



Drug Free Family Newsletter

Mental Health Month: Live Your Life Well

Mental Health America, a national not-for-profit dedicated to helping people lead mentally healthy lives, began Mental Health Month in 1949.

This May, the organization encourages you to Live Your Life Well by helping your family better cope with stress and enhance a sense of well-being.

In this edition of Drug Free Family, we offer tips on steps you and your family can take together to strengthen personal bonds, become closer and enjoy life. We'll pass along advice on parenting during tough economic times, raising kids with healthy body and minds, finding fun family activities and much more.

We also take a look at two ongoing challenges -- the need for ongoing alcohol-awareness efforts and helping kids avoid the "sexting" trend.

As always, we welcome your feedback. Email us at nbeals@drugfreemc.org or jsaetre@drugfreemc.org, or call us at 317-254-2815.

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How to Raise Healthy Kids -- Physically and Mentally

You know the importance of meeting your child's basic physical needs, such as balanced meals, a

safe home environment, regular medical and dental checkups and adequate rest. But what about mental and emotional needs? While not always as obvious, your child's mental health is as important as the physical side. That's why May 6 has been designated as National Children's Mental Health Awareness day. According to Mental Health America, good mental health enables your child to think clearly, strengthen social bonds, learn new skills, build self-esteem and develop a positive outlook on life.

You are key in helping your child become mentally and emotionally healthy. Here are some tips from MHA:

Love your child unconditionally. She needs to know that your love does not depend on her accomplishments.

Nurture confidence and self-esteem. Set realistic goals and encourage and praise your child in his attempts to meet them.

Encourage playtime. Play helps your child be creative, develop problem-solving skills and learn how to get along with others.

Check in on older kids if they are allowed to be home alone after school. Kids need to know that even if you're not there physically, you're thinking about them and are interested in them.

Provide a sense of security. If your child expresses fears, talk calmly to him about them, being loving, patient and reassuring, not critical. Even an unfounded fear can be very real for a child.

Give appropriate guidance and discipline when necessary. Be firm, but also kind and realistic with your expectations. You don't want to control your child, but rather help her to learn self-control.

Communicate. Make time each day after school and work to listen to your child and talk with him about what is happening in his life. Share emotions and feelings. Be honest about your own mistakes, and avoid sarcasm when talking with your child.

Good Parenting During Tough Times

The challenging economic environment of the past two years has added stress to the lives of many American families. Whether a family is coping with job loss, falling income, dwindling savings or retirement accounts or simply the fear that any of the above will occur, it's easy to become overwhelmed. Parents and guardians may be working extra hours and additional jobs or devoting more time to financial matters when at home.

Don't forget, though, that your children still need your attention, and most likely have worries of their own. How do you keep your parenting skills fine-tuned while coping with your own well-being? Mental Health America offers these suggestions.

- Limit kids' exposure to your concerns. Try not to talk about your own fears when the kids

are listening, and consider switching off the news when the family gathers to watch television. You may think children tune out adult topics, but they sometimes hear enough to spark fears.

- Share honestly, but appropriately. A child may grow scared if he thinks you're keeping secrets. It's fine to share some details of your family's financial situation. Just don't overwhelm with information. Instead, take a reassuring approach by pointing out any areas you know are stable, such as your child remaining in the same school, in the face of other changes.
- Economize in ways that are clear and fair. If you need to scale back on after-school activities, let your child pick one favorite from a few options to decrease disappointment. Consider less-expensive options at local community centers and libraries. And show that you too are cutting back on your own fun "extras."
- Keep predictability high. Kids like routine, so make sure yours follow a schedule that includes exercise, soothing nighttime activities and, above all, special time with you.
- Let your children contribute to the household. Even young children can help with simple chores. Donate old clothes or toys to a local shelter; this will help your child build self-esteem and a sense of purpose, and also make her aware that others are facing tough times too.
- Take a break. If you feel that stress is affecting your ability to be kind and gentle with your family, take some time to be by yourself. Squeeze in a quiet walk in your neighborhood or take 15 minutes to call a friend for a chat. A little "me time" will help you regain your composure and perspective, so your kids won't feel it's their fault you're having a bad day.

