

Messages for This and All Seasons

The holidays can be a beautiful time of year, filled with the lights of the season, and the anticipation that all things are possible. There are the challenges of finding just the right way to express your love and appreciation for family and friends, and the joy of knowing you are giving just the right gift, whether it is bought or made.

This season in particular also brings stress, especially for families who don't feel they have "enough to give" or for families where there can be old resentments that have never been resolved. This year there are job losses, home foreclosures and diminishing bank accounts. One way that many people are known to deal with stress is by using alcohol or other drugs. Alcohol in moderation is fine, but for some people, additional stress can push moderation into the realm of unsafe.

On Dec 4, The Natick Alliance for Substance Abuse Prevention (www.NatickNASAP.com) held its second forum on Youth Substance Abuse and revealed a list of the **Top Ten Messages for Youth about Alcohol**. The list was created by members of the community who attended a forum in May 08. While the messages were created for youth, many of the messages on the list are applicable to returning college students and adults as well.

10. Follow your interests. You can have fun without alcohol.
9. Parents in Natick do watch out for each other's children.
8. Never leave your drink unattended.
7. Know your family alcohol history.
6. Be mindful of the situations you are in.
5. Call or text any time, if you are in an unsafe situation.
4. Your actions and choices have consequences.
3. Make good decisions and healthy choices: Be safe!
2. Take care of yourself and your friends.
1. NEVER drink and drive or get in a car with someone who is impaired.

As the holidays approach, please remember the best gifts we can give to each other don't cost anything-forgiveness, kindness and good health.

Have a safe and healthy holiday season.

Sincerely,

Erica Dinerman
Coordinator, Natick Youth Substance Abuse Initiative