



CENTRE COUNTY PREVENTION COALITION
A SAMHSA Supported Drug-Free Community Coalition
Led By Centre County Drug and Alcohol



ARTICLE 24 – August 27, 2008 – Media Influences on Values

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In 2001, pre-teens and teens listened to music between 3 and 4 hours per day. Any caregiver or teacher can tell you that innovations in computer, cell phone, and gaming systems and the introduction of the portable iPod™ in 2001 means that most teens are plugged in more frequently today. Music downloads have taken access, portability, and selection well beyond the limited AM and FM radio that older generations remember. What is the influence of all this listening time?

It has been reported that teens consider musicians their heroes more frequently than athletes and rate the influence of music higher than religion or literature. According to the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, some teen music lyrics glamorize the abuse of drugs and alcohol, present suicide as a “solution”, depict violence, dwell on Satanism and sacrifice, and describe harmful sexual practices. It is important that adults listen to teen music - borrow your youth’s iPod™, let them pick the station in the car, listen to their phone ring tone - and talk about what you are hearing and your family’s values.

Music affects emotions and is used to enhance, change, or intensify moods. Recent attention has been given to Emo, short for hardcore emotive or emotional, music and culture. The movement arose from 1980’s hardcore punk. Emo culture embraces a drama connected with self-injury, prescription swapping, dark hair and dress, and introversion. Preferring Emo music, just like heavy metal, is not a concern. However, troubled teens may gravitate to this style of music. The angry, depressive, and violent lyrics of Emo and heavy metal music may indicate risk for teens already alienated, depressed, suicidal, using substances, or encountering family or school problems. Show concern if youth isolate themselves or demonstrate other risk signs. Can Help (1-800-643-5432) can direct you to confidential resources if needed.

As caring adults, age may make it harder for us to be hip, but it is easier for us to educate ourselves and guide youth in making healthy music choices:

- Expose youth to different types of music and music from different countries an early age. Music can teach about history and cultures.
- Parent advisory warnings, adopted in 1990 by most music companies to satisfy Congressional demands, are voluntary. Reports have shown that the warnings are included less than a third of the time, even when lyrics are explicit or violent. Listen to your child’s music and be knowledgeable of the lyrics. For older, more refined ears, deciphering the lyrics may not be easy, but an online search often results in a readable version.
- Set limits regarding the music your youth can listen to and use objectionable material as an opportunity to explain your family’s values.
- Listen to and communicate with teens about their music choices. Music can be in tool in initiating dialogue and understanding across generations. Talk openly about their musical interests, your musical taste and experience, and their perceptions of the meaning of lyrics.

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