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4th of July Safety

Set a Good Example for Your Kids this Fourth of July Holiday

Happy July! With temperatures climbing across Arizona, we try our best to stay cool. But with Fourth of July, fireworks and backyard barbeques, staying cool can sometimes mean showcasing adult habits that may not seem inherently dangerous, but when observed by kids, can become so.

Drinking is a very common component in social gatherings. For cookouts on national holidays, like Memorial Day or Labor Day, or even just celebrating birthdays, anniversaries, and other events, often drinking plays a central role. Independence Day is no exception. In fact, it is the top beer-drinking holiday in the U.S., according to Market Research. And when you're spending your entire day relaxing and having a good time with friends, you may not realize exactly how much you're consuming.

Besides the fact that adults should always drink responsibly, it's important to realize that parents'

behaviors can quickly become learned behaviors by their kids, particularly when it comes to alcohol. As you might expect, drinking alcohol is a completely learned behavior; kids learn to

drink by imitating what they see. If a child or teen sees their parent constantly drinking at social gatherings, they may begin to think consistent drinking at these sorts of events is ok. And teens may even begin to partake in it themselves, and at an early age.

The summer is more dangerous when it comes to teen drinking overall; more teens will have their first drink of alcohol on a summer day compared to a day during the school year, according to a survey from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. And on holidays when drinking is more prevalent, this risk only increases.

Besides seeing an increase in teen drinking and teaching unwanted behaviors, Fourth of July is one of the deadliest days of the year for drivers. According to Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), last year between the evening of July 1 and the morning of July 5, 188 people nationwide were killed in crashes involving drunk drivers. Parents can show kids that drinking and driving is wrong by not drinking and driving themselves.

Remember that children look to their parents as role models. Although parents may tell their kids "do as I say, not as I do," kids will still learn from their parents' behaviors. So this Fourth of July, whether you're hosting the local neighborhood cookout, heading to the pool with friends, or making your way to the local high school to see the city's firework display up close, showcase responsible drinking habits, and remember not to drink and drive.

Submitted by Carrie Holmes, program director at Southwest Behavioral & Health Services

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