



THE TEENAGE  
PHRASEBOOK

How to  
talk to your  
teenager  
about  
alcohol

SYSTEM  
BOLAGET

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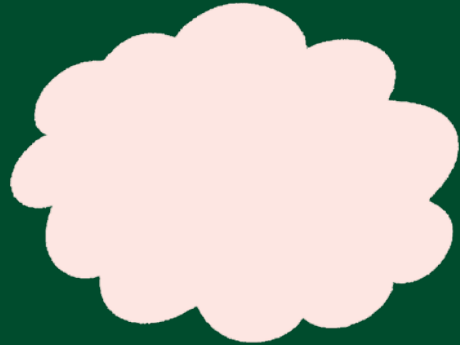
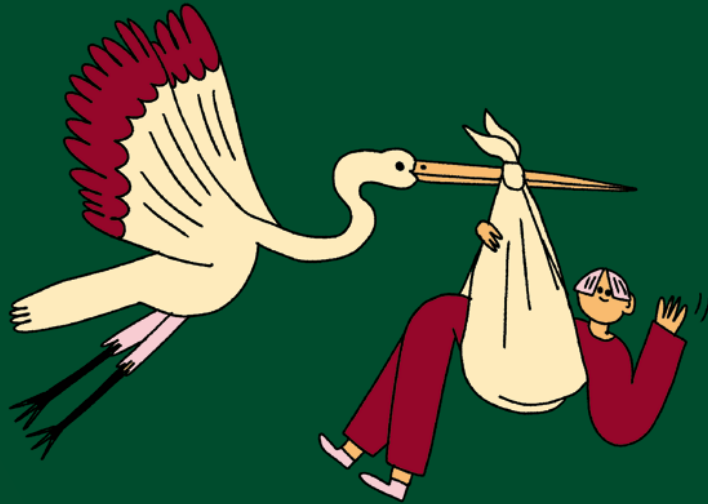
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## Congratulations! You're now the proud parent of a teenager!

And just like that, Systembolaget is reaching out to you. Why? Young people don't even drink nowadays. There must be other things to worry about. Things like mental health. And cannabis. And what's happening on Snapchat and TikTok.

And yes, it's true that young people are drinking less alcohol than your generation did when they were in their teens. But that downwards trend has levelled off – four out of every ten ninth graders still drink alcohol. And the figure amongst 2nd year upper secondary school students has risen to seven out of every ten.

You play a key role in your child's life, even when they're no longer little ones. What you say makes a difference, even if it might not always feel like it at the time. And when the day comes that your teenager has to decide whether to turn down or accept a glass of spirits, it's really useful if you've laid the foundations for their decision in the form of know-how and opinions, if you've listened to each other and built a mutual sense of trust. And if you've agreed on some rules you can refer to if your child comes home late and drunk one evening.

The brochure you're holding contains information and the best tips we have to offer on how to talk to your teenager about alcohol. Save this Teenage Phrasebook, read it in peace and quiet – ideally, together with your child.

# 6 ways to get the conversation started

It's not always easy talking about important and emotionally charged. Even if you're met with scepticism or silence when you try to talk about alcohol, keep trying. Have faith that your words mean something.

## 1. Think about how you open the conversation

We often use phrases like "you must" or "you're always" in emotionally charged conversations. We use them because we really want to get the other person to understand where we're coming from. But the chances of having a good conversation are higher if you start by formulating your feelings and experiences of the situation by saying "I feel" or "I think."



## 2. Avoid interrogations

Avoid turning the conversation into an interrogation – try and maintain a dialogue instead. Actively listen to your child and show them you're interested in what they have to say. This will increase the chances of your teenager continuing to share their thoughts and feelings going forward.



9 OUT OF EVERY 10 YOUNG PEOPLE THINK IT'S A GOOD IDEA FOR PARENTS TO DISCUSS ALCOHOL WITH THEIR CHILDREN.



## 4. Be clear about your expectations

It's important that you listen to your teenager's experiences and feelings, but it's also vital that you, as their parent, have the courage to set boundaries. Be clear about the rules when it comes to alcohol. This will give your teenager a sense of knowing where they stand, and remember, no child wants to disappoint their parents.



## 3. Look at it from their perspective as well as yours

It's often difficult to think flexibly when we're angry or concerned. Remember that your child's perspective is just as important as yours. Tell them about your concerns, but try to understand how your child feels and experiences the situation, too.



## 5. Encourage honesty

If you want your teenager to be honest, you need to think about how you react when he or she tells you when they've made a mistake or something bad has happened. It can be challenging to do, but stay calm and show your appreciation when your child opens up to you. Anger and criticism will just shut the dialogue down. It might sound obvious, but every parent knows just how hard staying cool can be.

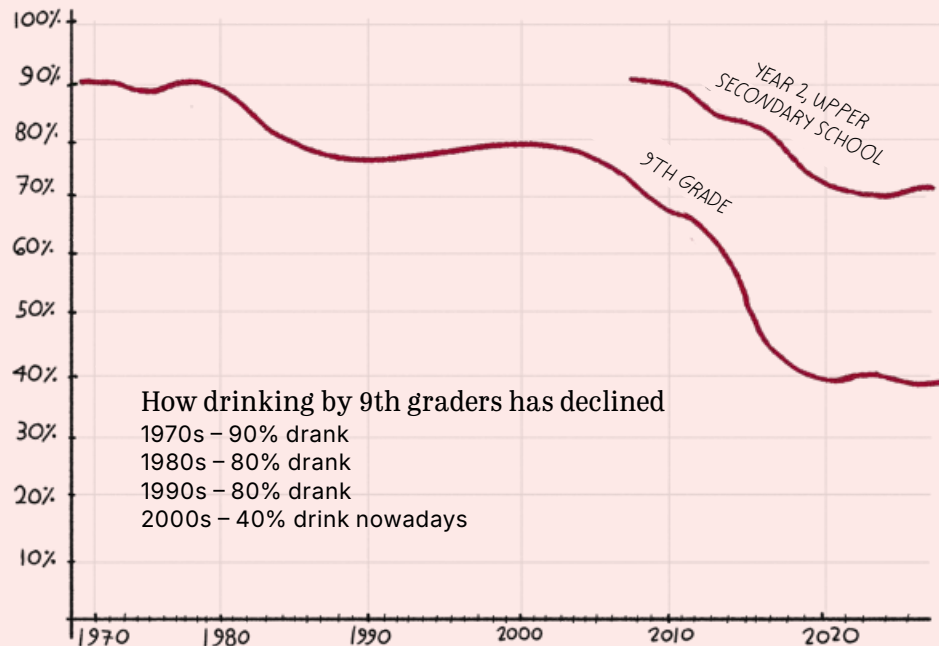
## 6. Make conversation part of your daily routine

Be on the lookout for the times when your teenager seems to want to talk – during car journeys, at mealtimes, or when it's just you guys at home together. The conversation might involve something big or something small, but by being available when your child is looking to make contact, he or she will become more comfortable talking to you about a variety of subjects.

