

Here's a pop quiz: What is one of the major differences between the energy drinks known as Tilt and Full Throttle? You may not know the answer, but your kids just might.

"Tilt" contains alcohol, "Full Throttle" doesn't.

Alcohol companies have jumped on the energy drink bandwagon in a big way, churning out alcoholic beverages such as "Sparks," "Bud Extra," "Rockstar 21" and "Tilt" that often are packaged in ways similar to non-alcoholic energy drinks popular with many young people.

Companies frequently market the alcoholic energy drinks as ways to fuel all-night partying. This despite a recent report that found energy drinks containing alcohol are a serious danger to young people. Among other things, caffeine, a stimulant, masks in the body the intoxicating effects of alcohol and may lead to increased risk-taking.

The alcoholic energy drink trend is part of the alcohol industry's multibillion-dollar marketing effort that saturates our culture in television, magazine, Internet and billboard messages about drinking – messages that kids are exposed to at young ages. Often, those messages – conveyed by cool, hip actors – perpetuate the misperception that everyone drinks, with no negative consequences.

Alcohol advertising has become so ever-present that it can seem commonplace and easy to overlook. And it can make the often difficult job of parenting even harder. But the fact that so much advertising exists offers parents ample opportunity to talk with their kids – early and often – about drinking and the messages they are exposed to. Here are a few tips for connecting:

- Use everyday moments, such as driving in the car or watching television, to talk with your kids about the alcohol advertising they see. Ask them how it makes them feel and whether they think the images are realistic. Helping them think critically about the ads can lessen their influence.
- Encouraging critical thinking can open a conversation about an array of important subjects, from the dangers of youth drinking to your

family's rules about it. Be prepared to share the facts about why drinking at a young age is harmful.

- Learn about energy drinks as a whole, which have exploded in popularity among youth, and discuss them with your kids. Help them understand the health effects of caffeine and the importance of moderation even when it comes to non-alcoholic energy drinks.
- If you enjoy an occasional alcoholic beverage, talk with your kids about responsible drinking by adults. Let them see you decline alcohol from time to time as well, and explain why you abstain.

For resources about talking with your kids about alcohol and other drug use, contact Oregon Partnership at 503-244-5211, or orpartnership.org.