Why The Growing Popularity of e-Cigarettes Among Youth

“These products are now the most commonly used form of tobacco among youth in the United States, surpassing conventional tobacco products, including cigarettes, cigars, chewing tobacco and hookahs,” wrote Dr. Vivek H. Murthy, U.S. Surgeon General. “I am urging all parents to take a stand against e-cigarette use by our nation’s young people.”

The report provides an interactive website (e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov) and educational quiz for parents. There is much misinformation about e-cigarettes and the report is one way of educating on the dangers. Perhaps most compelling is the damage of nicotine on a developing teen brain, including mental health problems, behavioral issues and changes in brain structure. e-Cigarettes also bring the possibility of addiction and associated long-term complications.

As of 2014, the e-cigarette industry spent $125 million a year on advertising. The industry used many of the same techniques from the successful campaigns for traditional cigarettes. In 2015, the report found that nearly 60 percent of high school students were both current smokers and current vapers.

Teens and young adults reported using electronic tobacco products because they believe they are less harmful than conventional cigarettes. e-Cigarettes are also a way to avoid indoor smoking restrictions. Young adults reported enjoying the more than 7,000 flavors of e-cigarettes. The report notes e-cigarettes are also used to smoke marijuana and possibly other illicit drugs.
Navigating The Journey of Senior Year

As students anticipate their senior year, many hope for the old adage that senior year is a time for excitement, accomplishments, freedoms and celebrations. But in reality, it can bring enhanced anxiety and heightened pressure as students navigate the complex and competitive college decision process along with the expectation of delivering their best grades with varsity sports, volunteering, jobs and/or college visits. Deciding where to apply and, ultimately, where to attend college is also one of the biggest decisions of their lives.

The dialogue and pressure on college planning — and “packaging yourself as a desirable student” — is starting as young as the middle school years. Students are coached to build resumes, add activities to stand out and take courses that differentiate.

For many, there are trepidations of leaving the familiarity, support and comforts of home as well as a network of friends that have helped them to grow through challenging years. Students navigate and balance “the last” milestones along with prom, senior activities and the never-ending college supplements/essays. There might also be additional stress at home with how to pay for the ever-rising cost of college — especially during the uncertainty of the exact financial commitment.

There is the long waiting game for acceptances, and notifications can create both pride and embarrassment. For most seniors, well meaning family and friends have the college decision as the most important topic of conversation. It can be a scary prospect for seniors in not knowing where they will be living in the years to come, and college visits can become an exhausting blur. The endless stream of college communications can be paralyzing.

So, what can we do to encourage and support our seniors as they try to navigate one of their most challenging years? Check out our sidebar for tips and to learn more.

Tips for a Successful Senior Year

1. Understand emotions may be fluid while pressures fluctuate.
2. Don’t take reactions personally. The cause of stress can be cumulative.
3. Encourage balance, adventure and stress relief with day-trips, exercise, sleep and healthy eating.
4. Focus on goals and create a manageable plan.
5. Be an active listener for support.
6. Encourage research of the opportunities and a trust in their instincts.
7. Manage your expectations for your senior.
9. Reinforce the importance of resiliency during senior year and for life.
10. Encourage faith in the process and how life has a way of working it out for the best.

Most importantly, find ways to enjoy your senior and cherish the time together in this final year home. Have fun, laugh, support and enjoy each milestone.
As we talk about teen stress, increased use of marijuana and e-cigarettes, and impact of social media, a mindfulness practice is a powerful tool for balance, awareness and good decision-making.

Mindfulness can help teens navigate the challenges of adolescence as well as provide lifelong skills of empathy, gratitude and awareness.

But, what is mindfulness? It is purposeful, nonjudgmental awareness. It is the ability to be fully present, and not overwhelmed or reactive. It also has proven health benefits due to better sleep, a stronger immune system, less stress and healthier mindset.

We are seeing trends in education to create Zen zones, inclusion of mindfulness before testing, as an alternative for behavioral challenges and to create a stronger learning environment. One example of our mindfulness inclusion for prevention is in our recent monthly newsletter tips for families of elementary students.

There are mindfulness programs at local yoga studios, YMCAs and meditation centers as well as simple apps for private, guided meditations to center for one’s day or relax at night. Education is becoming more interested in mindfulness due to studies that are proving a heightened ability to concentrate, better performance on tests, and reduction in anxiety, stress and depression in students.

Why not model your own mindfulness practice today and allow your family to follow along to a more peaceful, balanced and healthy New Year.

We need to find ways for “no screen time” to allow a break for teen brains and minds from constant judgment. Cyber bullying has become an increasing problem as there can be a disconnect of the human impact and consequences.

We need to actively monitor social media to find ways to build confidence, self-respect and sensitivity to others.