# How teenagers drink

Fewer and less – but the trend is levelling off

Swedish teenagers are drinking less than previous generations. That having been said, there are signs of this decline levelling off. This is what daily life looks like for your teenager today.



FROM (1977):



3.75 LITRES OF PURE ALCOHOL/YEAR

TO (2024):



0.8 LITRES/YEAR

## How much are teenagers drinking?

It's not just that fewer teenagers are drinking: they're also drinking less alcohol. The amount of alcohol consumed by ninth graders has fallen by 70% between 1977 and 2024. Consumption peaked in the late 1990s and early 2000s, but has since declined once more.



## How many teenagers drink?

**35 percent** of ninth graders and **69 percent** av of year 2 upper secondary school students.

Young people were asked whether they had drunk alcohol in the past 12 months.

# Why are teenagers drinking less than before?

We don't really know why young people are drinking less alcohol than before, but here are some possible explanations:

## Lack of time

Studies, leisure activities, and social media are occupying young people's time and attention.

## High demands

Young people are experiencing high performance-related demands, both in their spare time and at school. Which means less room for alcohol.

## Parental disapproval

"My parents don't like me drinking," is a common reason for young people's abstinence.

## Health

Taking care of your health is an ideal that affects both adults and young people. Teenagers seem to be aware that alcohol is harmful.

## Group pressure

Saying no is more socially acceptable than it used to be, and group pressure to party seems to have declined.



# Does alcohol lead to other drugs?

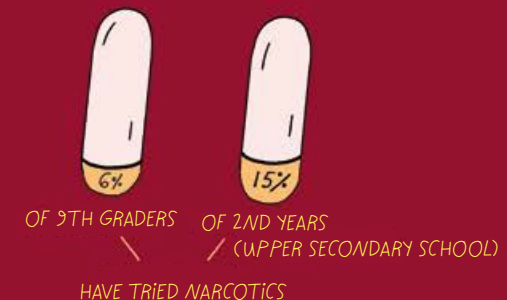
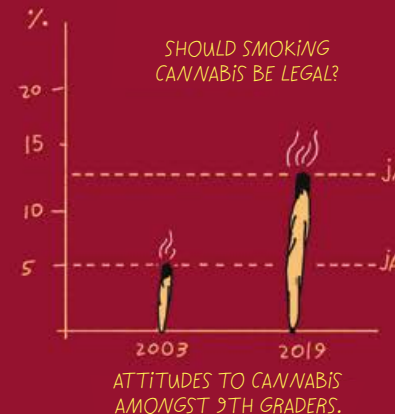


Well, yes and no. Most teenagers who drink alcohol will not try narcotics. That having been said, the majority of those who do use narcotics started by trying legal drugs like alcohol and tobacco.

narcotics nowadays do so twice as often as the young people who used 30 years ago.

Cannabis has been partially legalised in a number of countries worldwide over the last few years. Are young people influenced by the legalisation debate? The percentage of ninth graders who have tried narcotics has remained relatively stable over the past 20 years, but the frequency has increased. In other words, young people who use

Young people do not seem to be using more narcotics than they used to, but we have seen an attitude shift towards a more liberal approach since early 2000. Ninth graders nowadays regard narcotics as less of a problem than they did 20 years ago, and fewer seem to regard cannabis as a dangerous drug. It's worth mentioning, however, that just over 1 in every 3 people still see narcotics as a big problem.



# Which parent are you?

Parents handle the alcohol question in different ways. Some forbid, others want to talk and inform. What do you do? And what are the challenges you face?



## The facts parent

### Opportunities:

You approach the alcohol conversation with your child with the help of logic and rational arguments. Poorer grades? Unprotected sex? Street fights? No thanks! And because you base your discussions on facts and research, you undoubtedly already know that zero tolerance helps postpone alcohol debuts – which is how you protect your child against getting into difficult situations.

### Challenges:

If you want to get your message across, you need to start by listening and showing an interest in your teenager's perspective. Stick to your zero-tolerance approach when it comes to alcohol, but maybe you could let a few things be up for discussion? Try opening up a dialogue about timekeeping or how often your teenager has to get in touch when they're out. If you've previously agreed to some rules with your teenager, there's a much better chance that they'll stick to them when push comes to shove.

Challenge: listening

Opportunity: you're supported by the facts

Reading tip: 6 ways to get the conversation started. Page 2.

## The personal responsibility parent

### Opportunities:

You trust your teenager's ability to handle situations, and believe that alcohol is a part of life that people need to learn how to handle for themselves – just like you did when you were young. Trust is an important part of any relationship – which means you have a solid foundation for communication with your teenager.