Alcohol Awareness Should Continue Year-Round

Alcohol Awareness Month officially ended on April 30, but the need for education about alcohol's effects on our community must continue all year. In April alone, numerous alcohol-related incidents made headlines in Indianapolis -- for all the wrong reasons. Among the most concerning:

- A 36-year-old man struck two 15-year-old pedestrian girls on Keystone Avenue, then fled the scene. The teens were hospitalized in critical condition; the man was arrested on drunken driving charges.
- A 53-year-old man led police on a high-speed chase, reaching up to 130 mph on I-70 downtown before crashing on a ramp to I-65. He subsequently had his license revoked for life, due to four arrests on drunken driving charges within five years.
- A 50-year-old man was charged with operating a vehicle while intoxicated after driving the wrong way on a Keystone Avenue off ramp, creating what one IMPD officer called "a highly dangerous situation."

"There are many more examples of drunken driving and other alcohol-related incidents throughout the year in our city, all too often with tragic consequences," says Nancy Beals, prevention project coordinator for Drug Free Marion County.

In 2008, for example, Marion County recorded 1,170 alcohol-related collisions and 35 alcohol-related car fatalities -- a death rate up from 19 in 2007. Also in 2008, 4,691 individuals seen in Marion County hospital emergency departments had blood alcohol levels over the legal limit (.08 or higher).

Such statistics show that headline-making incidents aren't the only reason to be concerned about alcohol issues in our city, says George Brenner, LCSW, LMFT, director of Addictions Services for Community Health Network. Both the misuse and abuse of alcohol cause serious problems that never make the 11 p.m. news.

"All too often we focus on the sensational stories about alcohol abuse that make the news and do not focus on alcohol dependence as an equal opportunity disorder that affects nearly one in 10 adults in their lifetime," Brenner says. "The primary consequence of alcohol dependence is premature health problems. The people I see at Community Health Network will not make the news, as won't many of the patients in this city's other hospitals.

"They are the persons seen for hypothermia because they passed out in the cold during the winter and might have frozen to death. They are the persons seen with a trauma injury due to a fall at home due to intoxication. They are the persons with advanced liver disease or pancreatitis in great pain with an unclear prognosis about their recovery. They are our patients born prematurely in our pediatric units and the seniors in progressive care."

Alcohol dependence affects a wide range of individuals, Brenner stresses, from the homeless to professionals. They want to be healthy, but their dependence interferes with those positive motivations. But with treatment, sometimes multiple efforts, about 60 percent will eventually make progress, he says.

That's another reason why alcohol awareness should be an ongoing effort, Beals stresses.

"Education about the effects of alcohol on individuals and the city is crucial in helping to reduce and prevent further incidents of public intoxication, drunken driving, youth drinking and binge drinking -- and the accidents, illnesses, injuries and deaths that result."

Drug Free Marion County can help. Our alcohol related resources include:

- [A Substance Abuse Treatment Provider Directory](#)
- An annual [Community at Risk SNAPSHOT](#) with local data on alcohol and other drug use
- [Start Talking Before They Start Using](#), a conversation guide for parents and guardians
- Parent/guardian newsletters, handouts, tips, reports and other materials on alcohol and drugs
- The [Local Report on Underage and Binge Drinking](#)
- Position statements and papers on alcohol-related legislation under consideration by the Indiana General Assembly
- Details on upcoming and continued Marion County Alcohol and Tobacco Commission hearings for new and renewed alcohol licenses
- A [Remonstrations Manual](#) with step-by-step instructions for remonstrating against new and/or renewal alcohol-license requests
- Information about how to oppose or work with businesses that sell or serve alcohol

For more information, call Drug Free Marion County at 317-254-2815 or visit www.drugfreemarioncounty.org.

Special Report: 'Sexting' More Than Troubling Trend

Gone are the days of passing flirtatious notes to a crush in class. Today's tech-savvy tweens and teens are snapping and exchanging explicit photos via cell and smart phones - sometimes with

devastating results.

Two teen deaths - a 13-year-old Florida girl and an 18-year-old Ohio woman - are extreme examples of what can go wrong. Both young people hung themselves after explicit photos they sent to a crush and a boyfriend, respectively, were spread without their permission, resulting in severe and prolonged bullying.

Legal consequences also can be harsh. Currently in Indiana, minors convicted of sending or receiving sexually explicit images via cell are charged with a felony. The penalty? Prison time and, as young as age 14, registration as a sex offender.

