).

Because back-to-school time is a major transition for all students, it can be an emotionally-charged time. Understanding of our child's mental and emotional exhaustion at the end of a new school day or his anxiety over all that's new can go a long way toward supporting this time of change.

Check out the following tips for parents on how to build this critical competence at each age.

FOR 3- TO 5-YEAR-OLDS: Develop a Feelings Vocabulary and Cultivate Body Awareness.

While our young children are becoming competent with language use, they are only at the beginning stages of developing their feelings vocabulary. In fact, that body takeover that occurs when they are upset can further fuel their upset as they feel out of control. Though we've heard the phrase "use your words!" uttered to young ones, this expectation goes

beyond their developmental capacity. Consider the fact that mature adults can struggle to name what they are feeling when highly upset, so we shouldn't expect that of children. Instead, support their learning. When seeing a furrowed brow, ask: "It looks like you're worried. Is that right?" Make a point of using feeling words in family life to give young children practice. And also, call out physical symptoms when they are seen. "Your ears are red. Are you feeling tired?" Or "your tummy seems to hurt when you are worried. Are you feeling worried?" These simple reflections can help a young child cultivate self-awareness as they become better able to understand, express, and seek support for what they are experiencing.

FOR 6- TO 8-YEAR-OLDS:

Reflect on Self-talk.

Did you know that the emergence of self-talk happens between kindergarten and first grade? Children are attempting to figure out the rules in all aspects of their lives — in the classroom, in family life, and with their friends. Self-talk aids this self-regulating process. Whereas we once had to say, "Don't climb on that wall. It's dangerous," now a child will utter to himself, "Mom said this is dangerous. Don't do it." But as we know, self-talk can also become self-defeating. If a child approaches an academic challenge with an "I can't do it" refrain playing in their head, the chances are slim that they'll meet that challenge. So how can we call out self-talk and reflect on it? If we see a child repeatedly struggling, maybe ask, "What are you telling yourself?" Let the child know that self-talk is normal, important even. But when those inner voices turn destructive, that's the time to turn them around. Instead ask, "what can you say to yourself to help you figure out that problem or meet your challenge?"

FOR 9- TO 12-YEAR-OLDS:

Learn the Conversation Two-Step. One: Empathy, Two: Reframe.

A central theme of this age group is their growing social awareness and the anxiety that comes with attempting to understand the thoughts and feelings of others. Change is upon these pre-teens as they deep dive into puberty and the many physical, emotional and mental changes that accompany it. They feel a heightened vulnerability that can lead them to confusing conclusions about how others perceive them and what they think of themselves. So when our child comes to us with a concern about a friend, listen and reflect back with empathy. "Sounds like you

are feeling rejected by your friend's cold shoulder in the hallway." That supports their big feelings. But then, help her reframe her thinking by asking open-ended questions. "What do you think your friend was feeling? Is there anything going on in her life that could be making her upset? Are you sure this had to do with you or could it be more about her own stresses?" Offer those questions without expectations of an answer. This not only offers the child the opportunity to strengthen her empathy skills, she'll also grow in her social and self awareness as she realizes that particularly her negative interpretations are not always accurate. She may be more liked and accepted than she thought!

FOR 13- TO 15-YEAR-OLDS:

Help Teens Discover their Anchor.

Teens spend much of their time comparing themselves to others to figure out how they will define themselves and what their role might be in their friend nucleus. As they pull away asserting their independence, they are experimenting with the many variations of who they could become attempting to envision their future adult self. This is the time when they need an anchor. What will help offer direction and serve as a steady internal guide as they grow their identity into emerging adulthood? Reflect on their sense of meaning and purpose. What's most important to them? How can they see themselves contributing to the world? What specific gifts can they give to others and to the larger world? If they looked back on their life at the end, what about who they became would give them great pride? Asking these questions provokes their thinking to help them grow their sense of purpose. They begin to see their potential as a significant contributor. This sense of purpose can guide their big and small decisions as they face increasingly complex risks and challenges.

