

Escape Plans for Teens

By Bright Tomorrows, CAC Staff

The teenage years are full of concerns about fitting in, being popular, and not wanting to be a loser. Teenagers often find themselves in seemingly impossible situations full of peer pressure. It's a time when they will encounter pressure to use drugs, drink alcohol, engage in sexual activity, break the law, and more.

As adults, we can help teenagers prepare for some of these situations by helping them create some "escape plans," or excuses they can use to get out of bad situations while still saving face. It is easier for an adult to be the "bad guy" than for the teen to stand up to the peer pressure on their own. By creating escape plans ahead of time, teenagers will be better prepared to avoid some of the negative effects of peer pressure.

Help your teenager brainstorm 3 to 5 escape plans he/she may use to get out of sticky situations. Here are some examples to get you started. 1) Create a pre-made text from you that says he/she needs to get home immediately. This way, he/she can show this text to their friends and leave the situation. 2) Have a code word/question he/she can use when they call/text you that lets you know they need help getting out of a situation. 3) Have a premade list of contacts in the teen's phone or on a piece of paper the teen carries with him/her. If they are not able to contact you, they have a list of other responsible adults they can call for help. Review these escape plans regularly with the teen to help him/her be better prepared to use the escape plan under pressure.

If you have teens in your life, show them how much you care by having a conversation about these impossible situations. Help prepare them to be successful in rising above the peer pressure and making the smarter decision. The teenager in your life may not understand or recognize the importance of this conversation now, but will be grateful for the running list in his/her mind when the impossible situation presents itself.