In January of this year, two middle school students in Valparaiso were referred to juvenile probation on charges of possession of child pornography and child exploitation after exchanging explicit photos of themselves. Had they been prosecuted in adult court, the charges could have carried a maximum penalty of 11 years in prison.

During the 2010 Indiana General Assembly, Sen. Jim Merritt of Indianapolis introduced Senate Bill 224, which would give courts a variety of sentencing options for sexting cases, including ordering counseling, education and community service. The bill was referred to a legislative summer study committee for further evaluation.

Just how prevalent is sexting? It depends on who you ask. In December 2009, the Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project released a study showing that four percent of cell-owning teens ages 12-17 reported having sent sexually suggestive nude or nearly nude photos of themselves via text messaging. Fifteen percent of the respondents said they had received such images of someone they knew.

The numbers increased among older teens, with eight percent of 17-year-olds saying they had sent such images and 30 percent having received them.

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy found much higher numbers in its sexting survey, conducted in the fall of 2008. Twenty percent of the 13- to 19-year-olds in its study reported having electronically sent or posted online nude or semi-nude photos, and 31 percent had received them.

Why do tweens and teens participate in such risky behavior? It's not for lack of knowledge. The 2008 survey showed that 75 percent of teens believed that sending sexually suggestive content "can have serious negative consequences."

But while they know the consequences can be bad, teens don't necessarily think the same about the content of their "sexts." The most common reason for sending sexually suggestive content: to be "fun or flirtatious," according to 66 percent of teen girls and 60 percent of teen boys. Fifty-two percent of teen girls said such messages are intended as a "sexy present" for their boyfriend.

Amanda Lenhart, author of the Pew report, calls sexting "a form of relationship currency. These images are shared as a part of or instead of sexual activity, or as a way of starting or maintaining a relationship with a significant other."

Unfortunately, though, those "gifts" often keep on giving. In the 2008 survey, 36 percent of teen girls and 39 percent of teen boys said it was common for nude or semi-nude photos to be shared with people other than the intended recipient. "They are passed along to friends for their entertainment value, or as a joke or for fun," Lenhart says.

So what can parents and guardians do to deal with the sexting trend? Experts suggest handling the subject much as you would approach the topic of alcohol and drug use: communicate with your child and be involved in his/her daily life.

Here are some tips from The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy:

- Talk to your kids about what they're doing on the phone and online. Make sure they understand that messages and photos sent via phone or Internet are not as private and anonymous as they might believe. Content can and often is forwarded and shared, even by trusted friends or romantic partners, and can wind up viewed by other students, teachers, school administrators, employers, family, neighbors and countless strangers.
- Know who your kids are communicating with. You should already know who your children hang out with when they leave the house. Do the same with those they socialize with on the phone and online. Many kids consider someone a friend even if they've only "met" online. Supervising their activities in cyberspace makes you a parent, not a nag.
- Consider limitations on electronic communication, especially if you have concerns about your teen's activities. Ask your child to leave the cell phone or laptop in a family area when she's at home, for example.
- Be aware of what your child is posting online. Check out his Facebook and other social-media sites occasionally. Everyone else can see it - why shouldn't you? And discuss what your child considers to be public versus private information. You may be surprised at the answers.
- Set expectations. Be clear about what you consider to be appropriate behavior on the phone and online, and remind your child about your expectations from time to time. (How often do you need to remind your child to clean her room or do his homework?) Reinforce that you care enough to be paying attention.

For more information on sexting and tips for both parents and teens, visit:

- The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy: <http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/sextech/>
- Connect Safely: www.connectsafely.org/Safety-Tips/tips-to-prevent-sexting.html
- That's Not Cool: www.thatsnotcool.com

Drug Free Marion County News Brief: New PSA Campaign Debuts

If you're visiting a local movie theater this summer, be sure to watch the screen pre-show. Drug Free Marion County is running a public service announcement aimed at tweens and teens. The 30-second PSA features photos of young people enjoying typical summer activities and encourages viewers to have "a carefree summer" by staying away from alcohol and drugs. The campaign will begin running in theaters on May 7 and continue through Labor Day weekend.

The PSA will show in the following theaters: Castleton Square 14, Circle Centre, Eagle Highlands, Galaxy 14, Indianapolis Showplace, Washington Square, Glendale Mall and Washington Market Movies 8.

