



Drugs and Alcohol and Your Kids' Music

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Wonder what your teenager is listening to on those little white earbuds? How about 84 references to explicit substance abuse a day? Most of which, by the way, are associated with partying and sex.

About one third of the most popular songs of 2005 refer to substance abuse, according to a new analysis led by researchers at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. They took on the task of counting because they were well aware of data showing that cigarette-smoking characters in movies tend to increase smoking among teenagers. This new study, published in the February *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine*, didn't look for cause and effect. But it does give a sobering portrayal of just what's pouring into kids' ears.

There's a huge variation depending on the type of music. Pop songs almost never mentioned substance abuse, for example, while rap songs led the pack with 104.5 references per hour of song. The biggies for rap musicians were marijuana and other drugs, including cocaine. (It's hard to find a rap lyric that can be quoted on a family website, but the rappers 50 Cent and Ludacris were big that year.)

By contrast, the 33.7 references per hour in country songs focused almost exclusively on alcohol ("life looks good, good, good/Billy's got his beer goggles on"). R&B and hip-hop songs included 14 references per hour. And rock-and-rollers may have been eight miles high in the 1960s, but the Foo Fighters and Green Day, the top rockers in 2005, must have been swilling decaf: The most popular rock songs contained just 6.8 substance abuse references each hour. Even more surprising is that most of the rock references talked about negative physical consequences, like becoming an alcoholic.

Given that the average teenager listens to 2.4 hours of music a day and thus hears about 30,732 substance abuse references in music in the course of a year, should parents be ripping off the headphones and banning the Nano? No way, says Brian Primack, the pediatrician at Pitt who led the study. "At this point, since we really don't know what kind of impact there is on behavior, we don't need to have any really dramatic response." Censor music at home, he notes, and kids will inevitably find it elsewhere. Primack studies media literacy — that is, whether knowing how to

analyze the underlying motivations behind advertisements and popular media help people make more informed (and, one would hope, more healthful) choices. Better, Primack says, to teach your kids to analyze and evaluate the messages that they do hear and to realize they don't necessarily reflect the truth. "Really, they're there to sell records, not to reflect reality."

Here's a link to the Billboard 2005 charts, if you want to go that way: billboard.com/bbcom/yearend/2005/charts/index.jsp

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substance abuse choices

i think that kids listen to music for the beat and really dont even care what the words are even if they do know them by heart.

because some music i listen to refers to substance abuse but does not mean i am out abusing drugs or having multiple sex partners i think substance abuse is a choice and it is our jobs as parents to educate them aboiut substance abuse and sex

jennifer of MO

Feb 07, 2008 11:46:24 AM

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rehab song of the year

What a timely article. The Grammy award winner for best song was "rehab" by Amy Winehouse...it is unrated on iTunes, easy access to kids of course.

It's one thing to parent, its another to fight glowing endorsements of substance abuse.

Rehab lyrics:

The man said, why you think you here?

I said, I got no idea

Bob Lawn of PA

Feb 15, 2008 15:20:41 PM

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Im gonna, im gonna loose my baby

So I always keep a bottle near

Loverly.

STOP BLAMIN RAP ARTIST

LOOK DONT FUCKIN BLAME RAP ARTIST FOR WHAT YOUR KIDS IS DOIN,WE DONT HAVE NOTHIN TO DO WITH THAT.JUST RAISE YOUR KIDS RIGHT AND IT WILL ALL BE GOOD.I LISTEN TO THAT MUSIC.DOESNT AFFECT ME.

Nicholas Keith of NY

Mar 23, 2008 18:29:41 PM

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