

Introducing
"From the Halls"
see pg. 5

Robbed of Slumber

Teens have to balance the weight of many demands on their time. They are so full of potential, so full of life, so... sleepy. Research shows that most teens do not get the average eight- nine hours of sleep each night that is needed to feel alert and well rested.

A growing number of teens are **abusing over-the-counter (OTC) sleep aids such as Benadryl, NyQuil, PM formulation** of pain reliever or cold medicine, most popular natural remedy - **Melatonin** and **Prescription** sleep meds to help them sleep.

Side Effects of sleep aids include: distorted vision, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, confusion, slurred speech, loss of motor skills, hallucinations, seizures

Teens who are having sleep problems **should not self-medicate**.

Since Covid, teens have been exposed to more blue light than ever. Exposure to all colors of light helps control your natural sleep-and-wake cycle, or circadian rhythm. The blue light that emits from devices (cell phones, laptops, TVs) suppresses the natural production of melatonin. Melatonin is the natural hormone that makes you sleepy. Ways to help your teen reduce the blue light exposure:

- Turn off your smartphone, TV, and other gadgets well before bedtime.
- Cut back on screen time starting 2-3 hours before bed.
- Blue light-blocking glasses. They're widely sold online. Amber or brown-tinted lenses may help best.
- Dim the brightness on your devices. This is often called night mode or dark mode. It changes the background from white to black.
- Set an alarm for 1 hour before bed to remind yourself to quit using devices.

You can talk to your teen's doctor about how much sleep they are getting and how it impacts their daily life. Their pediatrician can work to identify any underlying causes and craft the most appropriate and tailored treatment. Depending on the cause of sleep problems, medications may be considered; however, in most cases, treatment with medications isn't necessary for teens to get better sleep. Sleeping pills can have many side effects, and they can also make you feel tired during the day. What's more, a lot of medications that make it easier to sleep can also lead to dependency, even after a relatively short period of time.



Meeting Children's Needs

Dr. Bernard DiLullo,
Jr. Superintendent of
Johnston Schools



Over the span of the last 9 months, school aged children and teens have been spending much of their time at home and learning in a virtual environment. During this time, many of them have been lacking structure, in person education, exercise, and social interactions. All of these are necessities for the growth and development of our youth and are areas that parents must pay attention to as they monitor their child's emotional well being. Although our society is experiencing a pandemic like no other, our children's developmental needs have not changed and therefore must be met creatively during these challenging times to ensure healthy development of children and teens. It is important to keep in mind that while children are typically used to a fairly predictable future and a reliance on adults to problem solve, this period of time is very different for them. Take school for an example, it continues to be unclear as to when school as they know it, will be back to "normal". This is very unsettling for children as they don't do well with this uncertainty. They are anxious to get back to their predictable routines and their social interactions with their peers. Children and teens need a sense of connectedness and belonging.

When children and teens lack the basic needs of their development, they are at higher risk of developing emotional health risks such as increased anxiety, depression, substance abuse and self injury. Parents should be keenly aware of signs that their child is experiencing emotional struggles. These signs include feelings of anxiety and worry, low self-esteem, sleep disturbance, physical complaints such as headaches or stomach aches, substance abuse with adolescents and self harm such as cutting oneself. *Continued on page X*

AMONG US

AmongUs is a multiplayer online game that quickly rose to one of the most popular games during the pandemic. Kids (adults) can play with 4 – 10 friends and or strangers. It involves teamwork, mild violence and disloyalty. It is similar to Clue where players have to uncover hidden roles, etc. **Parents should be aware there are some risks for younger players.**



HAVE YOU HEARD OF FOMO?

FOMO STANDS FOR: FEAR OF MISSING OUT

- Teens feel constant pressure to be online and accessible
- FOMO can cause anxiety and/or depression in teens
- FOMO is causing teens to stay up late, staring at their phone screens, which results in poor sleep quality
- Teens are using their smartphones while driving because they don't want to miss anything that could be happening online

SOME THINGS PARENTS CAN DO TO HELP TWEEN/TEEN DEAL WITH FOMO:

- ✓ Schedule technology breaks
- ✓ Teach your kids the negative effects of FOMO
- ✓ Establish rules for both adults and children where and when devices are not allowed
- ✓ Remind your teens that social media is a twisted version of reality



NEW DRUG TRENDS

Andrea Paiva – North Providence and Smithfield Prevention Coalition Coordinator

Benzedrex Think that this is a simple inhaler for a stuffy nose? Intended to treat nasal congestion that can occur from allergies or the common cold, you would think so. HOWEVER, kids are buying Benzedrex at big box stores and pharmacies for as little as \$5!