Free Family Activities in May

We're counting down to summer with some fun activities for your family to enjoy together. Remember, it's important to spend quality time with your kids, just relaxing and enjoying each other's company. And as always, these bonding moments don't charge admission!

Celebrate Asian Heritage Month. The Central Library presents two programs that will open up new worlds to guests. On Saturday, May 1, the Filipino Barangay Dance Troupe performs special music and dance, while the Natyalaya School of Arts takes the spotlight on Saturday, May 15. Both shows begin at 3 p.m. in the Clowes Auditorium. 40 E. St. Clair St., 317-275-4100.

Go Green. Celebrate National Public Gardens Day on Friday, May 8, with free guided tours through the gardens of the Indianapolis Museum of Art. IMA horticulturalists lead the in-depth tours, giving you a deeper understanding of the plants, trees and flowers flourishing on IMA grounds. Tours begin at 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. Madeline F. Elder Greenhouse, 317-923-1331.

Get Arts Smart. Embrace your creativity at the Garfield Park Arts Center open house on Saturday, May 22. Performance, language and visual arts all play a part at the Center, which includes exhibits and the Arts for All room, where hands-on experiences vary from painting and print-making to sand sculpting and playing an instrument. Join in from 2 to 4 p.m. 2432 Conservatory Dr., 317-327-7066.

Pay Tribute to Heroes. In the midst of Indianapolis 500 activities, take time to remember the meaning of Memorial Day weekend at the 500 Festival Memorial Service. Held Friday, May 28 on the north steps of the Soldiers and Sailors Monument downtown, this moving event features guest speaker Rear Admiral John W. Miller, a wreath-laying ceremony and a flyover by the "Blacksnakes" of the 122nd Fighter Wing of the Indiana Air National Guard, Fort Wayne. The service begins at noon. Monument Circle, 317-927-3378.

Just for Kids: Test Your Alcohol Knowledge

You probably see plenty of ads for alcohol, and you see characters in movies and television shows drinking. But how much do you know about the reality of alcohol and how it affects your mind and body? Take this quiz to find out. It's adapted from PBS Kids Go! at <http://pbskids.org>.

1. Alcohol is made when sugar is mixed with _____.
2. It rhymes with something that zooms through space, and alcohol can make you do it.

3. Heavy drinkers might forget things, because alcohol can make them lose their _____.
4. Doctors check these with a rubber hammer to the knee. Alcohol can slow them down. _____
5. It is against the law for anyone younger than age _____ to drink.

6. These keep you from saying and doing stupid things. Alcohol lowers them. _____
7. Some people think that drinking a lot can make these go away, but it makes them worse. _____
8. Never get into one of these with someone who has been drinking. _____
9. When a friend pushes you to drink, it's called peer _____.
10. When someone believes he or she won't be affected by the bad effects of drinking, it's called being in _____.
11. Being sad might make this feel like it will break, but alcohol can actually hurt it. _____

Answers:

1. *Yeast*
2. *Vomit*
3. *Memory*
4. *Reflexes*
5. *21*
6. *Inhibitions*
7. *Problems*
8. *Car*
9. *Pressure*
10. *Denial*
11. *Heart*

Upcoming Events

Local Advisory Council Meeting

When: Monday, May 10, noon to 1:45 p.m.

Monday, June 14, noon to 1:45 p.m.

Where: United Way/RCI Room

3901 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, 46205

What: The Local Advisory Council works to change the availability and social norms around alcohol in Marion County.

Local Epidemiological Outcomes Workgroup Meeting

When: Thursday, May 20, 3:30 to 5 p.m.

Where: Drug Free Marion County

2506 Willowbrook Parkway, Indianapolis, 46205

What: This group works to gather data on alcohol use in Marion County.

Drug Free Marion County Board Meeting

When: Wednesday, May 26, 8:30 to 10 a.m.

Where: Radio One Board Room

21 E. St. Joseph St., Indianapolis, 46204

What: Board discusses organizational planning and practices.

Our Mission

Drug Free Marion County -- a not-for-profit organization -- plans, promotes, implements and coordinates community efforts to prevent and reduce the abuse of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs among youth and adults.

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The Drug Free Family Newsletter is funded through a grant from FSSA/Indiana Division of Mental Health and Addiction.