



## Chris Herren Parent and Caregiver Resources

Studies show that parents influence whether and when adolescents begin drinking, as well as how their children drink. Family policies about adolescent drinking in the home and the way parents themselves drink are important. For instance, if you choose to drink, always model responsible alcohol consumption. What else can parents do to help minimize the likelihood of their adolescent choosing to drink? And if drinking does occur, how can parents make sure it doesn't become problematic? Below are some helpful tips:

- Talk early and often, in developmentally appropriate ways, with children and teens about your concerns—and theirs—regarding alcohol. Adolescents who know their parents' opinions about youth drinking are more likely to fall in line with their expectations.
- Establish policies early on and be consistent in setting expectations and enforcing rules. Adolescents do feel that parents should have a say in decisions about drinking. They maintain this deference to parental authority as long as they perceive the message as legitimate. Consistency is central to legitimacy.
- Work with other parents to monitor where kids are gathering and what they are doing. Being involved in the lives of adolescents is key to keeping them safe.
- Work in and with the community to promote dialogue about underage drinking and the creation and implementation of action steps to address it.
- Be aware of your state's laws about providing alcohol to your own children or anyone underage.
- Never provide alcohol to someone else's child. Children and adolescents often feel competing urges to comply with and resist parental influences. While younger children typically lean toward compliance, adolescents tend to shift toward resistance as they prepare for adulthood. With open, respectful communication and explanations of boundaries and expectations, parents can continue to influence their children's decisions well into adolescence and beyond.

### Discussion Prompts

As you reflect and process what you heard during Chris Herren's presentation with your student, you can use the following prompts to help guide your conversation:

- During the presentation, what feelings came up for you? Was there anything specific that struck you?
- Chris Herren talked about the different pressures he felt from society, his family, and himself. Are there pressures you feel right now? Can you describe how this feels for you and how you manage this pressure?

- Many people who are struggling with mental health, substance use, or addiction have a hard time reaching out and asking for help. Why do you think this is? What might prevent someone from reaching out?
- What does it mean to you to belong? What do you believe are the consequences of feeling like you don't belong?
- Like many teens, Chris struggled to love and accept himself and turned to alcohol to manage and cope with intense and painful emotions. When we learn and practice strategies to express and manage our inner struggles, we are better equipped to manage life's challenges. What are some of the ways that you give voice to your thoughts and feelings?
- What are some of the ways you can release the mental and emotional pressures you feel inside?

### **Additional Resources**

- [Partnership to End Addiction](#) - Resources include prevention information, ebooks, conversation guides, and support tools including a parent helpline and texting app called Help & Hope.
- [Herren Project](#) - Support to help individuals and families live healthy and fulfilling lives free from the effects of alcohol and drug addiction.