



PARENT AND FAMILY NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the Middletown Alliance Parent and Family Newsletter!

Purpose: Family members are valuable partners in our shared mission of helping our youth thrive and succeed. It's not always easy to navigate the current drug and alcohol trends or have difficult conversations with loved ones. This newsletter will include Alliance information as well as varying topics, tips, and resources about substance use, mental health, and other at-risk behaviors.



WHO IS THE MIDDLETOWN ALLIANCE?

The Middletown Municipal Alliance is a community-based volunteer organization. Through education and awareness, The Alliance works to prevent substance use disorders, underage drinking, alcohol use disorders, vaping, and other at-risk behaviors. The Alliance aims to eliminate the stigma of mental health disorder and substance use disorders through the events and programs they implement.

CONNECT WITH US!



Scan the QR code to visit our website or go to:
www.middletownnj.org/alliance



@Middletownalliance



Middletown Alliance page

NEXT MIDDLETOWN ALLIANCE QUARTERLY MEETING:

Saturday, September 21st

The Alliance meets in person on a quarterly basis on the third Saturday of the month from 8:30-9:30 AM at the Training Room in Town Hall (1 Kings Highway).



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TOPICS COVERED IN THIS ISSUE:



Alcohol and The Sun



Time Outdoors Helps Boost Mental Health



Talking With Your Teens About Marijuana



Summer Mocktails

ALCOHOL AND THE SUN

Drinking alcohol when temperatures heat up should be done responsibly and can become dangerous if you're not careful. Here are ways the sun and alcohol affect your body:

- **Dehydration:** Both alcohol and the sun cause dehydration. Alcohol is a diuretic, and the sun causes you to sweat in order to stay cool. If you're drinking in the hot sun, you may be losing fluids twice as quickly and be at risk of dehydration. Make sure to drink water throughout the day and in between alcoholic beverages.
- **Heat Stroke:** Alcohol combined with high temperatures means your body may not be able to regulate its own temperature effectively. Heat illness can present itself in 3 phases. The first is heat cramps from the loss of essential water and sodium. The second phase is heat exhaustion caused by the dehydration. Lastly, heat stroke is the final phase and could lead to shock or organ failure. If you're feeling overheated, get out of the sun and hydrate!
- **Protect Your Skin:** Sunburns can put a damper on summer fun. People who drink alcohol while in the sun are less likely to wear sunscreen. Research suggests that alcohol lowers the amount of sun exposure needed to produce burns. This can be dangerous as repeated sunburns increase the risk of skin cancer. Whether drinking or not, be sure to put on the sunscreen to maximize your summer fun!

TIME OUTDOORS HELPS BOOST MENTAL HEALTH



1

Stress Reduction– Nature acts as a powerful stress reducer. Even just a few minutes outside can regulate your sympathetic nervous system, which controls blood pressure, heart rate, and blood sugar. Stepping into nature provides almost immediate benefits by calming stress responses.

2

Coping With Mental Health Conditions– Research shows that exposure to nature can be an effective coping strategy for chronic mental health conditions like depression, anxiety, PTSD, and ADHD. Being in natural surroundings positively influences mood and emotional well-being.

3

Physical Activity– When we're outdoors, we tend to move more. Physical activity promotes positive mood, attention, reduced anxiety, addiction recovery, and better sleep. So, the combination of fresh air and movement contributes to mental well-being.

4

Improved Memory and Creativity– Spending time in nature rejuvenates our minds. It enhances memory, attention, impulse control, and creativity. For children, it even leads to improved school performance

Talking With Your Teens About Marijuana



It's never too late to start talking with your teen about the risks of marijuana use. As teens age, they make more decisions on their own and face greater temptation and peer pressure. Though it may not seem like it, teens really do hear your concerns. It's important you help them understand what marijuana is, and why they shouldn't use it.

What is marijuana?

Marijuana refers to the dried leaves, flowers, stems, and seeds from the *Cannabis sativa* or *Cannabis indica* plant. It is a psychoactive drug that contains close to 500 chemicals, including THC, a mind-altering compound that causes harmful health effects. Marijuana use is prevalent among teens and young adults, and according to SAMHSA's 2018 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, an estimated 3.1 million youths ages 12–17 reported using marijuana in 2018. Marijuana use tends to increase with age. While 1.8 percent of youths ages 12–13 reported consuming marijuana in the past year, that number increased to 11.3 percent of those ages 14–15 and 23.4 percent by ages 15–16.

Why do young people use marijuana?

