

This is the time when your child learns to navigate larger halls, figure out how to work with multiple teachers, and determine who they are, as opportunities and social circles grow. To add to the complexity, it occurs at a time when big developmental changes, both in the body and the brain, are taking place. To say the least, it can be a very exciting but challenging period for parents and their children. The good news is that you can do a lot to help guide them as they work on reaching their full potential or what we call, Becoming Unstoppable.



## Understand *your* Child's Developmental Needs

From roughly the age of 12-25, the adolescent brain enters a period where it works differently than both the brain of a child and an adult. Some things to keep in mind:

- Preteens and teens need approximately 9 1/4 hours sleep to best learn and manage emotions. Establish a schedule that makes sleep a priority.
- Confidence can be very shaky during the junior high years. Focus on your child's strengths, ensure he/she know what they are, and look for activities that will build their confidence.
- During the tween and teen years, your child is more susceptible to negative impacts of stress than an adult. Too much stress can lock down a brain, preventing learning from taking place, and lead to lasting damage. Work with your child to find ways to manage stress in a healthy way.
- Children develop new cognitive powers during the junior high years and will start to want to do more things independently. The result, conflict between parent and child will peak between 7-9 grade. Work to find ways you can still connect with your child, and save arguments for issues that involve safety and health.

It is often a hard line to walk, helping and not hindering development as our children become independent. We don't want to be overly restrictive but at the same time we don't want to trust blindly. BN Parents hopes to help you navigate this line.



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When you talk to your teen about alcohol...

*Parents Make a Difference.*

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Junior high is often the first big step into independence.



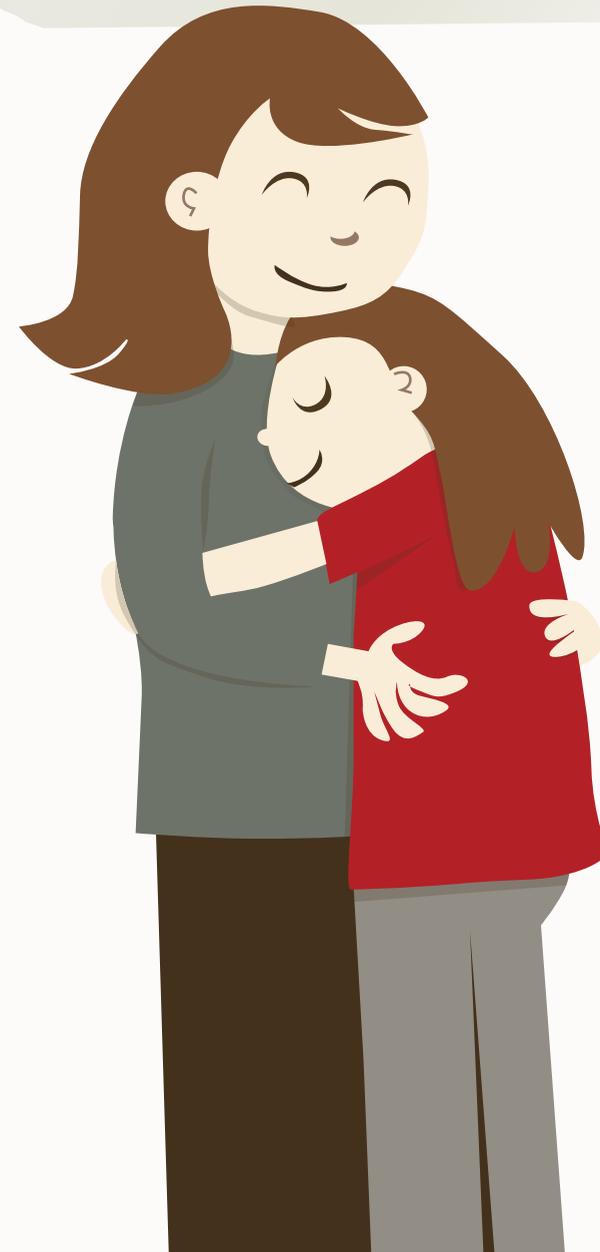
*Parents Make a Difference.*

## Keep *your* Relationship Strong.

BN Parents has been delivering support information to parents in partnership with the high schools for the past 8 years. Our primary goal, to reduce substance use rates. We are pleased to share that alcohol and marijuana use rates have come down considerably amongst the high school population. Our concern now, the use rates have been increasing amongst the junior high population. This tells us we need to get support information to parents sooner so that every parent can begin acting to prevent the onset of use.

You may be thinking, “I don’t need to worry about my child. I have a good kid.” We will never dispute that but we will tell you from experience that every child makes poor decisions. And, experience tells us that parents active involvement can help prevent them from making the decision to try a substance. This is particularly important because the earlier a youth initiates use the more likely they are to develop a lasting substance use disorder and interfere with overall development of their brains during a very critical period of growth and development.

**The good news is that research and experience have identified actions parents can take to make a difference. This brochure is constructed to tell you what some of them are.**



The most important thing you can do as a parent is to stay involved in your child’s life and work to maintain a close relationship. This is true even if your child seems to be acting in a way that tells you otherwise. This involvement includes the assurance that you are watching, guiding and ensuring their best interests are at heart in decisions that can have a lasting impact.

To best accomplish this, we encourage you to:

- Make it a habit to always know where your child is, what they are doing, and who they are with. Just knowing you care and are concerned helps them make good decisions. Also, don’t assume poor decisions only happen at night. The after school hours are a very high-risk time. Check-in during these hours if you are at work.
- Get to know your child’s friends, introduce yourself to their parents and exchange numbers.
- When your child is participating in activities away from your watchful eyes, even if you think you would never need to, plan ahead and make sure your child has the words to refuse an offer of alcohol, marijuana, vaping products and any other drugs.
- Eat dinner together and plan fun alcohol-free and cannabis-free activities.
- Lock up or monitor any alcohol, marijuana or vaping products at home.



## Support Success *in* School.

Not only is the relationship you have with your child protective, the relationship your child has with the school is as well. And, there is a lot you can do to support this.

- Each day, check in to see how the day went and ask if he/she has what is needed to complete homework.
- Attend school events and get to know your child’s teachers.
- Establish a set study space for homework and help them with organization.
- Encourage your child to get involved at school, through clubs, sports and music programs.