

# STAND OUT POUR IT OUT.

## NO EXCUSE TO DRINK

The teen years are a period of high stress and drastic change for youth. When they start worrying about things like grades, friends, fitting in, and/or physical appearance, they sometimes turn to alcohol in an attempt to escape their problems. Between the ages of 11 and 18, we are particularly susceptible to outside influences like peers, family members, and the media. Life events such as transitioning from middle school to high school, breaking up with a significant other, moving, or parents divorcing are also major factors. It's important within these circumstances to remember who our real friends are, that things will get easier, that there are social groups to be found in sports and extracurriculars, and that drinking is not a solution.

Here are some strategies to help you and your friends manage peer pressure:

- Keep yourself busy with activities that don't involve alcohol
- Find and maintain friendships with people who don't drink
- Be aware that people often exaggerate their actions to appear cool; they likely aren't drinking as much as they say they are
- Develop a plan ahead of time to turn down offers of alcohol
- Use your parents as an excuse to leave or turn down a drink
- Talk to a trusted adult about ways to avoid drinking
- Educate yourself on alcohol and choose to stay sober

We sometimes fall victim to FOMO ("fear of missing out"), especially when our friend groups expand on social media and our network grows. Teens who see others posting about partying and drinking on the weekends are more than three times as likely to try drinking for themselves. Social media often portrays high-risk behaviors in a positive light and neglects to help us understand the consequences.