Teens and young adults use marijuana for many reasons, including curiosity, peer pressure, and wanting to fit in with friends. Some use it to cope with anxiety, stress, and even depression. Ultimately, many things factor into why some people decide to use marijuana, including their environment at home, at school, and in the community. The perception of the dangers of marijuana use is declining and, increasingly, young people today do not consider marijuana use a risky behavior. This is partially due to the changes to some states' policies on the legalization of marijuana and recreational use. Marijuana remains illegal at the federal level, even though many states have legalized its use. Make sure your teen understands that marijuana is addictive. In fact, research shows that 1 in 6 youths who start using the drug before the age of 18 can become addicted.

Risks of marijuana use:

Marijuana use among teens and young adults can harm brain development and cause other negative impacts. Additionally, the amount of THC in marijuana has steadily climbed; today's marijuana has three times the concentration of THC compared to 25 years ago, increasing the impact on the brain. Make sure you know the risks of marijuana use and are prepared to talk with your teen about them.

Common risks include, but are not limited to:

- Issues with attention, concentration, problem solving, learning, and memory
- Poor academic and job performance;
- Lack of balance and coordination;
- Poor judgment and decision-making
- Less life satisfaction
- Relationship problems
- Increased risk of mental issues
- Potential for addiction



Talking With Your Teens About Marijuana



Identify the signs: Recognizing signs of marijuana use can be difficult if you don't know what to look for. Be aware of any noticeable changes in your teen's behavior, as it might indicate he or she is using marijuana.

Common signs include, but are not limited to:

- Unusual laughing, coordination issues, or forgetfulness
- Bloodshot eyes or repeated use of eye drops
- Strange smelling clothes or bedroom
- Frequent use of incense and other deodorizers
- Drug-themed clothing, jewelry, or décor
- Unexplained lack of money or frequent requests for money

Another telling sign is the presence of drug paraphernalia—any equipment, product, or material of any kind that is modified for making, using, or concealing a controlled substance.

Examples of drug paraphernalia include the following:

- Rolling paper (a specialty paper used for making a marijuana cigarette)
- Cigar (hollowed out and filled with marijuana to make what is referred to as a "blunt")
- Pipe (a device to smoke marijuana)
- Bong (a filtration device to smoke marijuana)
- Roach clip (a metal clip used to hold a marijuana cigarette)
- Electronic cigarette (a device to smoke marijuana extracts)
- Grinder (a tool that breaks marijuana up into smaller bits)

Take action—

Use these tips to talk with your teen:

- Check in frequently to see how they are doing
- Choose informal times to talk, such as in the car, during dinner, or while watching TV
- Be clear and consistent about your expectations regarding marijuana and other drug use
- Establish family agreements together for social and extracurricular activities
- Let them know you care and are always there for them
- Continue talking with your teens as they get older

Help your teens create an exit plan—

Help your teen create an "exit plan" in case he or she is offered or faced with a difficult decision about marijuana. Peer pressure can be powerful, so coming up with realistic action steps and practicing them together in a safe environment will prepare and empower your teen to make good choices when it matters.

For more information about how to talk with your teen about marijuana, visit

www.underagedrinking.samhsa.gov
and www.samhsa.gov



#TalkTheyHearYou

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SUMMER MOCKTAIL RECIPES

Watermelon Mint Mocktail

Ingredients:

- 2 fresh mint leaves, plus more for garnish
- Ice
- 3/4 cup watermelon juice (see Tip)
- ½ cup club soda
- Small slice watermelon for garnish

Directions:

Mash mint leaves in the bottom of a large cocktail glass or pint glass with a muddler or small wooden spoon. Fill the glass one-third full of ice; add watermelon juice. Top with club soda and garnish with a watermelon slice and more mint leaves, if desired.



Blueberry Lemonade Mocktail

Ingredients:

- 2 cups fresh blueberries, plus more for serving
- 1 cup fresh-squeezed lemon juice (about 6 thin-skinned lemons)
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 4 cups water



Directions:

Place blueberries, lemon juice, sugar and salt in a blender. Process until combined, about 45 seconds. Pour the mixture through a fine-mesh strainer into a large pitcher; discard solids. Stir in water. Divide among 8 ice-filled glasses and top with more blueberries, if desired.

MIDDLETOWN ALLIANCE CONTACT INFO:



Chairperson Kim Kratz:
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Coordinator Erika McKee:
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732-615-2277

IF YOU HAVE UNWANTED, UNUSED, OR EXPIRED MEDICATION (NO NEEDLES OR SYRINGES):

Anonymously drop off in the "Project Medicine Drop Box" in the lobby of the Middletown Township Police Station.

Address: Middletown Township Police Department,
1 Kings Highway Middletown, NJ 07733

WANT TO FOCUS ON DESTRESSING THIS SUMMER?

Visit our
website or
scan the QR
code!



JULY 1-7: ALCOHOL AWARENESS WEEK

According to the 2022 NSDUH survey, 5.7 million youth ages 12 to 17 reported that they drank alcohol at some point in their lifetime.

Visit our website or scan the QR code to learn more!

