THE STRESS-JOY-SOCIAL CHECK-IN

"What do you do in moments of **stress**, **joy**, and **sociability**?"

IN THE LAST 6 MONTHS, DID YOU --

- Experience **stress** (work long hours, family trauma, world events)?
- Experience **joy/celebrate** (have a good day, birthday, wedding, graduation, holiday)?
- **Socialize** with friends or family (attend a sporting event/tailgate, dinner party, reunion)?

Are alcohol, marijuana/THC, or other substances a common part of de-stressing, celebrating, or socializing with friends and family?

If your responses **often or always** include alcohol, marijuana/THC, or other substance use, consider adding responses that do not include substances to model alternative strategies for your kids.

WHAT ARE HEALTHY WAYS TO DE-STRESS, FIND JOY, AND BE SOCIAL WITHOUT SUBSTANCES?

- Go for a hike
- Call a friend
- Journal
- Read a book
- Light a scented candle
- Do yoga or stretch
- Walk the dog/play with pets
- Listen to music
- Bake/cook a special meal
- Plan an outing with friends
- Drink warm tea
- Close your eyes and listen to the sounds around you

Consider planning activities **without alcohol, marijuana/THC, or other drugs**, especially when they include youth.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Adolescence is a unique time in human development. The brain continues to develop until the mid-20s, and during this time, teens are building a foundation for relationships, emotional connection, and coping skills. Opportunities where teens have to navigate life experiences without substances is one important way they acquire these skills. Parents/caregivers can be intentional in modeling healthy strategies for dealing with stress, finding joy/celebrating, and socializing. They can provide positive social spaces for youth explicitly without alcohol, marijuana/THC, or other drugs present to support their social and emotional growth.

#1 MIND THE MESSAGE

When adults glorify alcohol (e.g., “nectar of the gods”, “wine-o'clock”) or marijuana/THC (e.g., “weed mom”), it sends the message to teens that substance use is the norm. Also, when we overemphasize the glory of “glory days”, we can overlook or minimize the trauma that went along with those times.

Parents/caregivers are often sensitive to the messages in advertising, media, and music that explicitly endorse substance use but may overlook how substance use is embedded within the home/family life.

Pay attention to the messages your words and behaviors send about substances use.

#2 PROCESS EMOTIONS OUT LOUD

Kids learn to process their emotions in part by watching parents/caregivers. Consider processing your feelings more outwardly: “I had a hard day at work today.”

Instead of “I need a drink”, try something else like, “I’m going to go for a walk to de-stress.”

Upon return, report back and share if you are feeling positively or negatively, and declare your next step/plan.

#3 USE SITUATIONS TO START CONVERSATIONS

“Do you think people can have fun at a tailgate/party and not drink alcohol? I just had a blast without drinking.”

“Did you notice/was it uncomfortable to see So-And-So drunk/high at the family reunion? What do you think about that?”

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