All of these ways of supporting and reflecting on a child's feelings and interpretation of others' feelings can assist in her growing identity. Children can begin to define themselves as ones who can face challenges head on with a positive outlook, who understand the messages they are receiving from their feelings and can communicate them in ways that support their needs, and figure out who they are independently becoming and how they might actively contribute their best to the world. Self-awareness builds confidence. With support, each child is eager and ready to uncover the many gifts and powers that lie waiting within them! ■

About The Author: Jennifer S. Miller, M.Ed., author of the popular site, Confident Parents, Confident Kids, has twenty years of experience helping adults become more effective with the children they love through social and emotional learning. She serves as a writer for ParentingMontana.org: Tools for Your Child's Success, a statewide media campaign to educate parents on social and emotional learning. Her book, "Confident Parents, Confident Kids: Raising Emotional Intelligence in Ourselves and Our Kids — From Toddlers to Teenagers" is available now for pre-order.

Check out who's standing out in our community.

IS THERE SOMEONE YOU'D LIKE TO NOMINATE?

Please email ycdupage@gmail.com and tell us why this individual has stood out in your crowd.

FACES IN THE CROWD



Gavin Schilling GLENBARD WEST HIGH SCHOOL, JUNIOR

Gavin is one of Glenbard West High School's most involved juniors. He is an active member of the school's math team, science Olympiad, speech team and best buddies. He also makes time to prioritize his involvement with Reality Illinois, the Teen Advisory Board to the DuPage County Health Dept. Gavin says that his participation means helping his peers and community members make healthy decisions. He believes that Reality gives him the tools and platform to help educate his classmates and friends about the effects of vaping and other drugs so that way they can make the right decisions and allows him to advocate for local laws like smoke free parks and opting out of local recreational marijuana dispensaries.

Jane Pieper GLENBARD WEST HIGH SCHOOL, SOPHOMORE

Jane is a committed member of Reality Illinois and is passionate about getting involved in her school and community. She is a strong youth advocate for prevention policies that impact her and her peers. Earlier this year, Jane presented to the Glen Ellyn Village Board to advocate for prevention policies that would prohibit the sale of recreational marijuana in her town. Outside of being a youth advocate for Reality, she plays field hockey and runs track at her school. She is also involved in Young Life, West Student Leadership and Student Council.



Justine Rozenich SAINT IGNATIUS HIGH SCHOOL, JUNIOR

Justine is a current member of Reality Illinois, which is a high school aged group that represents teens throughout DuPage. She is very passionate about medical advocacy and keeping teens safe from drugs and alcohol. She recently participated on a panel to discuss the impacts of vaping on teens. Outside of Reality, she is Secretary-General for her school Model UN team, a member of both her school's orchestra and the Naperville Youth Symphony, and the captain of her school Scholastic Bowl team. She is committed to serving her community and somehow makes time to attend local town hall meetings and tutor kids.

Ann Marie Bianchi PROGRAM COORDINATOR-COMMUNITY & GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS, NORTHWESTERN MEDICINE

Ann Marie is committed to the health and wellbeing of DuPage County youth and adults. Outside of her position at Northwestern Medicine, she volunteers as the Co-Chair to the DuPage County Prevention Leadership Team, a community coalition that works to prevent substance use and increase mental wellness among DuPage County youth. In this role, she has attended national trainings and conferences, volunteers to present to community groups, and represents the coalition at community events. Ann Marie is also very active in the church community and volunteers for Habitat for Humanity and Bridge Communities. She also serves as a board member for HOME DuPage, Hearts of Grace, and the Western DuPage Chamber of Commerce.



Village of Bensenville

Earlier this year, the Village of Bensenville amended the Village code to make all Village-owned parks tobacco free. The new regulations prohibit the use of all nicotine products, tobacco products, and electronic cigarettes in any Village-owned park or outdoor recreation area open to the general public. This includes the Town Center Park, Veterans Park, and Redmond Recreational Complex. In a recent survey conducted by the DuPage County Health Department, 73% of respondents reported that they do support tobacco-free policies in Village-owned recreational parks. Of those who had visited a park in DuPage County within the last year, 45% had been bothered by tobacco smoke. The adoption of these regulations continue Bensenville's efforts towards health and wellness within the community.



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Visit www.DuPagePLT.org for more information.

40 DEVELOPMENTAL ASSETS

40 Developmental Assets are essential qualities of life that help young people thrive, do well in school, and avoid risky behavior.

