



By Gregory Ramey, PhD, child psychologist at Dayton Children's and *Dayton Daily News* columnist

## Questions from readers

### Question:

My son is graduating in a few weeks and has been invited to lots of graduation parties. I'm concerned about his safety. He occasionally drinks, which I know is normal for his age. I'm considering having a few of the parties at my house where I can supervise his alcohol consumption and make sure the kids get home safely. Am I wrong?

### Answer:

Providing alcohol to teens is dumb and illegal. You are placing yourself and these kids at substantial risk.

Your letter lists only two options --- provide alcohol at home, or let your son go to parties where you expect him to drink and drive. There is another option. He can choose to be a responsible person who makes good decisions about his own safety and that of others.

I realize that when your son is away at school, you will have little influence over what he does. However, for these next several weeks when he lives at home, you need to be a role model for doing what's right, not what is fashionable or convenient.

By the way, why would you ever let your son drive your car after he's been drinking?

### Question:

My 5-year-old doesn't have any friends. Her kindergarten teacher says she does wonderful in school, interacts great with other children, and is progressing well academically. However, other parents never call for "play dates" and my daughter seems fine either just playing by herself or being with me and her dad. Is this something I should worry about?

**Answer:**

Given the positive report from the kindergarten teacher, I wouldn't be concerned. Children develop in different ways, and some are simply more social than others. The fact that your daughter enjoys being around her parents rather than playing with other kids is not a concern. If you haven't done so already, you can involve her in group recreational activities such as sports, dance, gymnastics, or other events where she can begin to make peer friendships.

**Question:**

Is there an age at which children should be given chores? I think childhood is a time to play and enjoy life without the burden of excessive responsibilities but my husband argues otherwise. He was made to do things as a young child and thinks that's the way we should raise our boys. Your opinion?

**Answer:**

I agree with your husband on this one. From an early age, and I think kindergarten is about the right time, children should be given modest responsibilities to help them learn that they are part of a family unit. The world does not revolve around them. They are part of and contribute to making a family work, which means enjoying the good times as well as doing such modest tasks such as clearing the table, making a bed, or helping out in the garden with mom and dad.

These chores do not have to be negative experiences for kids, but actually can be helpful ways to help connect them with their family.

**Gregory Ramey, Ph.D., is a child psychologist and vice president for outpatient services at The Children's Medical Center of Dayton. For more of his columns, visit [www.childrensdayton.org/ramey](http://www.childrensdayton.org/ramey).**