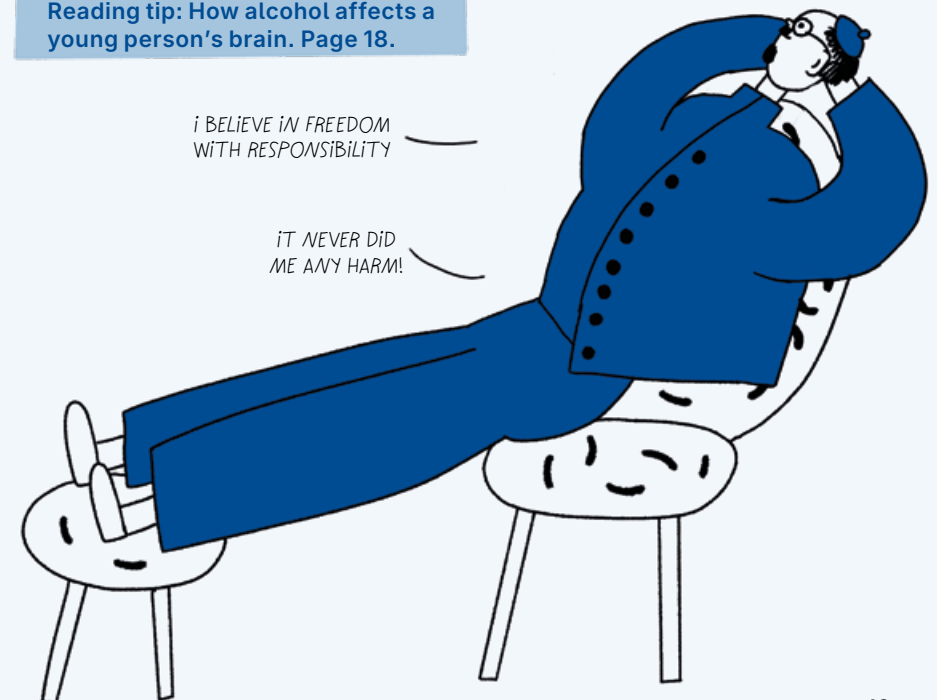
### Challenges:

Setting boundaries is not something you're used to doing, but remember that teenagers aren't always mature enough to take personal responsibility. Research has shown that alcohol has a more harmful effect on young people's brains than on those of adults. If you're thinking of buying alcohol for your teenager to make sure you know what they're drinking, bear in mind that it can go badly wrong. Teenagers who get their alcohol from home often drink more than those who don't.

Challenge: keeping track of what's happening

Opportunity: you're showing trust

Reading tip: How alcohol affects a young person's brain. Page 18.



# The out of the question parent

## Opportunities:

You seldom or never have a glass of wine. Maybe your religious beliefs or your culture include rules on alcohol. Allowing your teenager to drink alcohol is simply out of the question. Firm principles can be good – they offer clarity. The position at home is absolute and boundaries are very clear.

## Challenges:

Your teenager might be encountering situations and contexts that are foreign to you. If you want to get through to them, it's important that you show an interest in your child's perspective and experiences. If their contemporaries drink alcohol or take drugs, it can be difficult for your teenager to say no. Maintaining an open dialogue about alcohol that makes space for your child's questions and doubts may well increase the chances of them saying no.



# The let's talk about it parent

## Opportunities:

You're an engaged parent who wants to establish a dialogue and be understanding. It's important to you that you base your approach on reality, rather than sticking rigidly to your own principles. You're keen to talk about alcohol, even when your child is in their early teens, which gives you a real opportunity to raise the subject again if and when your child starts drinking.

## Challenges:

You might find setting boundaries challenging. Try to show curiosity about your child's perspective while, at the same time, being clear that it's unacceptable to you that they drink. Showing understanding is not the opposite of setting clear boundaries. If you let your teenager taste alcohol at home, it can be difficult to say no if your teenager says, "But you let me drink at home! Why can't I drink when I'm out with my friends?"

I REMEMBER WHAT IT WAS LIKE TO BE YOUNG!

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS THAT YOU FEEL YOU CAN ALWAYS TALK TO ME.



**Challenge: setting boundaries**

**Opportunity: you're listening to your teenager**

**Reading tip: No or OK? How to counter your teenager's arguments. Page 12.**



# No



# Or OK?

## How to counter your teenager's arguments

The balancing act between setting boundaries and listening can be a difficult one for a parent. Below, Ola Siljeholm, Psychologist, and Sven Andréasson (Alcohol Dependence Specialist), share their tips on what to say when your child wants to drink.

*"It's not logical saying you're allowed to drink but I'm not."*

"The brain is the slowest developing organ in the human body, and the one that is most sensitive to the effects of alcohol. It doesn't matter if you're bigger than me, physically speaking: your brain is still developing, which is why you're not allowed to drink. You're not allowed to drive a car either, but I am."

*"I'm going to get hold of alcohol anyway, so I might as well get it from you. At least that way you'll know what I'm drinking and how much I'm drinking."*

"Yes, I'm sure you can get hold of alcohol if you really want to, but as an adult, I cannot help you drink. Which is why I have to say no. And you can blame me if you like – say, "My pathetic mother won't let me drink." You can have that one on me."



*"Everyone else is allowed to..."*

"It might feel as though everyone else is allowed to do things you're not allowed to do, but I promise you that most people of your age are having exactly the same discussion with their parents as you are with me now. If you like, I could talk to the other parents so we can agree on a set of rules that apply to everyone."

*"So you don't trust me? If you did, you'd know I can handle drinking."*

"I do trust you when it comes to a lot of things. But when you've been drinking, it's easy to end up in situations that are harder to handle. And that worries me. Which is why I'm saying no."



*"Can I taste yours?"*

"No, I understand that it's tempting, but alcohol is a neurotoxin that affects teenagers more than adults, so I don't want to give you a taste."

### ABOUT THE EXPERTS

#### Ola Siljeholm

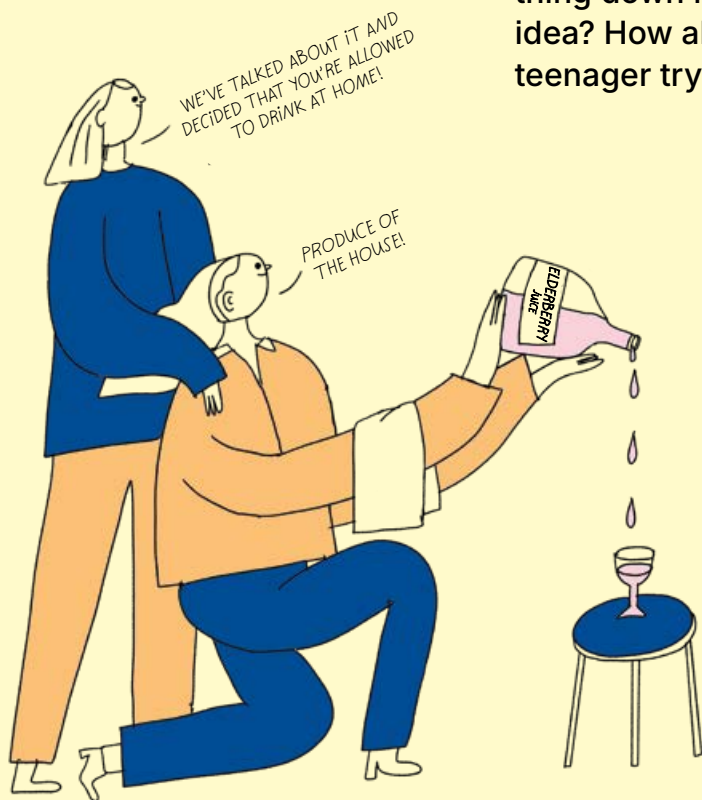
Psychologist and researcher into alcohol and parenthood at the Karolinska Institute.