Youth Connections utilizes the 40 Developmental Assets Framework to guide the work we do in promoting positive youth development. The 40 Assets model was developed by the Minneapolis-based Search Institute based on extensive research. Just as we are coached to diversify our financial assets so that all our eggs are not in one basket, the strength that the 40 Assets model can build in our youth comes through diversity. In a nutshell, the more of the 40 Assets youth possess, the more likely they are to exhibit positive behaviors and attitudes (such as good health and school success) and the less likely they are to exhibit risky behaviors (such as drug use and promiscuity). It's that simple: if we want to empower and protect our children, building the 40 Assets in our youth is a great way to start.

Look over the list of Assets on the following page and think about what Assets may be lacking in our community and what Assets you can help build in our young people. Do what you can do with the knowledge that even through helping build one asset in one child, you are increasing the chances that child will grow up safe and successful. Through our combined efforts, we will continue to be a place where Great Kids Make Great Communities.

Turn the page to learn more!



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3

EXTERNAL ASSETS

SUPPORT

- 1. **Family support:** Family life provides high levels of love and support.
- 2. **Positive family communication:** Young person and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parent(s).
- 3. **Other adult relationships:** Young person receives support from three or more nonparent adults.
- 4. **Caring neighborhood:** Young person experiences caring neighbors.
- 5. **Caring school climate:** School provides a caring, encouraging environment.
- 6. **Parent involvement in school:** Parent(s) are actively involved in helping young person succeed in school.

EMPOWERMENT

- 7. **Community values youth:** Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth.
- 8. **Youth as resources:** Young people are given useful roles in the community.
- 9. **Service to others:** Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week.
- 10. **Safety:** Young person feels safe at home, at school, and in the neighborhood.

BOUNDARIES & EXPECTATIONS

- 11. **Family boundaries:** Family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the young person's whereabouts.
- 12. **School boundaries:** School provides clear rules and consequences.
- 13. **Neighborhood boundaries:** Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior.
- 14. **Adult role models:** Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.
- 15. **Positive peer influence:** Young person's best friends model responsible behavior.
- 16. **High expectations:** Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well.

CONSTRUCTIVE USE OF TIME

- 17. **Creative activities:** Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts.
- 18. **Youth programs:** Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in the community.
- 19. **Religious community:** Young person spends one or more hours per week in activities in a religious institution.
- 20. **Time at home:** Young person is out with friends "with nothing special to do" two or fewer nights per week.

INTERNAL ASSETS

COMMITMENT TO LEARNING

21. **Achievement motivation:** Young person is motivated to do well in school.
22. **School engagement:** Young person is actively engaged in learning.
23. **Homework:** Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day.
24. **Bonding to school:** Young person cares about her or his school.
25. **Reading for pleasure:** Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.

POSITIVE VALUES

26. **Caring:** Young person places high value on helping other people.
27. **Equality and social justice:** Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty.
28. **Integrity:** Young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs.
29. **Honesty:** Young person "tells the truth even when it is not easy."
30. **Responsibility:** Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility.
31. **Restraint:** Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.

SOCIAL COMPETENCIES

32. **Planning and decision making:** Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices.
33. **Interpersonal competence:** Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.
34. **Cultural competence:** Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.
35. **Resistance skills:** Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.
36. **Peaceful conflict resolution:** Young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.

POSITIVE IDENTITY

37. **Personal power:** Young person feels he or she has control over "things that happen to me."
38. **Self-esteem:** Young person reports having a high self-esteem.
39. **Sense of purpose:** Young person reports that "my life has a purpose."
40. **Positive view of personal future:** Young person is optimistic about her or his personal future.





FIVE TRUTHS *about middle schoolers*

and How Parents Can Make the Most of a Critical Phase

By PHYLLIS L. FAGELL, LCPC

When Maia starts sixth grade in the fall, I'm putting you on speed dial," my friend Jackie told me over lunch. "I was the mean girl in middle school, and karma is going to bite me. Tell me the truth—just how bad will it be?" As a school counselor who has spent the past two years researching the parenting book *Middle School Matters*, I'm used to fielding that question. I told Jackie that I couldn't do anything about her karma, but I could dispel some common misconceptions about tweens. Here are five truths about middle schoolers, along with tips to help parents approach a critical phase with positivity and confidence.

MOST MIDDLE SCHOOLERS DON'T CRAVE DRAMA.

Kids this age tend to be unfairly maligned as high-intensity pot-stirrers, but that's a mischaracterization. They simply lack perspective and life experience. If you've never been dumped by your best friend, how can you know the searing pain won't last forever? Instead of insisting it's not a catastrophe, validate your kid's real heartbreak, redirect their energy and help them expand their friend group. And remember—as much as kids dislike peer drama, they really don't want any drama from you. If they suspect you'll overreact, they won't tell you they failed a quiz or sent a classmate a nude selfie. Try to keep your cool so you're in the know when they need help regrouping.

