

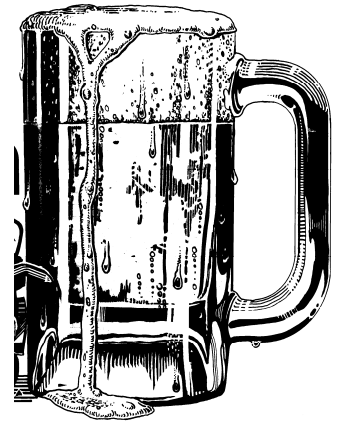
Unsupervised Parties

Question:

One of the most frequently asked questions from parents is “Should I allow my minor child to attend activities where alcohol or other drugs will be present, since I am sure this child does not drink or use other drugs?”

Answer:

The logic behind this question is understandable. Parents feel that if their child is honest enough to tell them exactly where he/she will be, and is honest enough to say that alcohol will be present, isn't it better to let them attend and know where they are than to forbid them, and risk their going anyway, and lying about it?



However, before parents accept this con, they should examine the dynamics of the most common such activity – the unsupervised party, usually known as a *kegger*...although kegs do not have to be present for an unsupervised party to be called a *kegger*.

A *kegger* happens when parents are gone, usually when they are out of town. The host convinces parents that he/she can be trusted to stay alone. Word gets out to participants through the grapevine network, sometimes to kids from many different schools. Word is passed at school as well as at work, over the phone, the Internet, etc. Often, teens bring their own alcohol.



If the party is a *kegger*, a fee (usually \$5-\$20) is charged to get in. Soft drinks are rarely provided. Profits of \$200 - \$2,000 can be made, depending on the size of the event. Drinking games are usually played. Binge drinking by minors is common. There are usually “other drugs” at such parties. Usually they are available in a bedroom, or, in nice weather, in the back yard. If the party is not broken up by police early enough, continued drinking by the minors results in behavior which is out of control. Kids vomit. Fights occur. Property gets damaged or stolen. Assaults happen. Rapes and gang rapes are not uncommon. Falls occur. Drunk kids leave and get in cars to drive away, inviting obvious danger.

These parties are not quiet, cocktail parties with stimulating conversation, that adults tend to relate to.

When a parent allows a child to attend such an event (even if the parent thinks all the facts are known, and that the child can be trusted), the parent will find it very difficult to ever not allow that child to attend any other future such parties.

The parent is putting his/her “stamp of approval” on these parties, and is saying, “they are okay for my kid”. These parents are also becoming accomplices in any bad thing that happens to other kids as a result of their child’s attendance at the same party.

Parents must also remember that they are allowing their child to be in a very unhealthy and dangerous environment. In some jurisdictions, it is unlawful for young people to be in taverns and bars after 9 pm for a lot of very good reasons...most notably the child’s own welfare.

Parents who knowingly allow their children to attend parties where alcohol will be present for “other” teens should ask themselves, “Would I allow my child to attend a party if I knew cocaine or heroin were being used by other teens?”.

Parents must also remember that the average teen has been drinking for over a year before most parents even begin to suspect that he/she is drinking alcohol. Trusting parents “buy” lies such as “other kids spilled beer on me”. Alcohol smells are covered up by strong gum, mouth sprays or any strong-smelling chemical available...even hair spray, Windex, etc.

One last consideration parents must think about before giving permission for kids to attend unsupervised parties is that, as long as teens attend these parties, the parties will keep happening. These wild parties which promote illegal activity have become “the only game in town” already.

As long as any parents allow kids to attend, the parties will proliferate. As long as these parties keep happening, they will be “the” place to be and be seen. Chemical-free activities will not be attractive to enough kids as an alternative, because “no one” will attend. It is futile to try to plan or organize any type of on-going chemical-free activity as long as these unsupervised parties are continuing and are so popular.

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