#### Sven Andréasson

Alcohol Dependence Specialist and Professor of Social Medicine at the Karolinska Institute.

# PLAY IT DOWN?

Is playing the whole alcohol thing down maybe a good idea? How about letting your teenager try it at home?



**Offering your teenager a drink at home...**

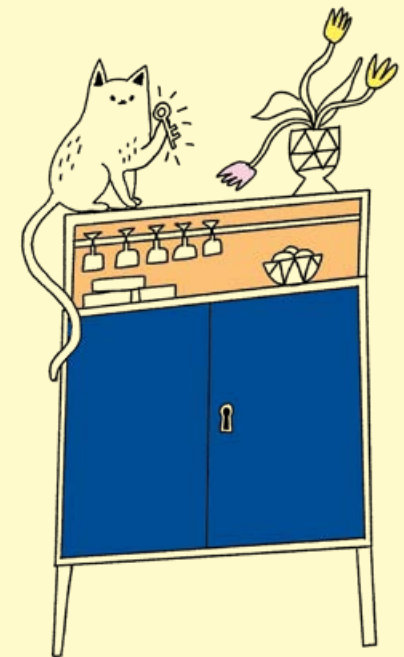
... doesn't result in them drinking less or learning a natural approach to alcohol. Quite the reverse, in fact. Permission to have a beer at home can be interpreted as it being OK to drink in other settings, too.

**Bottles of spirits in the drinks cabinet...**

... can be tempting for a teenager. If you have alcohol on display at home, it might be a good idea to talk to your teenager about what you expect. About the fact that the alcohol on display is for adults only. If you're worried, keep an eye on the content of the bottles, put them away somewhere, or keep the bottles behind a locked door to help your teenager resist the temptation.

**Do you have different attitudes to alcohol**

It's important that the adults in the family are giving teenagers the same message. Try to come to an agreement with your co-parent about what your position is on alcohol and partying, preferably before it becomes a relevant issue for your teenager. If other adults in your



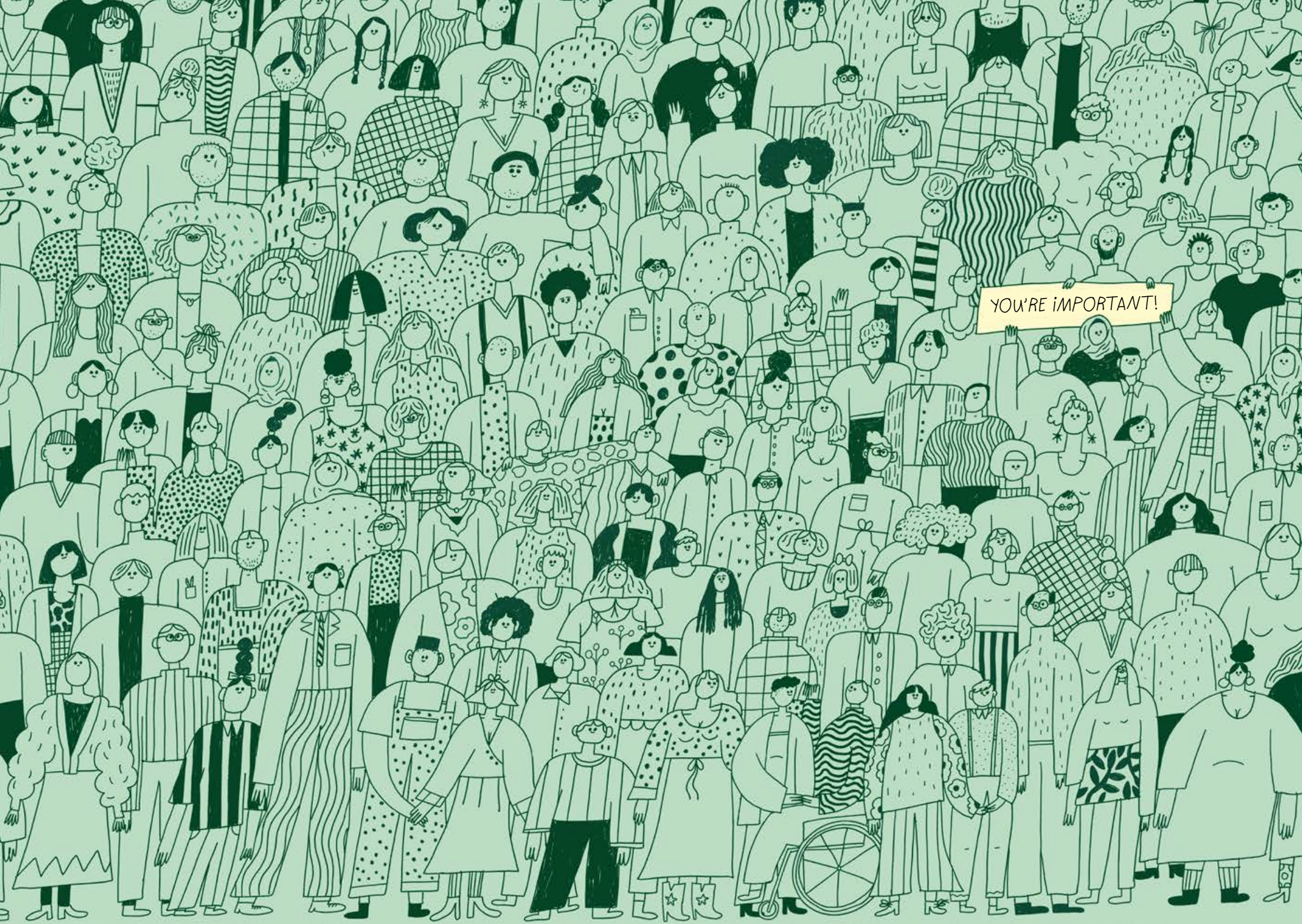
child's circle are happy to offer your teenager alcohol, it's important that you – as the parent – make it clear to your teenager that they are not allowed to drink.

