



Reaching Out

Norristown Area Communities That Care for Youth

Keeping Youth Safe & Drug Free

Winter 2009



Spotlight On Teen Drinking

Signs of Teen Drinking

If you notice the following signs in your teen, experts believe they may point to a drinking problem. You may notice several signs at the same time, they occur suddenly and some may be extreme in nature.

- Mood changes: flare-ups of temper, irritability and defensiveness.
- School problems: poor attendance, low grades and/or recent disciplinary action.
- Rebelling against family rules.
- Switching friends, along with a reluctance to have you get to know the new friends.
- A “nothing matters” attitude: sloppy appearance, a lack of involvement in former interests and general low energy.
- Finding alcohol in your child’s room or backpack or smelling alcohol on his/her breath.
- Physical or mental problems: memory lapses, poor concentration, bloodshot eyes, lack of coordination, or slurred speech.
- Trouble concentrating and staying focused on a task.

Teens Talk About Being a Parent

By Viviann Schorle, MA, Prevention Services Facilitator

“It’s really, really hard. I’ve got to get up with him during the night, then get up early for school. My mother watches the baby during the day. In the evening, I’ve got to do my homework, feed him, give him a bath, get him to sleep, and get myself ready for the next day.”

“My friend just became a mom. She has no time for anything else. She comes to school looking so tired and run down. She leaves at lunch to feed her baby. Sure, babies are cute, but they are so much work.”

“You sometimes feel as tired when you get up in the morning as when you went to bed.”

“You can say it’s not going to happen to you and keep on do-

ing what you’re doing, but I said the same thing.”

“I always say I feel like I’m 40 years old. I missed out on my whole childhood.”

“I didn’t think it would be that much screaming...or that he’d need that many diaper changes.”

Research shows that teens who become pregnant:

- Are less likely to complete high school, let alone college. Only 40 percent of teen mothers finish high school, and only 1.5 percent finish college.



(Teens continued on page 2)

(*Teens continued from page 1*)

- Are more prone to living in poverty conditions
- Of those who get married, by the time the child reaches the age of 3, a high percentage of those marriages have ended.

Once you've found out that you're pregnant, you will have some soul searching to do and some decisions to make. Parenting is a full-time job, and it will be a life altering event; indeed, it will be one of the



toughest things you experience. This is certainly not to say that your life will be "ruined," but it will most definitely be com-

pletely different than what you thought it would be up to this point.

Find positive people in your life to help and support you and your child. Ideally it would be your own parent, but if that is not possible look for support from teachers, a guidance counselor, social service agency, and/or your religious community. You do not have to go through this process alone.

Guiding Good Choices

By Alissa McBride, MSW, Community Prevention Coordinator

Do you ever worry about whether or not your child is safe, healthy and making good decisions when he is not with you? Is she doing her best in school? Is he a leader or a follower? Are her friends steering her down the right path? What will his future hold 10 years from now? Are you doing everything you can to make that future bright?

If any of these questions run through your mind, you may want to attend our five session parenting program called "Guiding Good Choices." The program, dinner and childcare are all provided FREE of charge to Norristown

families. Throughout the five weeks you will learn about factors in the home, school and community that put your child at



risk for making unhealthy choices and what you can do to reduce those risks. It is designed to help you make your

family stronger and closer. You will have the opportunity to learn new parenting techniques and share ideas and experiences with other parents who are struggling with the same challenges. Some of the topics addressed are setting guidelines and consequences; dealing with family conflict; improving communication; helping your child deal with peer pressure; and strengthening family bonds.

If you have questions about when this program will be coming to your school or community location, please contact Alissa McBride at 610-630-2111 ext. 239 or amcbride@fsmontco.org.

Single Parenting

By Oglatha S. P. Ingram, MSW, Parent Outreach Specialist

Are you a single parent? You are not alone; there are approximately 13.6 million single parents in the United States, raising 21.2 million children. Single parenting happens. It could happen by way of an unplanned pregnancy, divorce, death of a spouse, or by personal choice. Single parenting also crosses all social, economic and racial barriers.