- Propylhexadrine is the active ingredient
- One will give them a high for several hours
- Break open the inhaler and chew on the cotton swab or put in a bottle of lemon juice and leave for a day
- This works like a drug...this is like meth (a stimulant)

Kratom is an opioid-like natural, herbal painkiller. Some youth might be drawn to Kratom due to it being available in retail stores and not regulated in their state.

Kava is a drug made from the ground roots of a plant found in the South Pacific. It is taken as a drink, supplement or extract. It contains substances called kavapyrones that act much like alcohol on the brain, making you feel calm, relaxed, and happy. This can also be ordered online or found in stores that sell supplements.



HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT

An interactive display providing parents with signs of risky behavior and possible drug use and the tools needed to have constructive conversations

ENTER MOCK BEDROOM



Alcohol Role Modeling

Parents often joke about children not leaving their sides as toddlers and early adolescents. Your “Mommy friends” try to take a moment of peace by sitting in the bathroom and sometimes make jokes about needing “Wine Wednesday” or “Wine-o’clock” to get through a stressful day, week or quarantine. The truth is that our kids are picking up on our habits and hear our jokes and mimic their surroundings.

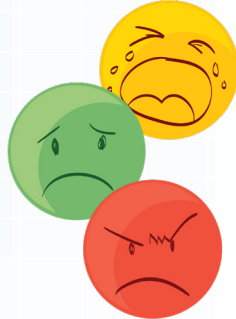
Our children see how adults manage their relationships, work, health, and more. They note how we handle stress, how we treat others and overall practice what we preach. All of this information is tucked away and will be used as they navigate their own lives.

Our use of alcohol is no different. As parents, our own alcohol consumption is a key factor in protecting our children from the risks associated with underage drinking. Some well-meaning parents believe that letting their children drink at home helps them develop an appropriate relationship with alcohol. Research suggests otherwise— in fact, adolescents who are allowed to drink at home drink more heavily outside of the home. In addition, adolescents whose parents have specific and strict rules against underage drinking (and also drink responsibly themselves) are less likely to drink heavily outside the home. In addition to the research, the law is very clear cut in Rhode Island. Supplying or serving alcohol for an underage person is against the law and if you are found to be in violation you face fines and up to a year in prison for your first offense.

Continued on page 6



TANTRUMS, OUTBURSTS, FIGHTING...



Are you anticipating bubbling behavior problems in the months ahead as children spend more time cooped up at home? The good news is that learning to calm down instead of acting out is a skill that can be taught.

Model managing difficult feelings:

- For younger children, describing your own feelings and modeling how you manage them is useful

Validate your child’s feelings:

- Validation is showing acceptance, which is not the same thing as agreement and it’s not trying to change or fix anything.

Active ignoring:

- Validating feelings doesn’t mean giving attention to bad behavior.

Positive attention:

- The most powerful tool parents have in influencing behavior is attention. Positive attention will increase the behaviors you are focusing on.

Clear expectations:

- Dependable structure helps kids feel in control. Providing a warning before a transition happens can help kids feel more prepared.

Give options:

- Giving two options reduces the negotiating that can lead to tension.

Problem solving:

- If you can come up with one or two things that might have led to a different outcome, your child might remember them next time he’s starting to feel overwhelmed.

It's just pot, right?



Hanako S. Jones MA NCC, Cranston West Student Assistance Counselor

This is a comment I hear often from parents and other adults when discussing teens' substance use. People often carry outdated information about marijuana because the substance has evolved so quickly in recent years. From the 70's to our current weed, marijuana has increased in THC concentration by up to 30x! THC is the psychoactive component in the cannabis plant. Take a look at these numbers showing THC concentration:

- 1978 1.37%
- 1988 3.59%
- 1998 4.43%
- 2008 8.49%
- 2018 29.69%

WOW!
29.69%
THC concentration
in 2018

Not only is marijuana more potent, there are now concentrates known as 'wax' or 'dabs' that can be up to 95% THC. Along with higher concentrations of THC come an increased risk of addiction and associated mental health problems. Because teen brains are still developing, the neural pathways to the reward centers in their brain can be heavily activated by marijuana and other substances, leading them to a life of potential addiction.