**Mixed messages**

Saying yes to alcohol in some contexts and no in others can make things confusing for your teenager. If you allow them to drink at home, you're giving them the impression that the whole alcohol thing is negotiable, and that can make it harder for you to stick to your "no" when your teenager wants to drink with their friends.

**Is offering teenagers alcohol illegal?**

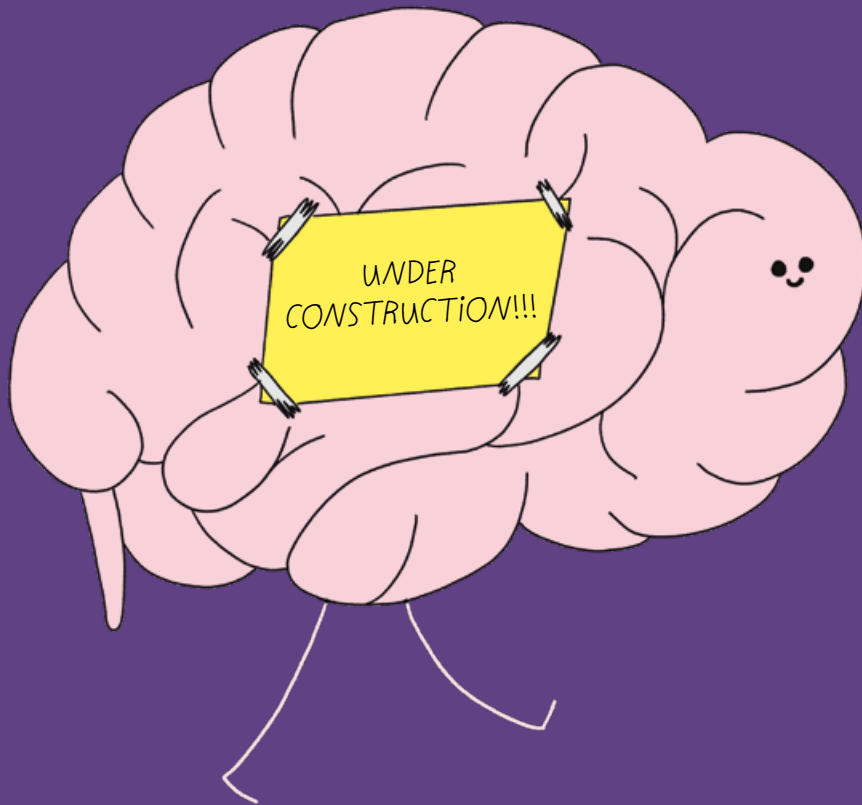
Offering your teenager a glass of wine with their meal is not illegal, but it can send the wrong signal. But when it comes to buying alcohol so your teenager can take it with them when they go out – that's called bootlegging, and it's illegal.



YOU'RE IMPORTANT!

# How alcohol affects a young person's brain

A teenager's brain is changing at record pace, acquiring the building blocks it needs to handle the stresses and strains of adult life. Alcohol can disrupt this developmental process and damage your child's potential later in life.



## Impulse control? Zero

A brain that is under the influence of alcohol makes your teenager more willing to throw themselves into situations without a safety net. To have an accident or to get into fights – things that can have consequences long after the hangover has faded.

## 5 minutes!

That's how long it takes for alcohol to reach the brain. After 10 minutes, cognitive functions and behaviour are affected. The effect lasts for several hours – exactly how long depends on how much you have drunk.

## Do not disturb!

The teenage years are when neural pathways are merged, and cells formed. The brain undergoes an intensive period of development all the way up to 25 years of age. Drinking alcohol at a young age can disrupt this delicate process during which several important abilities are shaped.

## BLACKOUT!

Teenagers often drink quickly, pouring it down their throats to avoid the taste of the spirits. Group pressure is not uncommon. Which can make it hard to judge just how drunk you're getting. Drinking until you have memory gaps has quantifiable consequences and affects the structure of the brain for several weeks at a time. Young people who drink heavily once or twice a month will, therefore, constantly suffer from poorer memory skills and reduced cognitive ability.



# Drinking is fun! At least at first...

Alcohol consumption releases the pleasure hormones, dopamine and endorphins – the body’s reward system is activated. You feel happy, brave, and loving. But those feelings pass. Because not only does the effect disappear as you become drunker, but if you drink regularly, your brain will also get used to this hormone boost. You’ll need more and more alcohol to achieve the same effect, and drinking frequently lays the foundation for future addiction.

### The self-confidence rollercoaster

When we have a little bit of alcohol in our blood, we feel attractive and clever. But that feeling is deceptive. Regular alcohol consumption will, in fact, eat away at your self-confidence, particularly if you do things you regret.

### Poorer grades

The ability to learn new things and to remember them are two of the things you risk worsening when you drink alcohol.


### Your brain wants more

When you drink, your brain learns to crave the intense rush that alcohol gives, so if you drink in your teens, rather than waiting a few years, the risk of becoming addicted increases.


### Doom and gloom

Alcohol can cause anxiety, depression, and mental illness. At the same time, mental illness intensifies the need to drink more to suppress the unpleasant feelings, at least temporarily. This can very easily become a vicious circle that teenagers may find very difficult to break.






"I'M SCARED THAT SOMETHING WILL GO WRONG - SO I'VE BEEN KEEPING A PRETTY CLOSE EYE ON THINGS. I'M WORRIED ABOUT WHAT'S HAPPENING ON SOCIAL MEDIA, OTHER PARENTS CAN BE REALLY NAÏVE - "NOT MY CHILD!" ARE THEY SURE ABOUT THAT?"  
- MOTHER, AGED 52, BIG CITY



"IT'S CHALLENGING THAT THEY THINK THEY'RE MORE GROWN UP THAN THEY ARE - TRYING TO EXPLAIN TO THEM WHY SOME THINGS DON'T WORK."  
- FATHER, AGED 53, COUNTRYSIDE

# What are you worried about?

Are you keeping an eye on Snap Map in real time? Or do you sleep like a baby when your teenager is out and about?



