

# PARENT MESSAGES THAT WORK

## A Tip Sheet For Parents

**You can provide a good model for your children by what you do and by what you avoid doing.**

- Show that you value your freedom to think and act independently – that you don't have to do something because *"everyone is doing it."* This helps your children see that unwanted peer pressure can be rejected.
- Be consistent in your words and actions. For example, a phone call interrupts your dinner and you say, *"Tell them I'm not home yet."* The message your children hear is that it's okay to be dishonest for your own convenience.
- Demonstrate your sense of self-respect and self-esteem. For example, taking care of your health through exercise and diet offers a strong model for your children. Be creative and constructive in your use of free time. Show your children that there are alternatives to being a "couch potato" or "hanging out."
- Show respect for your children's lives and concerns by being a good listener. Be sincere, ask questions and use a touch or a look for encouragement.
- Be cautious in using prescriptions or over-the-counter medicines as a quick fix for pain or stress. Your example can help counter the media messages that chemicals can cure discomfort.
- Be aware of how your own use of alcohol can influence your children. Drinking in front of children has not been shown to be harmful, but your children will notice how much you drink and why. Avoid using excuses for drinking, like having a rough day. Your drinking behavior tends to be the drinking behavior your children will have when they grow up.
- Talk honestly about stress or conflict in your own life. Children need to know that such struggles are a normal part of life. You are providing your children a good model when they witness you coping with problems without relying on alcohol or other drugs.
- If you are trying to change something in your behavior – such as quitting smoking or losing weight – be willing to talk about what works and what doesn't.
- Demonstrate that spending time with your children is something you value and look forward to. If you are often too tired or too busy, they are likely to imitate your behavior.
- Be open in showing that you love and value all members of the family. Single parents can provide as much affection and support as two-parent families.

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