THEY'RE NOT EMBARRASSED BY YOU, THEY'RE EMBARRASSED TO BE WITH YOU.

For middle schoolers, separating from parents and aligning with peers is a developmental imperative. If your

seventh-grade daughter is at a football game with her eighth-grade friends and you show up, she probably won't invite you to sit with them. It's not that there's something inherently embarrassing about you, it's that she wants to appear mature and independent. Don't confuse this standoffish behavior for lack of interest in you. Your child is watching your every move, observing how you practice self-care, handle setbacks, cope with stress, pick friends and treat others. This isn't a time to back off—in fact, it's the perfect time to double down on modeling values, because middle schoolers are intellectually capable and impressionable.

THEY DO WANT TO TALK, AS LONG AS YOU ABIDE BY THE FOLLOWING 4,024 RULES.

How you engage your child is just as important as what you say. If the conversation feels too personal, they'll feel over-exposed and shut down. Try manufacturing emotional distance. You can broach love or friendship issues by analyzing characters in a movie, show or book, or by dissecting a relationship advice column, or by asking about their friends' experiences. If you talk about topics such as underage drinking, drugs or sex, bring them up in the context of a current news story. Some kids find it easier to talk when eye contact is optional, such as in the car. Avoid prying, open-ended questions unless safety is at stake, and respect that their crush is their business. Take the same approach with problem-solving. If your kid is stuck, ask them how they'd advise a friend. Or try visual imagery and take them on a magic carpet ride. Ask them if they have a different take on their situation from their vantage point in the sky.

THEY'RE NOT TRYING TO PUSH YOUR BUTTONS.

Your child is likely to test boundaries in middle school, whether they lie, cheat, spearhead a hurtful group chat, get in a physical fight, skip school or vape in the bathroom. None of that means they're a bad person, but something could be getting in their way. Determine the root cause of their behavior so you can target the right solution. Are they unhappy with their status in the social hierarchy? Need extra help in school? Struggle with attentional issues? Feel overwhelmed, anxious, or depressed? Want to fit in? Be clear that you can handle the truth. Your child won't burden you with their insecurities if they sense you're not at your peak. On the flip side, don't despair if they battle you over everything. They're not pushing your buttons for sport. It may feel counterintuitive, but arguing is a sign that they respect your opinion and care what you think.

THEY'RE AN ENIGMA TO THEMSELVES, TOO.

Middle schoolers are a jumble of contradictions and inconsistencies. They can be sullen at home but delightful with teachers. They can be risk-takers on the athletic field but cautious in class. The same kid who asks you to read to them on Monday might ask you to get out of their life (and their room) on Tuesday. I know it's tough, but try to be the eye of their storm. Stay consistent, accepting and loving as they do the hard work of figuring out who they are and who they hope to become. They're already feeling tremendous pressure to conform, so celebrate what makes them different, focus on their strengths, and remind them that every middle schooler on the planet is working on something. ■

About The Author: Phyllis L. Fagell, LCPC is the school counselor at Sheridan School in Washington, D.C., a psychotherapist at The Chrysalis Group and a frequent contributor to *The Washington Post*. She writes the "Career Confidential" column for PDK, Intl., "The Meaningful Middle" column for AMLE, and is the author of *Middle School Matters*, (Hachette, 2019). Phyllis blogs at www.phyllisfagell.com and tweets @pfagell.

About Ask, Listen, Learn: *Ask, Listen, Learn: Kids and Alcohol Don't Mix* is a program of Responsibility.org, a non-profit organization committed to preventing drunk driving and underage drinking and promoting responsible consumption for those of age who chose to drink. To access the FREE resources please visit www.asklistenlearn.org

HOW TO DEVELOP *positive self-esteem in youth*

Dr. Tim Elmore

Self-esteem for kids has been a hot topic for fifty years. In the 1960s, books were written for educators and parents about the need to affirm young people; for teens to "find themselves," believe in themselves and express themselves.