"IT FEELS LIKE THEIR WORLD AND THEIR GENERATION ARE DIFFERENT FROM HOW IT WAS WHEN I WAS GROWING UP. IT'S DIFFICULT TO RELATE TO THEM."  
- MOTHER, AGED 44, SMALL TOWN

## The 6 most common consequences when teenagers drink

- Damage to possessions or clothing: **23%**
  - Being photographed/filmed in embarrassing or compromising situations: **19%**
  - Getting into a row: **21%**
  - Having an accident or being injured: **17%**
  - Driving a moped, car or other motor vehicle: **18%**
  - Losing money or other valuables: **17%**
- \* 9th graders who drink alcohol

Citatet är hämtade ur intervjuer med föräldrar, genomförda av Expedition Mondiale.

The conversation – how we had the talk

*"I WOULDN'T HAVE CALLED ME IF I'D BEEN A DRUNK TEENAGER EITHER."*

# The rules aren't there to stifle you: they're there to help you.

Comedian, Kristoffer Appelquist, has been straight with his son, Erik, when it comes to alcohol: no, no, and absolutely not – not before his 18th birthday. "I've tried to be as clear as possible on the subject," says Kristoffer.

Kristoffer Appelquist became a father at the age of 21. The family lived in the Värmland town of Sunne while Erik was growing up. Many of his friends started drinking at an early age, and it wasn't always easy for him to accept the explicit rules at home when other parents and adults had a far more accepting approach to teenagers and alcohol.

"I felt that my parents were maybe a bit tough in that respect, that they pretended the drinking going on around them wasn't happening. There wasn't much scope to talk about it.

"Other families would come and pick you up after a party, either way, and it wasn't the end of the world if you'd had a few beers or something," says Erik, who is now 25 years old.

As far as his father, Kristoffer, was concerned, however, it was a given that Erik was not allowed to drink during his teens, even if other parents did buy alcohol for their children and offer them drinks. Kristoffer and Erik's mother didn't drink at home either.

"My only experience of alcohol culture was a bad one, which is why, when I became a father, I decided there wouldn't be any sort of alcohol culture at all in my family. I thought that sort of clarity was important to avoid ending up in the same position as those parents who say, "It's better if I buy them a beer than have someone else giving them home-distilled spirits." But at the same time, I understand how Erik feels. I wouldn't have called me if I'd been a drunk teenager either."



## Deferred alcohol debut

Erik drank for the first time when he was 15 years old, during a school trip to Poland. Now that he's an adult, he can see that his family's strict approach to alcohol probably deferred his alcohol debut.

"It probably meant that I started drinking later than I would have done otherwise. And that I've drunk less. But I also think there's a risk that I wouldn't have dared ring home if something had happened when I was drunk."

Kristoffer has younger children now from a new relationship and has relaxed his attitude towards alcohol a bit. Nowadays, he does have a beer with food sometimes, but he would still never let his teenage children drink.

"I think a child doesn't just need hugs: they need frameworks too. But the rules aren't there to stifle you: they're there to help you. I think it's important that you learn to how to be in a social setting before you start drinking alcohol. That you're given the time to become a person, and learn to function in different contexts."

## FACTS AND FIGURES

Kristoffer Appelquist is a comedian and TV anchor, he has four children and lives now in Stockholm. His son, Erik Appelquist, grew up in Sunne in Värmland.

The conversation – how we had the talk

# The most important thing is that my kids always feel they can call me

For media profile, Ann Söderlund, dialogue and trust have been important cornerstones of being a parent. But when she found her son Ossian's party pictures on his iPad, the rules got tightened up. "I'd been naive," says Ann.

Ann Söderlund, a jack of all trades in the media industry, has a big "every-other-week family" with five sons. The oldest, Ossian, is now 22 years old, but at around the age of 14, he began drinking alcohol with his friends who lived in different parts of Stockholm.

"I wanted to try drinking. It was exciting, pure and simple," says Ossian.

During his teens, Ossian often snuck home to the other parent when he knew he'd done something wrong.

"The first time I drank, I was at my Dad's, but I went home to my Mum's place because I didn't think she was at home."

But she was, and Ossian, who'd drunk a lot of red wine with his friends, couldn't hide the fact that he was drunk. Ann, who wasn't expecting to have a drunken teenager come home, one Sunday afternoon like any other, had to bite her lip and handle the situation as best she could.

"I wasn't actually angry at the time," says Ann. "Ossian felt so bad, both physically and emotionally, that I didn't want to punish him. The most important thing for me has always been that my kids feel they can call me if they're in trouble, so I didn't want to be too hard on him."

## Found an iPad with party pictures

Ossian continued drinking from time to time after that first incident. Ann, who has several younger children to take care of, tried to navigate the situation by maintaining as open a dialogue as possible with her eldest son, without laying blame and punishing. But then one day, she found his iPad with party pictures she wasn't really prepared to see. And when she then got a phone call from the police during a holiday on Gotland, she'd had enough. Ossian had thrown a party at home in Stockholm, and the apartment had, as a result, been jam-packed



"I THINK YOU HAVE TO FORGIVE YOURSELF IF YOU'RE NOT ALWAYS ON YOUR TOES WHEN IT COMES TO COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR TEENAGER."

with teenagers. The bill for the party included unhappy neighbours and a smashed window.

"At which point I actually felt I'd been had to some extent, because I'd trusted Ossian so much. You love your children so much that you want to believe them, but I felt I'd been naive. But after those incidents, I put some new rules in place and came down more heavily – checking his phone, that sort of thing."

Ossian is now 22 years old and when he looks back at his teenage years, he does it with a sense of having been listened to, including about difficult things like alcohol and partying.

"Both my parents were really decent when I'd messed up, and it was probably a good thing that they weren't too strict. That having been said, slightly more defined rules might have been a good thing. It was kind of like a balancing act between being a friend and being a parent," says Ossian.

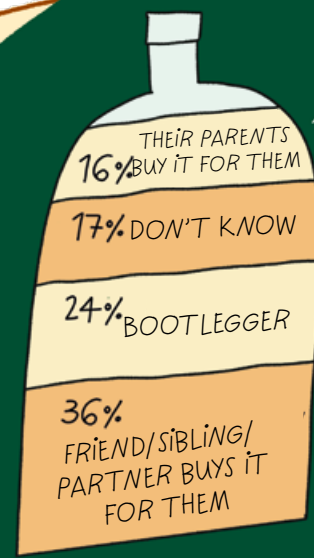
"I think you have to forgive yourself if you're not always on your toes when it comes to communicating with your teenager," says Ann. "There has to be an ongoing dialogue. I sometimes feel that when I get into it and start laying down the law, I can become controlling, and feel the need to intervene and interfere all the time. And I don't want to do that – children must be allowed to be free individuals too. It's a balancing act, basically."

