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Study of the Day: Arguing With Mom Protects Teens From Peer Pressure

By Hans Villarica

Adolescents who are comfortable expressing their opinions at home can more easily resist negative influences to use drugs or alcohol



PROBLEM: How can parents protect their teens from peer pressure to use drugs or drink alcohol?

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METHODOLOGY: University of Virginia researchers recruited a racially, ethnically, and socioeconomically diverse pool of participants of more than 150 families to understand the influence of social skills, close friendships, and parent-teen ties on substance use. When the children were 13, 15, and 16 years old, the scientists observed their interactions with their peers and parents, and asked all of them to answer questionnaires.

RESULTS: Adolescents who held their own in family discussions were better at standing up to peer influences to use drugs or consume alcohol. The best protected of the group were the teens who persuaded their mothers with reasoned arguments, rather than with pressure, whining, or insults, when talking about topics like grades, money, household rules, and friends.

CONCLUSION: Teens who more openly express their opinions with their moms are more likely than others to resist peer pressure to use drugs or drink alcohol.

IMPLICATION: The healthy autonomy adolescents establish at home may carry over into their peer relationships, says lead author [Joseph P. Allen](#) in a statement. "It may be that teens who are secure in their ability to turn to their mothers under stress are less likely to end up feeling overly dependent upon their close friends, and thus less likely to be influenced by their friend's behavior when it's negative."

SOURCE: The full study, "Predictors of Susceptibility to Peer Influence Regarding Substance Use in Adolescence," is published in the journal *Child Development*.

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