As Baby Boomers became parents, we determined we would raise our children in an era of high self-esteem—giving them trophies just for participating; building the family calendar around their events, passing out money just for being part of the family, and telling them they are awesome just for making their bed. We created a Millennial generation who often wasn't ready for the stark realities of adulthood. (Employers may not have been so quick to affirm them for doing what's expected).

I believe it's time to revisit the self-esteem issue. Something has happened that none of us was ready for.

WHY SELF-ESTEEM IS AN ISSUE TODAY

While I believe the self-esteem movement went awry, the issue is as important today as it's ever been, thanks to the emotional highs and lows students now experience from social media. These digital platforms brought several unintended consequences that frequently overshadow their positive benefits.

I've written about the negative impact social media has had on Generation Z and cited data on their increased loneliness, anxiety, envy, narcissism, panic attacks and depression, due in no small part to the presence of social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and others. The four outcomes I noted are:

- Teens rely on others' feedback too much for their emotional wellbeing.
- Teens buy into cognitive distortions about their worth and identity.
- Teens gain their sense of identity from information instead of application.
- Teens see themselves as victims rather than leaders in their interactions.

FOUR STEPS STUDENTS CAN TAKE TO BUILD THEIR SELF-ESTEEM

Given this reality—what can we do as caring adults to kindle healthy self-esteem in our young? Since social media is not going away how can we help them during those hours they are on it and off of it, to develop a robust sense of identity? Here are four ideas for students to practice.

1. Tell yourself the truth.

When something is posted online, it becomes very difficult for a victim to erase it from their memories much less the social media platform. In this scenario, students must learn to fight distorted perceptions about who they are. They must believe the best about themselves and speak the truth about who they are. When I wake up every morning, I say four affirmations out loud to myself. These affirmations are true statements clarifying who I am and the mission I pursue. This practice may need to be preceded by identifying any perceptions they're embracing, such as: *I am a loser. I'm never going to get any better. I always ruin the party for everyone. No one likes me.* Helping them think objectively then speak truthfully are essential steps in this process.

2. Focus on others instead of yourself.

Human beings are wired to be happier and emotionally healthier when we target our attention toward others, not just ourselves. This doesn't mean we fail to practice self-care. It simply means that narcissism is the enemy of happiness. When I begin to feel down about myself on social media, I gain perspective by serving the needs of others or affirming them on those sites. While this sounds like a platitude, it's actually backed up by research. Dr. Marianna Pogosyan writes in *Psychology Today*: "Research has found many examples of how doing good, in ways big or small, not only *feels* good, but also *does* us good. For instance, the well-being-boosting and depression-

lowering benefits of volunteering have been repeatedly documented. As has the sense of meaning and purpose that often accompanies selfless behavior... Moreover, there is now evidence from fMRI studies suggesting a brain link between generosity and happiness."

3. Use your talent in a way that makes you proud.

When we transition our self-esteem from mere information (my mom told me I'm a good artist or I'm a caring person) to application (I actually created a piece of art or carried an elderly neighbor's groceries inside) we actually take a big step in building a robust self-image. Actions always speak louder than words. I see too many students who have "artificial self-esteem" because it's all built on mom's praise, not on their own achievement. Certainly there is a balance; I am not negating the power of affirmation from others. I just believe that negative comments on social media pale in comparison to the strength of knowing I have actually done something significant. Other's opinions are less important and false criticism becomes hollow. I take my self-esteem into my own hands.

4. Join an environment that builds healthy self-esteem.

Encourage students to participate in a community that will enhance their self-image. It enables me to choose my sense of identity through the people I have around me regularly. You've probably heard the phrase: "You will become the middle of the five closest people you hang around." There is some truth in that statement. Social media can be overwhelming in a teen's life. If this is creating a problem in a teen's life, Sage Day suggests, "there are viable alternatives, like therapeutic and alternative schools for teens. These schools create a safe learning environment, while helping to restore self-esteem, and provide the encouragement and support your teen may need."

About The Author: Tim Elmore is an international speaker and best-selling author of more than 30 books, including *Generation iY: The Secrets to Connecting With Teens & Young Adults in the Digital Age*, *Artificial Maturity: Helping Kids Meet the Challenges of Becoming Authentic Adults*, the *Habitudes®* series, and *12 Huge Mistakes Parents Can Avoid*. He is founder and president of Growing Leaders, an organization equipping today's young people to become the leaders of tomorrow. Sign up to receive Tim's blog at www.growingleaders.com/blog and get more information on Growing Leaders at www.GrowingLeaders.com and @GrowingLeaders @TimElmore.