## FACTS

Ann Söderlund is a TV anchor, author, podcaster, and journalist, who has five sons. Ossian Bie is 22 years old and is Ann's eldest son.



# How teenagers get hold of alcohol



DID YOU KNOW THAT TEENAGERS WHO GET ALCOHOL FROM THEIR PARENTS USUALLY DRINK MORE THAN THOSE WHO DON'T?

THEY OFTEN GET MORE ALCOHOL ELSEWHERE.

Ninth graders' four most common ways of getting hold of alcohol

IF SOMEONE ASKS YOU TO BUY FOR THEM, TELL THEM IT'S ILLEGAL.

IT'S ILLEGAL TO:  
BUY ALCOHOL FOR MINORS  
AND = FINES OR IMPRISONMENT FOR UP TO TWO YEARS



Teenagers usually get alcohol from someone they know. And this is where your attitude as a parent is really important. Talk to your child and those in your circle about not buying alcohol for your teenager, or offering it to them.

THE MORE PEOPLE WHO KNOW ALCOHOL IS BEING SOLD ON SOCIAL MEDIA, THE GREATER THE CHANCE THAT MORE PEOPLE WILL REPORT IT.

## If you discover an anonymous dealer account – here's what you do.

A new media landscape has emerged over the past few decades. One where spirits are illegally resold via anonymous dealer accounts ("hinkkonto") on social media such as Snapchat and Instagram. Buying from online dealers is risky. Who's selling the alcohol? And what's in the bottle? If you discover an account that's selling to your teenager or others, you need to act immediately!

## Anonymous dealer accounts

SELL ALCOHOL VIA SOCIAL MEDIA

28% HAVE SEEN ALCOHOL OFFERED FOR SALE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

19% HAVE BOUGHT ALCOHOL VIA ANONYMOUS DEALER ACCOUNTS

### Vodka cars

CARS THAT DELIVER SMUGGLED SPIRITS TO TEENAGERS.



### Moonshine



ILLEGAL SPIRITS BOTTLED WITH FAKE LABELS. CAN BE VERY HARMFUL!

### 1. Report the account to the social media platform

The people behind the account cannot see who has reported it. If possible, encourage other people to do the same thing.

### 2. Report it to the police

If the dealer has been in contact with your child, or if you see other proof of alcohol sales, ask your teenager if you can take screenshots.

### 3. Ask about followers

Talk to your child about people who follow the account and who they are.

### 4. Talk to your child

Tell your child that contact with anonymous dealer accounts is dangerous and that selling alcohol that way is illegal.

### 5. Keep in touch with other parents

Raise the subject when you talk to other adults. The more people who know alcohol is being sold on social media, the greater the chance that more people will report it.

# What about parental drinking?

Pop! The wine cork's out of the bottle, it's Friday, and dinner's on the table. Psychologist, Sigrid Elfström, and nurse, Josefine Östh, offer tips on how you, as a teenager's parent, might want to think about your own drinking habits.



## ABOUT THE EXPERTS AND THE AUTHORS

**Sigrid Elfström** psychologist and doctoral candidate in global public health at the Karolinska Institute.

**Josefine Östh** nurse and researcher of the treatment of alcohol dependence at the Karolinska Institute.

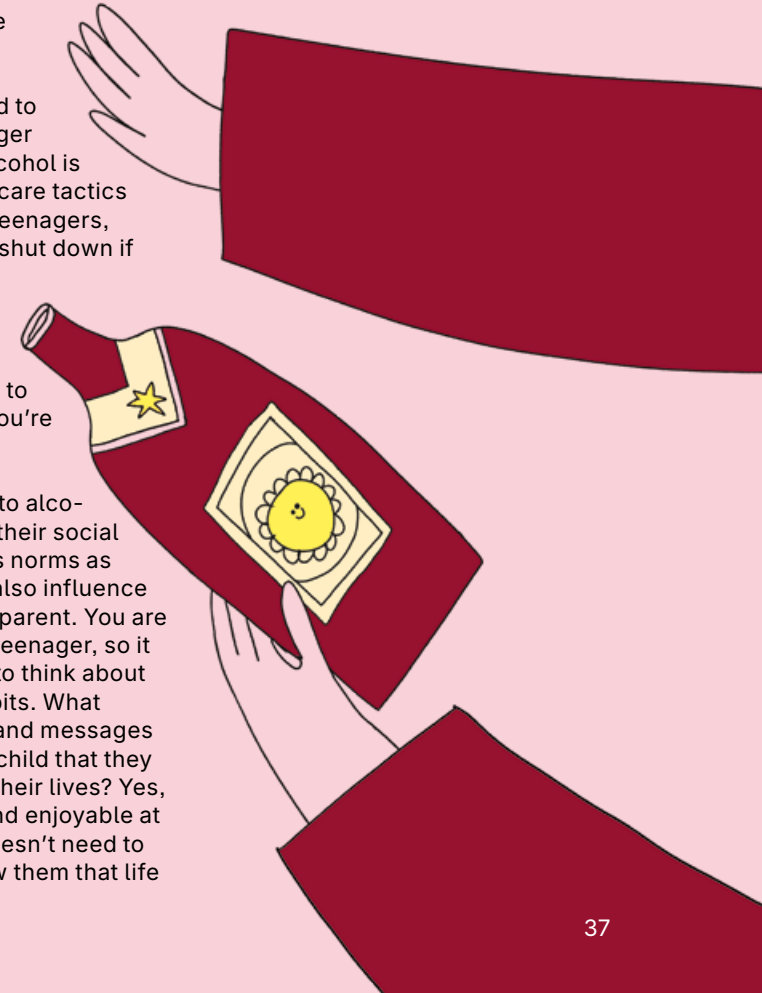
Many parents feel that they've regained their freedom, once their children become teenagers. Finally having more time to yourself can feel wonderful. At the same time, however, it's important to remember that your teenager still needs support, comfort, and stability. The fact that you drink alcohol doesn't have to be a problem, but a fourteen-year-old may feel insecure around an intoxicated parent in just the same way as a four year old.