For example: 9% of adult experimenters become addicted, while 17% of those who begin using in their teen years experience addiction. Daily users have a 25-50% chance of becoming addicted.

In the past, marijuana was thought to only be psychologically addictive, but because of the high THC concentrations, people now experience withdrawal symptoms if they stop using. Symptoms of withdrawal look like:

- Irritability, anger, or aggression
- Nervousness, or anxiety
- Sleep difficulty (insomnia, disturbing dreams)
- Decreased appetite, weight loss (nausea)
- Restlessness
- Depressed mood
- At least 1 of the following: abdominal pain, shakiness/tremors, sweating, fever, chills, headache

Marijuana is now a drug that could have serious consequences, and we need to address it appropriately. If you have concerns about your child's use, contact your school's Student Assistance Counselor for further information on this or any other drug, and how it can be addressed.

**FROM THE
HALLS!**

COMING SOON, STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVES

North
Providence
High School



Dr. Edward A.
Ricci
Middle School



Birchwood
Middle School



Meeting Children's Needs



Continued from page 1

Parents and families can help significantly in these stressful times for children. As stated earlier, children need structure. Setting appropriate and regular bedtimes and wake up times is essential. These times can be established based on schedules that were established while your child was in school. If your child is learning from home, set a school day schedule that mimics their in school schedule that includes a lunch or recess break. If your child is learning online, it may be easy for them to fall behind in their class work. Monitor this closely and maintain expectations that your child finishes his or her school work on time and with high quality.

Activity and varied leisure times are important components to keeping children healthy. Physical activity outdoors helps immensely in relieving tension and stress in addition to keeping the body in good condition. When possible and safe, allow your child to be connected to a peer group to avoid social isolation. When your child is interacting on an electronic device, distance monitoring of the conversation and the tone to be able to identify any concerning themes. Varied indoor activities such as reading, interactive games, movies or television offerings that promote thought and discussions focused on themes contribute to a healthier lifestyle while staying home.

Hopefully we will all be back to our usual lifestyle shortly. Until then, new routines and oversight of emotional health are key in keeping our children healthy. If you notice that there are warning signs that your child is experiencing unmanageable stress, anxiety or depression seek immediate professional help through your family physician or a local mental health agency.

Alcohol Role Modeling



Continued from page 3

So whether you have a shadow, or you always live life 6 feet apart, how can you model responsible drinking as a parent? Here are some guidelines:

- **Explain** to your child why alcohol is for adults only. Let them know their brain will continue to develop well into their twenties. Communicate your strong stance against drinking before this age, and talk about consequences for your child.
- **Be a role model.** If you drink alcohol, be mindful of how much and why you drink and what messages you might be sending to your children. Do not involve your children in adult behaviors. Restrict them from touching, sipping, mixing, or fetching alcohol for adults.
- **Control the context.** As adults, we shouldn't talk about drinking as a way to manage stress around kids ie., "Today was terrible. I need a drink!" Instead, we should model healthier ways to manage stress. We can put words to these actions and make the connection clear for our kids! For example, "Whew, I had such a stressful day! I'm going to go take a walk to calm down and unwind."
- **What if you drank as a teen?** If you choose to share that you drank as a teen, be sure to admit that it was a mistake and give examples of negative experiences that resulted or could have resulted from it.
- **Practice what you preach:** Never drive when you've been drinking or get into a vehicle with a driver who is impaired. You wouldn't want your child to, so don't do it yourself. Designate a sober driver in advance if you plan to drink.

If you have alcohol in your home, be sure to secure it away from kids and teens.

For more tips and tools for preventing underage drinking or talking to your child about alcohol and other drug use, check out our SPC Regional Prevention page [HERE!](#)



www.spcregionalpreventioncoalition.org



**Southern Providence County
Regional Coalition**

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SPCR is a federally funded organization providing mental health promotion and substance use prevention.