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Q&A

When should I get my child a phone?

Most experts will agree there's not a set age that is appropriate for every child. A mature 12-year-old may be able to handle it better than an immature 15-year-old. Kids with ADHD find the constant stimulation especially distracting. They find it more difficult to resist the pull of all that stimulation and to stay tuned in to activities that are less reinforcing but more important, like homework and family meals.

Cell phones are also risky for kids because they are prone to impulsivity (their frontal lobe is still developing). It makes them more at risk to post something that they may regret later in life.

If the point of the phone is to stay in contact with kids and for parents to know their whereabouts, consider getting a not-so-smart phone where the child can make calls and text. There are some with GPS tracking. This is a good starting place.

According to the Lakeside Behavioral Health System, the digital age is impacting adolescent mental health. Here are some things to consider before committing to smart phones for kids.

- When youth communicate via smart phone it teaches them they can be anonymous and unaccountable, which makes it easier to be mean to others.
- Cell phone usage has reduced the amount of time kids spend outdoors, which reduces stress and fatigue.
- Teens spend on average 9 hours a day on their phones, which reduces device-free conversations with parents.
- Teens spend less face-to-face time with their friends, which impedes the development of social skills.
- Screen time and blue light affects sleep, which has consequences like trouble focusing at school and increased depression.

If the next step is to get a smart phone, set some parameters:

- Know the password and establish that you can take it away if it's not being used wisely.
- Set limits on screen time and phone time.
- Agree on limits of what can be spent on data plans and apps/games.
- Determine consequences if it's lost or broken and who pays for it.
- Specify times for use – no phone during meals, homework, it's turned off an hour before bedtime and stored out of the bedroom.
- Text and phone are not to be used for important or emotional conversations.
- Social media sites will be monitored.

Phones are not going away, so we must teach our kids to use them wisely.

HAVE A QUESTION?
email: ycdupage@gmail.com

We cannot guarantee all questions will be published; however, we will do our best to respond to all questions submitted.

BY THE NUMBERS



5

The length of the shortest space flight, in minutes.



8000

The diameter of the earth, in miles.



100

The number of facial expressions a dog can make.



4000

The number of flowers a bee visits to make a tablespoon of honey.



125

Toto from the Wizard of Oz's weekly salary, in dollars.



35,000

The amount of pasta Americans eat each year, in tons.

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IL HPP can provide presentations, education, and training on topics related to leadership, personal growth, sleep, mood and mindset, substances, and nutrition.

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WAYS TO reduce stress

By YOUTH CONNECTIONS STAFF

We hear more and more that youth are over-stressed, have high anxiety and increased depressive symptoms. In 2017, 31.5% of high school students reported experiencing periods of persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness (i.e. almost every day for two weeks or more in a row so that they stopped doing some usual activities) in the past year. This number has increased significantly from 2007 through 2017.

Heading back to school can be a stressor for some kids, but there are some things to do to help not only at the beginning of the school year, but throughout, to ease some of the symptoms.

SLEEP

Getting a good night's sleep can help all of us face the pressures of life better. For children with ADHD, poor sleep (too little sleep or symptoms of sleep disorders) may profoundly impact ADHD symptoms. In fact, one study (National Institutes of Health) found that treating sleep problems may be enough to eliminate attention and hyperactivity issues for some children. According to the Academy of Pediatrics, tweens need nine to twelve hours of sleep a night and older teens need eight to ten. It's important to practice good sleep hygiene.

- **Establish a bedtime routine;** this helps the body know it's time for bed. Read a book (not on a device), take a warm bath or shower, do some light stretches. Avoid emotionally upsetting conversations before bed.
- **Make sure the room is favorable for sleep.** The mattress and pillow should be comfortable. The optimal temperature is between 60 and 67 degrees. Make sure there is little to no artificial light.
- **No technology 30-60 minutes before bed.** The blue light emitted from devices tricks the body into thinking it's day, which makes it harder to fall and stay asleep.

SOCIAL MEDIA

A recent survey asked 14-24 year olds how

social media platforms impacted their health and wellbeing. The survey results found that Snapchat, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram all led to increased feelings of depression, anxiety, poor body image and loneliness. One study found that 48 percent of teens who spend five hours per day on an electronic device have at least one suicide risk factor, compared to 33 percent of teens who spend two hours a day on an electronic device. Here's how parents can help:

- **Set time limits on social media** – for everyone in the house.
- **Set technology-free zones and technology-free hours** when no one in the house uses technology, for example the dinner table and in the car.
- **Delay the age of first use** as long as possible.