If your teenager wants to drink because you do, the answer's simple: there are some things that adults do that young people are not allowed to do. Talk to your teenager about why drinking alcohol is one of these things. Scare tactics seldom work well on teenagers, who are very likely to shut down if they feel they're not being listened to. A non-moralising tone and an open dialogue are always good ways to go – including when you're discussing alcohol.

Teenagers' attitudes to alcohol are influenced by their social circle and by society's norms as a whole, but you can also influence them in your role as a parent. You are a role model for your teenager, so it might be a good idea to think about your own drinking habits. What behavioural patterns and messages are you sending your child that they will carry onwards in their lives? Yes, alcohol can be nice and enjoyable at times, but maybe it doesn't need to be a focal point? Show them that life

can be just as much fun without a glass of wine in your hand.

For some parents, alcohol might feel like it's taking more than it gives. Do you feel like alcohol is occupying more and more space in your life? Do you find yourself drinking more than you'd initially intended to? Do you often feel tired and worn out when you've been drinking the night before? If so, it might be time to review your alcohol consumption so you can successfully build the secure foundation your child needs.



# If your teenager comes home drunk

It can be hard knowing how to respond if your teenager stumbles into the hallway drunk, late one night. Take a deep breath and try to stay calm.

## Reaction

Discussions can wait. Maybe you drank too much yourself, once upon a time when you were their age, and know how bad they feel. Focus on taking care of your teenager and letting them feel safe in coming home to their own bed. Offer a hug, something non-alcoholic to drink, and put a bucket beside their bed in case they feel sick.



## The next day

It's time to talk about what happened yesterday, but don't go in all guns blazing. Your teenager is probably already feeling guilty and ashamed. Be alert to the possibility that unpleasant things may have happened during the evening. Adopt a fact-finding approach, rather than a judgemental one. Opening with, "What happened yesterday? Would you like to tell me?" can pave the way for a discussion. Start by listening to your teenager. Then say, clearly and calmly, that partying with alcohol is unacceptable to you. Let your teenager understand that everyone can make mistakes without becoming their mistakes.



## Rules

Had you and your teenager already come to an agreement on alcohol? If your teenager has broken the agreement, tell them how worried you are when this happens, but without guilt-tripping them. If you haven't talked about alcohol before, this is a good opportunity to set your course going forward. And when your child subsequently sticks to your agreement – show appreciation. It's not always easy saying no to your friends!

## Consequences

It might be a good idea to establish what the consequences will be if your child breaks an agreement before they do so. The consequences need to be logical and proportional if the teenager is to learn something from them. A logical consequence is one that's relevant to the situation. They might, for example, not be allowed to go to the next party, or that they'll be picked up early. Avoid empty threats. If you establish a consequence, you should be prepared to follow through on it – this creates clarity and trust.



# Useful contacts

## **ALKOHOLHJÄLPEN**

Tel. 020-84 44 48. For anyone thinking about their own or someone else's alcohol habits. Find out more: [alkoholhjalpen.se](http://alkoholhjalpen.se)

## **BRIS SUPPORT LINE FOR ADULTS ABOUT CHILDREN**

Tel. 077-150 50 50. The BRIS support line takes calls from adults who want to talk about issues involving children and young people. Find out more: [bris.se/for-vuxna/kontakta-oss/bris-vuxentelefon/](http://bris.se/for-vuxna/kontakta-oss/bris-vuxentelefon/)

## **BUP**

Childhood and adolescence psychiatric services (BUP) can provide support if you're worried about your teenager. Search online and contact your local clinic.

# Find out more

## **1177**

Information and support in connection with alcohol and other drugs. Find out more: [1177.se](http://1177.se)

## **BARNDOM UTAN BAKSMÄLLA**

Barndom utan baksmälla ("A Hang-over-Free Childhood") is aimed at children who are suffering as a result of adults' drinking. Find out more: [barndomutanbaksmalla.se](http://barndomutanbaksmalla.se)

## **CAN**

The Swedish Council for Information on Alcohol and Other Drugs – CAN. Find out more: [can.se](http://can.se)

## **DRUGSMART**

Statistics for alcohol and other drugs. Find out more: [drugsmart.se](http://drugsmart.se)

## **FÖRÄLDRALINJEN**

Tel. 020-85 20 00. For anyone who wants a sounding board about their role as a parent, or who is worried about either their own child or a child in their circle. Find out more: [mind.se/hitta-hjalp/foraldralinjen/](http://mind.se/hitta-hjalp/foraldralinjen/)

## **MASKROSBARN**

Support for young people growing up with parents who have mental health or alcohol issues. Offers a chat function and support sessions, etc. Find out more: [maskrosbarn.org](http://maskrosbarn.org)

## **TRYGGA BARNEN**

For young people living closely with someone who has problems with alcohol, drugs, or mental health issues. Find out more: [tryggabarnen.org](http://tryggabarnen.org)

## **FOLKHÄLSOMYNDIGHETEN**

The Public Health Agency of Sweden – Folkhälsomyndigheten – provides information, news, and statistics for alcohol and other drugs. Find out more: [folkhalsomyndigheten.se](http://folkhalsomyndigheten.se)

## **FULL KOLL**

Information and support about alcohol, drugs, and teenagers. Find out more: [fullkoll.nu](http://fullkoll.nu)

## **IQ**

Information and support. IQ is a subsidiary of Systembolaget. Find out more: [iq.se](http://iq.se)

## **OM SYSTEMBOLAGET**

Information and facts about alcohol and health. Find out more: [omsystembolaget.se](http://omsystembolaget.se)

## 4 ways to say, “No”

There are times when the kindest thing you can say is, “No.” Here are a few ways to refuse to buy alcohol for someone else.

### **Share your concerns**

Be honest about your concerns. Tell them that you're worried and concerned about what might happen if you buy alcohol for them.

### **It's illegal**

Tell them that it's illegal to buy alcohol for a minor and can result in you being fined or going to prison for up to two years.

### **Personal experience**

Many people regret what they did when they were drunk. Sound familiar? Talk about your own experiences with alcohol and why it's not a good idea for you to buy it for them. Or for your child to drink.

### **Play the health card**

The risk of alcohol problems down the line declines for every year you put off your drinking debut. Young brains are more sensitive to alcohol than adult ones. Plus alcohol affects exercise outcomes and impacts your heart and liver.

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