Open dialogue on expectations should be ongoing with discussions on mistakes by peers and the ramifications. We must teach, from a young age, the permanence of social posts, and their power to do harm. Our mentoring and modeling of social media will have a strong impact on our children’s use — or misuse — of digital tools.

We know the power and influence social media has on our teens, however, have you thought about the power of the ‘like’? The Association for Psychological Science published a study (The Power of the Like in Adolescence, 2016) where it found the reward center in teenagers’ brains were highly influenced by the number of perceived social media likes.

The power of the ‘like’ speaks to social conformity and potential for increased risky behavior. The influence could be positive, if peers are supporting positive decisions. The danger occurs with negative peer pressure. Studies show that with just one hour of chatting on social media each day, adolescents are less content.

Social Media Impacts Teens’ Confidence, Decision-Making & Happiness

Try Mindfulness for Stress Relief & Enhanced Coping Skills

As parents, we vow to support, nurture and protect our children. We take great pride in our involvement and ability to provide for every opportunity. And, it’s a fine line and gradual transition from our all-empowering role to allowing our children to fly. The following are examples of being a helicopter parent. Do you see yourself in any of them?

1. You reach out to your child’s coach on playing time.
2. You frequently “re-write” homework.
3. You resolve child friendship issues with other parents.
4. You answer student-directed questions from the teacher.
5. Your investment of time in the college application process is greater than your child’s.

Most of us will have some moments of helicopter parenting, but let’s remember that stepping back allows our children to take the lead, evaluate risks, grow in confidence and competence, and learn resiliency and creativity in overcoming mistakes. Perhaps then, we can find comfort for more independent (or teaching) moments as well as a better balance to raise healthy and happy children.

Five Signs You Are a Helicopter Parent
Social Media, Marijuana & Legalization

It’s no big deal…it’s safe to use.
Marijuana is not-addictive.
It doesn’t impact school or decision-making.
Everyone is doing it.

These are some of the social media messages teens hear about marijuana. They are even more powerful as according to Statista’s research (February 2016), 16-24 year-olds spend nearly 200 minutes/day on a mobile device. The social to watch most closely are Instagram and Twitter.

On the positive, according to PreventTeenDrugUse.org, what parents say to teens does matter and they actually do listen. With that in mind, parents need to reinforce strong messages of no alcohol, no tobacco, no marijuana and no non-prescribed prescription drugs. It’s even more important with the average potency of today’s marijuana at 244 percent higher than in the 1980s (National Drug Intelligence Center).

Beware Social Media Consequences. What many don’t know is what can happen if you post photos of marijuana or related activities. Social companies are acting on some illegal activity with deleting accounts – which has more impact to cannabis-related dispensaries. But, even with marijuana growing in legalization, it still remains illegal federally. In FORTUNE’s Marijuana Photos on Instagram Could Cost You Big, there was an example in Arizona that could lead to a $150,000 fine and 18-month jail sentence.

The Coalition Against Drug Abuse was surprised by the ease and frequency of selling drugs on social sites. They found 50 Instagram dealers in one day by searching hashtags like #weed4sale and user names like “ihavedrugs4sale”.

Since law enforcement monitors social media, social outreach could be tracked to the recipient. And, if a drug package is intercepted, the recipient could be arrested and face a potential Federal charge.

As you can see, social media is dramatically changing the landscape of drug access. We need to ensure the facts are shared on its impact and consequences.

The Y is the Place for Teens

Sometimes it is hard to find a place for teens to go that is welcoming and fun! The Bayside Y has great opportunities for teens after school, nights and on the weekends. Stop by today to check it out!

Health & Wellness Center
- Our state-of-the-art center is always staffed by our certified Health & Wellness coaches.
- Ages 9-10 can try the cardio machines, including 2 rowers, ellipticals, Express bikes, treadmills and ARC Trainers.
- Ages 11 are able to have an orientation on the strength training circuit.
- Ages 13+ are able to use the free weights after an orientation.

Open Gym
If you like to play hoops, then the Y is the place for you! We have open gym for teens every afternoon from 2:00-3:00 and many nights as well. Play a game of pickup or work on your free throws with some friends- it’s up to you!

Sport Specific Personal Training
If you are an athlete, you know how important training can be to your success. Let the Y help you train your body to support whatever sport you choose. From baseball to basketball, swimming, lacrosse and track, our certified personal trainers can help you achieve even more. For more information about these any other great Bayside Family YMCA program, please visit our website at www.gpymca.org or call the Y today at 245.2444 and ask for Anthony.

Social Media and Marijuana

Raising Healthy Teens is published by the Bristol-Warren Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition with permission from the South Kingstown Partnership for Prevention. For more information about keeping teens healthy and safe, contact Bristol and Warren Prevention Coalition Coordinators Ann Marie Roy or Maria Ursini at bsapc@bristolri.us or call (401) 396-5700.