GET OUTSIDE

Researchers are finding that just being outdoors and in nature can be one of the best stress reducers there is. It doesn't take long. They found that people experienced the largest boosts to their mood and self-esteem after just spending five minutes outside doing some form of light exercise, like walking. A daily dose of sunshine may also help with mood. Serotonin, the brain hormone associated with mood elevation, rises with exposure to bright light and falls with decreased sun exposure. Here are ways to increase outdoor time:

- **Do things that are normally done indoors, outside.** For example, yoga practice, read a book or magazine, do a puzzle, or listen to music. Instead of getting on the treadmill, go for a walk.
- **Encourage kids of all ages to walk barefoot in the grass or lie in the yard** and look for shapes in the clouds.

EAT HEALTHY

Eating a healthy diet can help reduce the negative effects of stress on our bodies. Stress affects blood pressure and blood flow. In addition, there is a growing body of

research indicating a strong link between digestive health and the brain. Research from the University of Otago found on days when people ate more fruits and vegetables, they reported feeling calmer, happier, and more energetic than they normally did. Eating fruits and vegetables of any sort (except fruit juice and dried fruit) helped young adults calm their nerves.

- **Eating at home** generally increases the chances of eating a healthy meal.
- **Have healthy snacks available** that are easy to grab and go, like fruit, nuts, cheese sticks, and veggie sticks.
- **Reduce sugar and starchy foods.** Sugar can lead to fluctuations in blood sugar, which can bring on mood swings.
- **Eat a healthy breakfast.** Studies have shown that kids who eat oatmeal for breakfast stay sharper throughout the morning. (There's a stress reducer!)

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

Activities to help kids (or ourselves) that can be done anywhere include:

- **Guided imagery.** Imagine being in your "happy place"—maybe sitting on a beach, listening to the waves, smelling the ocean, and feeling the warm sand underneath you. Close your eyes for a minute and walk yourself through a peaceful scene. Think about all the sensory experiences you'd engage in and allow yourself to feel as though you're really there. After a few minutes, open your eyes and return to the present moment.
- **Meditation.** Develop a mantra to repeat in your mind as you take slow, deep breaths. Or take a few moments to practice mindfulness – be in the moment and focus on what you can hear, see, taste, touch, and smell. By focusing on the here and now, it's hard to ponder on something from the past or worry about the future.

Some simple changes can help kids (and adults) have a more stress-free year. ■

VAPING CESSATION GROUP

Smoking Cessation Group for Adolescents Using Vaping Devices



Vaping related illnesses are on the rise in the United States. In 2018, the Surgeon General declared vaping a national health epidemic amongst youth.

In fact according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), last year 1,600 lung illnesses and 36 deaths were confirmed to be related to vaping. The CDC has advised all Americans to refrain from using any vape or e-cigarette products.

Vaping has now replaced cigarettes as the most common form of tobacco use among adolescents. Many teens even believe that vaping is less addictive than cigarette use despite the fact that research shows that adolescents who use vaping products have an increased risk for addiction and progression to cigarette use.

In addition, recent studies have found up to 31 different toxic chemicals in vaping aerosol, including carcinogens such as formaldehyde, and heavy metals such as nickel and lead.

To address this growing need in our community, Linden Oaks Medical Group (LOMG) established a specialized group designed to help teens quit vaping.

Group Benefits:

- Develop motivation to abstain from vaping
- Learn to recognize triggers for vaping use
- Practice techniques to resist cravings and refusal strategies for peer-pressure situations
- Support and education for the entire family

Group Components:

- Group based learning and interaction
- Four session curriculum with some parental involvement
- Drug screenings to assess for nicotine and other addictive substances (such as THC)

Fee:

- Group sessions/drug screens are billable through insurance

For additional information on the LOMG Vaping Cessation Group, contact (630) 646-5429.

WHEN:

Monday nights from 5:30 - 7 p.m.

