

April 1<sup>st</sup> means the beginning of Alcohol Responsibility Month. It serves as a great reminder to all adults to have those important conversations with the young people in their lives about the dangers of not only drinking and driving but the overall dangers of drinking alcohol at such a young age. Young people tend to model their behavior on what they see in their daily lives and what they believe is acceptable. We, as adults, have the responsibility of shaping their future behavior and actions.

In the recent survey, Monitoring the Future, conducted by the University of Michigan in 2021, it indicates that fewer American teens have been consuming Alcohol than ever before, with more than 3 out of 5 never consuming alcohol. But when comparing that with the statistics of MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Drivers), which states that 95% of the 14 million people who are alcohol dependent began drinking before the age of 21, you know that underage drinking needs to be addressed.

Based on tips from the website, Responsibility.org, the time to have these talks is **NOW**. They recommend mealtime, bedtime or even when driving in the car. They suggest that parents break the ice by discussing a current situation and asking their child's opinion. They suggest keeping it an open discussion, and not an argument. If kept as an open discussion, both parties have the opportunity to learn from one another. The Responsibility.org website is a useful tool for parents to browse all subjects related to underage drinking. It also addresses the impact of alcohol consumption on the brain at such a young age. It does so through articles, frequently asked questions and answers as well as a video series for the different age groups.

The adults need to have the important conversations with their children about what they find acceptable and not acceptable. They need to share their negative personal stories about alcohol and its effects on people they know and possibly other family members. They need to decide plans on how to handle situations before they turn into tragedies. They need to discuss all possible situations with their teenagers and how they should handle them. For example, do parents want to be called to pick up a child who has engaged in underage drinking? Do parents want their child to call for a ride from a service like Uber or Lyft? Do they want them spending the night if they are somewhere they consider safe? The number of scenarios goes on and on.

With the world emerging from the Pandemic, the emotional and mental health of today's youth needs to be a concern. Like everyone, their world was turned upside down and they faced issues and troubles that even adults were struggling with. They do not have the age or the maturity to process all that has been thrown at them. Now is not the time to ignore them. **NOW** is the time that they learn healthy coping skills on how to handle everyday situations and stress. In conclusion, take the time during Alcohol Responsibility Month, to talk to the young people in your life about this topic or any other related topic about drugs and/or alcohol. The lines of communication should always be open. It might very well save a life or two.