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Dr. Mayer's Memo

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Proms, Parties, and Dances... Oh My!

This is the season for proms, 8th grade graduation dances, and other transition parties.

I have spoken at many schools to prepare parents and students for these events. The enclosed outlines for both parents and students summarize a good reminder for both the parent and the student of guidelines to follow.

Feel free to copy each sheet and distribute. Please elaborate on the points outlined by filling in your own thoughts.

Remember, these sensationalistic presentations by the DARE officer or other groups that show videos of car crashes or other such tragedies have been shown by research to be of minimal use. Instead of these "dog and pony" shows, straightforward education, orientation and rule setting by the school for students and parents is the most effective. It is most powerful and effective when it comes from you. The enclosed simple guidelines are offered to that end.

Finally, follow through with rule violations is paramount. All eyes are on you in dealing with the prom/party night offender(s). The floodgates open when you don't act on your own rules.

The enclosed apply to elementary school events as well as high school events. The best prevention is not to scare young people, but to teach by setting guidelines through good orientation and follow through on the limits you set.

Be scientific---not sensationalistic.

Prom Tips for Students

HAVE FUN:

- This is one of those events that is a once in a lifetime occurrence don't do negative things to ruin it. The memories last forever.
- Drinking and drugs blur memories and prevent you from enjoying this great event.
- It is sad if you feel like you have to get high to have fun at this event. Why? You should feel great about this night—dressed up, looking great, a great evening.

LET YOUR PARENTS INTO THE FUN:

- Put yourself in their shoes. Parents are proud of their kids and want to share in the joy of the evening. Relax and let them enjoy it also.
- You will have fewer hassles from your parents if you let them into your plans.
- Talk to your parents and establish “rules” for them on how to behave. You can ask them to do and not to do certain things so you're not embarrassed. But if they don't hear it from you, how can they act differently.

BE IN CONTROL:

- Don't let others determine how and if you are going to do something. Be the leader of yourself. Remember that you will have this memory forever.
- Most trouble starts by not being in control of you.
- Drugs and alcohol are certain ways to be out of control and a bad time will result. Don't be pushed into anything.

BE SMART:

- You know what is right and wrong—don't make bad choices.
- Remember that this is a school event—you will have consequences from school if trouble occurs.
- Why risk your education and graduation over a stupid choice. Be Smart!
- Traditionally this is the event that marks your entrance into adult society—don't act like a child. Remember—“Act like a child—get treated like a child.”

Prom Tips for Parents

PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR TEEN:

- Don't just take pictures. Be a part of the event.
- Talk to your teen before the event—its never too late.
- Get the itinerary of the evening. There is nothing wrong with this.
- Talk to the other parents. Don't fall for the famous, "Tim's parents say its OK."

PARTICIPATE:

- Be eager to help plan the event. Good attitude = "How can I help?" This brings you into the event.
- Guide your child into good choices for the evening.
- Help plan an after dance event with the school or without.
- Don't take for granted that kids will know what to do or how to plan.

HAVE SOME CONTROL:

- "Act like a child get treated like a child" This night no different.
- Base the amount of control you exert on this night on past behaviors of your teen- if they are irresponsible all year they are probably going to be irresponsible on this night. Prom is a great learning device for the future.
- You can control by money-transportation-curfew-activities.
- Other tricks of parenting. Talk to the limo drivers; call the restaurant, etc.

DO NOT SUPPORT NEGATIVE BEHAVIORS:

- No Hotels. Nothing good happens here.
- No drinking or drugs. (See my comments to the students)
- No sex. Obvious.
- These behaviors are not an expectation of the evening.

WATCH YOUR LANGUAGE:

- Watch how you talk about having fun. Don't kid about drinking, getting "ripped", sex or drugs. Nobody is funny when they are under age and drunk.
- Watch how you talk about relatives or friends and how they have fun in negative ways. Don't even tell negative 'old war' stories. You're not a professional comedian, so don't try to be.
- Watch sarcasm and put-downs of the dates, evening, event, banquet hall, school, etc. It's their night—don't spoil it with needless comments.

BE SMART:.....Be Aware