

# 18 AND WILD: THE LIFE OF AN INDEPENDENT CHILD

When children start to mature and progress into young adulthood, they tend to spend more time away from their parents to explore relationships and activities. It can be a worrying period for some parents as they might feel a loss of control over their children's schedule. Questions such as "are they mixing with the right company?" and "what are they doing out there at this hour?" may arise. Naturally, concerned parents still want to play a prominent role in their children's lives despite them approaching adulthood.

In this article, we explore some common activities that young adults are engaged in that might require additional supervision from parents. As youths approach adulthood, they might feel endowed with a sense of independence and could stray into undesirable practices due to less intervention from their parents. We will also discuss how parents can continue to ensure that their children make wise choices in life even as they start to mature.



**18 IS AN EXCITING AGE FOR THE CHILD AND THERE ARE MANY TEMPTATIONS TO LEAD HIM ASTRAY BUT WITH THE RIGHT BALANCE OF INDEPENDENCE AND GUIDANCE, YOU CAN STILL HELP YOUR CHILD TO MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICES IN LIFE.**

## DRINKING SESSIONS

18 is the legal drinking age in Singapore and it may be tempting for some youths to try the intoxicating substance for the first time once they turn 18. When urged on by their friends, youths may consume alcohol at social gatherings such as football matches or birthday celebrations in order to blend into the crowd. Left unsupervised, it could lead to binge drinking, which is another problem that harms both the abuser and his family.

For more information on binge drinking, visit <http://www.hpb.gov.sg/HOPPortal/>

## OF CLUBS AND PUBS

Nightspots or entertainment outlets with loud music and dazzling lights are common venues that young adults frequent to relieve their stress or to hang out with their friends. It is perfectly fine to indulge in some fun once in a while. However, there are incidents where drugs are being offered and consumed at such premises or outside. When offered, your child might give in due to various reasons such as curiosity, the pressure to conform or the influence of alcohol. Although the authorities conduct spot-checks at these nightspots and entertainment outlets, it is still important for you as a parent to play your part. Pay close attention and if you notice a sudden change in his behaviour, find an opportunity to have a conversation with him to find out what is going on in his life.

## MASS SOCIAL EVENTS

Countdown parties and other mass congregation events allow youths to let their hair down and enjoy the company of friends. However, some irresponsible partygoers could also be involved in illegal substance abuse thus creating a negative impression for less discerning youths.

At a stage when your child is seeking more independence, yearning to stand out from the crowd and finding ways to look trendier, it may seem difficult for you as a parent to remain connected to your child's social life. In spite of these psychological changes in your child, there are ways that you can still encourage him to make the right life choices. Here's how:

## SHOW MORE INTEREST IN HIS SOCIAL LIFE

You can participate more in his social life and find out what is happening by enquiring about his outings with friends or sharing your opinions about the latest trends such as popular movies or music. This way, you are also improving the communication between both parties.

## TAKE PART IN A COMMON INTEREST

Find a common interest and participate in the same activities so that your child feels motivated to connect to you voluntarily. Activities can be as simple as exercising together.

## TREAT YOUR CHILD LIKE AN ADULT

It is important to start treating your child like an adult because this is the stage where he has to handle greater responsibilities. These heavier responsibilities also inculcate in him the value of good decision-making.

## PROVIDE PROPER GUIDANCE

Learn to be more interested and accepting rather than constantly pointing out mistakes. If there is a need to say 'no' to something, explain the rationale behind it so that it becomes a complete learning process.

## LEARN FROM OTHER PARENTS

Engage in networking sessions where parenting tips are shared and discussed. This will allow you to listen and learn from other parents who are raising or have raised children in the same age group. You can learn from the real life experiences of others and might be able to find solutions to similar issues you are facing with your child at home.