LOCATION:

1335 N. Mill Street St., Naperville

DURATION:

Approximately 4 sessions

REGISTER:

Call Maurice McClain at (630) 646-5429

MARIJUANA EDIBLES: *why are they dangerous?*

By LINDA COLLINS, Prevention Specialist



With more states legalizing recreational marijuana, parents need to be aware of all the places and forms youth can now access the drug. Edibles come in many different liquid and food types including brownies, drinks, cookies, popcorn, candies (including animal or fruit-shaped gummies), suckers and chocolates. They are often packaged to look similar to other foods and can easily be confused for non-marijuana products, especially by children. They can have similar names like Pot-tarts, Weetos (that look like Cheetos), and Orange Krush soda.

Marijuana edibles produce a much longer and more potent high than smoking, which can prove detrimental to new users. Smoking pot produces a more immediate high that dissipates quickly. Edibles take anywhere from 30 minutes to two hours for users to feel the effects and can last from six to 10 hours. This makes it dangerous because the delay in onset of the high can cause users to consume additional servings which has the potential to result in an overdose. Taken in large doses, marijuana edibles can lead to anxiety attacks, paranoia, and hallucinations. Several case reports where children consumed edibles found respiratory insufficiency a major side effect.

The amount of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) – the main psychoactive ingredient in marijuana can vary in edible products. This makes it harder to measure and control how much THC is consumed. Since marijuana was legalized in the state of Colorado, the Rocky Mountain Poison and Drug Center has reported an increase in calls related to edible exposures.

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, among 12th graders who used marijuana in the past year, 40 percent reported having consumed it in edible form in medical marijuana states, versus 26% in non-medical marijuana states. From 2006 to 2013, children's exposure to marijuana products rose 147.5 percent across the U.S., according to a study published in the journal Clinical Pediatrics. In states with legal medical marijuana, that figure jumped to 610 percent. Kids aren't the only ones affected. Over the past six years, the Pet Poison Helpline has experienced a 448% increase in marijuana cases.

As more states look to legalize the drug, parents need to be aware of the increased risk and availability of marijuana and edibles to their children and pets. ■



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at www.achn.net/teenhealth
or call **1.866.267.2353**.



Legal Doesn't Mean Safe



The recreational use and sale of marijuana will begin in Illinois on January 1st, 2020. This change in law can create some confusion to youth on the safety and normalization of the drug. Make sure to have frequent conversations with your teens about the risks of marijuana use!

Recreational use of marijuana under the age of 21 is illegal.

Recreational marijuana legalization only applies to individuals aged 21 and above. Being prosecuted for marijuana use under the age of 21 could result in legal action, school disciplinary action and could affect college and job applications.

Marijuana can harm the teen brain.

The teen brain is still developing, and marijuana can cause abnormal brain development in areas of the brain involved in processing emotions, learning, and forming memories.

Regular marijuana use in teens can lead to a mental health disorder.

Teens who use marijuana regularly are higher at risk for developing a serious mental health disorder such as addiction, depression, or psychosis.

Being under the influence of marijuana impairs driving abilities.

Driving under the influence of marijuana or riding in a car with a driver who is under the influence of marijuana is extremely dangerous and can result in serious and even fatal car accidents.

High potency marijuana has been linked to addiction.

Today's marijuana has a higher percentage of THC, the chemical in marijuana that produces the "high". High rates of THC have been linked to causing dependency among users.

Inhaling marijuana smoke can cause lung damage.

Smoke from marijuana irritates the lungs, and can cause a chronic cough that is similarly found in people that smoke cigarettes.

For more information on how to talk to your kids about the risks of youth marijuana use, visit www.dupagePLT.org

JOIN REALITY ILLINOIS!

This summer, strengthen leadership and advocacy skills, and make a positive impact in your community with Reality! Reality works together with the community to reduce substance & tobacco use, and increase mental wellness among youth.

We're open to all high school students in DuPage County and will be meeting every Tuesday during the summer at the Glenbard District 87 Administrative Center, 596 Crescent Blvd. in Glen Ellyn.

JUNE 9, 12-1PM JUNE 30, 12-1PM JULY 21, 12-1PM

JUNE 16, 12-1PM JULY 7, 12-1PM JULY 28, 12-1PM

JUNE 23, 12-1PM JULY 14, 12-1PM AUGUST 4, 12-1PM



A Reality teen recording a vaping PSA with WGN Radio.



Reality teens doing yoga to promote mental wellness.



Reality teens attending the signing of the Tobacco 21 law.



Reality planting flowers at the Ribbon of Life.