Regardless of the reason or your socio-economic background, the goals and challenges of parenting remain the same: to raise responsible, resilient, and respectful children who will become emotionally healthy and self-sufficient adults. This is not an easy task for even the most well-balanced two-parent household, but there are a few ideas a single parent may want to consider when managing the wondrous and unique lives of children.

Place no blame on your children about your singlehood

The negative issues that brought you to singlehood can be worked out by you. If you cannot process those issues alone, seek professional help or talk to a trusted friend or relative. Your children need an emotionally healthy parent available to them. You want them to be free to be

who they are without feeling any guilt about your single status. Help them to understand that the demise of your marital or romantic relationship was the direct result of actions and decisions made by you and the other parent. Be open, honest, approachable and positive when questions are asked about the other partner. You want to be the parent your children can trust as well as one with whom they feel comfortable confiding.



Take care of yourself

To be a good caretaker of your children, caring for yourself is a must.

- *Eat well* – Healthy, nutritious food feeds not only the body but the mind as well.
- *Exercise* – In addition to being on a well-balanced diet, exercise is the key to a healthy heart, limber mus-

cles (relieving stress), increased energy, and a natural glow—all things single parents need to feel good. A daily 20-minute brisk walk is great exercise.

Develop a positive social and support network.

Establish ties with people who will come to your aid when you are in need and develop friendly relations with people who share your values and are interested in your ongoing success. Having someone to talk to about your parenting challenges can be an excellent way to reduce stress. Another de-stressor is taking the opportunity to give back to the community; join a community club, or the PTA, volunteer to help with your child's extracurricular activities or fund-raising efforts.

Know Who You Are Raising

Our children have their own unique personalities, their own way of seeing the world, their own way of relating to the world around them. Spend enough time with your child to understand their personalities and witness their behaviors. The more we know about who we are raising, the more efficient and effective we will become at tailoring the discipline they will need to fit their unique individuality.

(Single continued on page 4)

Who can find the time to keep up with their kids lives?

www.FindYour25thHour.org



KEEPING YOUTH
SAFE
&
DRUG FREE

Communities That Care
3125 Ridge Pike
Norristown, PA 19403
Phone: 610-630-2111 ext. 236
Fax: 610-630-4003
info@norristownctc.org

Communities That Care (CTC) is a risk-focused approach to reducing adolescent problem behaviors through community mobilization and planning. Local citizens and community leaders work together to identify the risk factors that increase the likelihood of problem behaviors developing, and enhance the protective factors that can shield youngsters from problems. The risk and protective factors are used to implement a comprehensive plan to step ahead of the problems with far-reaching and long-lasting solutions.

For more information, visit our website at www.norristownctc.org.

(Single continued from page 3)

Plan for Your Child's Future

Think about what your child needs to thrive as a child and prosper as an adult. It will take not only loving care from a healthy parent, but also a safe environment in which to live, healthy food, sufficient clothing, a good education and a decent chance to go to college and become gainfully employed. Those assurances will take money. Do you have life and disability insurance? Think about your child's life if you were to pass away. Do you have access to child support? Child support is an obligation. Are you encouraging your child to go to college or to obtain vocational training? Our children's journey to self sufficiency starts with a good education.

Being a single parent is not synonymous with failure. Raising healthy, happy children can be a reality. President Barack Obama, Whoopi Goldberg, Bill Cosby, Alan Greenspan and Tom Cruise are living testaments to that fact for they were all raised by a single parent.



Helpful Resources

National Child Support
Advocacy Coalition (NCSAC)
P.O. Box 420
Hendersonville, TN 37077-0420

Consumer Credit Counseling,
Education Department
714-544-8880

The Institute of Certified
Financial Planners
800-282-PLAN

Ask for the free booklet *Your Children's College Bill: How to Figure It...How to Pay for It*.

Parenthood and Singlehood
<http://www.xensei.com/users/ileneh/parent.html>