



Deborah Burke Henderson (SADD)
1-877-SADD-INC

Glenn Greenberg (Liberty Mutual)
(617) 574-5874

TEENS REPORT PARENTAL INATTENTION TO THEIR IMPORTANT “RITES OF PASSAGE” HAS HIGH PRICE TAG

National Study Ties Teen Transitions to Alcohol and Drug Use, Sexual Behavior, Driving Habits, and Mental Health

BOSTON (December 16, 2005) – Almost half of America’s high school teens report parental inattention to what they consider to be key transitions during their adolescence, according to a new SADD/Liberty Mutual study released today. The study suggests that this lack of timely parental involvement in important “rites of passage” comes with a high price tag: the potential for dangerous behaviors that can lead to illness, injury, or death as teens seek alternative milestones to demonstrate growing maturity and independence.

The sixth annual *Teens Today* report reveals that high school teens whose parents pay the least attention to significant transition periods (42 percent), such as puberty, school change, and key birthdays, are more likely than teens whose parents pay the most attention (18 percent) to engage in high-risk behaviors, including drinking, drug use, early sexual intercourse, and dangerous driving. They are more than twice as likely to report daily stress and appear to be twice as likely to report being depressed and bored.

“In a culture largely devoid of formal ‘rites of passage,’ and too often unobservant of the few that exist, young people may make up their own. Far too frequently they include drinking, drugging, and other potentially destructive behaviors,” said Stephen Wallace, chairman and chief executive officer of the national SADD organization. “By paying attention to the important transitions of adolescence, parents can make it less likely that poor choices will become their child’s self-constructed mileposts along the path to adulthood.”

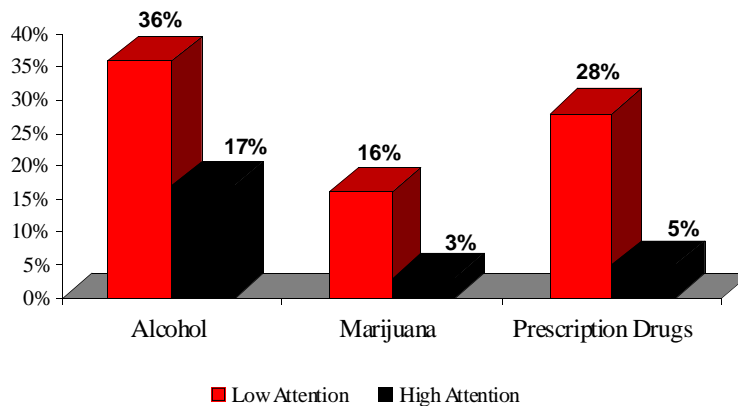
Other important transitions cited by teens included receiving a driver’s license, obtaining their first car, graduating from high school, and dating a first boyfriend or girlfriend.

Teens Today – 2

Alcohol, Drugs and Sex

Teenagers in the ninth through 12th grades who report high levels of parental attention (defined as communicating about and recognizing or celebrating important adolescent “life events”) are significantly less likely than those who report low levels of parental attention to use alcohol and marijuana or to have ever illegally used prescription drugs.

Teen Risky Behaviors by Parental Attention



The data also shows that these teens are more likely to delay sexual intercourse and some other sexual behaviors.

Safer Behind the Wheel

The *Teens Today* research highlights the effect of parental attention on another significant teen rite of passage: driving. Teen drivers who report high levels of parental attention are significantly more likely than those who report low levels of parental attention to say they never speed (45 percent vs. 14 percent). The data also suggests that these teens are more likely to wear seat belts while driving and are less likely to drive while impaired or to ride in a car with an impaired driver.

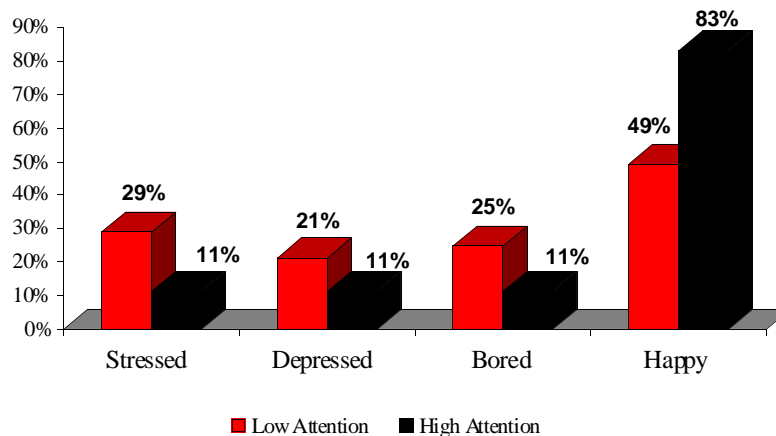
“It is clear from this exciting new research that adequately noting the important times in their children’s lives – such as the transition to driving age – is a necessary, and potentially lifesaving, exercise,” said Paul Condrin, Liberty Mutual executive vice president, Personal Market. “Motor vehicle crashes are the number-one killer of young people ages 15-20 in this country, and a large number of these deaths – 38 percent of males and 25 percent of females – involve speeding,” he added, citing 2004 statistics from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Teens Today – 3

Mental Health

Teens in the low parental attention category appear to be more than twice as likely to report regularly feeling stressed, depressed, and bored. Conversely, teens in the high parental attention category are significantly more likely to say they feel happy every day or almost every day.

Teen Emotional States by Parental Attention



What Changed

American culture has been largely stripped of the formal demarcations of significant life changes that marked passage for earlier generations and still form the basis for transition and celebration in other cultures. Seeking affirmation of growth and movement toward maturity, many young people then create their own demarcations involving alcohol and other drug use, early and intimate sexual behavior, and dangerous driving – traditions that leave them at risk.

Why This Is Important for Families

Teens Today research makes clear the incredibly influential role that parents *can* play in guiding their teenage children toward safe, healthy choices. SADD and Liberty Mutual provide tools to help parents in this cause: “Three Tips for Teen Transitions” and “Guidelines for Good Family Communication” are available at www.sadd.org and www.libertymutualinsurance.com. Additional key findings from this year’s *Teens Today* study also are available online.

Teens Today – 4

Methodology

Atlantic Research and Consulting, a division of FIND/SVP, conducted in-depth interviews with teens in Phoenix and focus groups and in-depth interviews in Boston, Minneapolis, San Francisco, Houston, and Miami. The findings in the report are based on the completion of 1,968 online interviews (984 parents and a corresponding teenager for each parent). Study results for each group (teen and parent) can be interpreted at a 95% confidence interval with +/- 3% error margin. Analyses of survey subgroups are subject to wider error margins. Percentages in the report may add to more or less than 100% due to rounding error or occasions when multiple response answers were accepted. Minor statistical weighting was applied to the teen data.

Research Partners

SADD, Inc. (Students Against Destructive Decisions) is the nation's preeminent peer-to-peer youth education organization, with thousands of chapters in middle schools, high schools, and colleges. With a mission of preventing destructive behaviors and addressing attitudes that are harmful to young people, SADD sponsors programs that address issues such as underage drinking, substance abuse, impaired driving, and teen violence, depression, and suicide.

Liberty Mutual Group is a leading global multi-line group of insurance companies whose largest line of business is private passenger auto, based on 2004 net written premium. "Helping people live safer, more secure lives" since 1912, Liberty Mutual is the eighth-largest personal lines writer and fifth-largest commercial lines writer in the U.S., based on 2004 direct written premium.

###