

Decoder

Breaking down teen culture, substance abuse, and parenting



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Prom + Drama = Prama

Apr 27, 2008 by [James Ponti](#) | Categories [Advice](#), [Age Appropriate Advice](#), [Alcohol](#), [Drugs](#), [General](#), [High School](#), [Illegal Activity](#), [Prom](#), [Teenagers](#)

This clever little word play is more than a headline - it is the title of the most recent book I had published. I can say it's clever because I didn't come up with it. It was given to me along with the chance to write a book about Prom and all the inherent ups and downs, laughter and heartbreak that goes along with it. Unfortunately the last prom I had much information about took place in Jacksonville Beach, Florida in 1984. (I wore a baby blue bow tie and cummerbund, they were very eighties.)

Since I was out of date, I had to do some research. I arranged for a group of current high school seniors to walk me through their most recent prom. I also talked to the prom sponsor at my local high school and some other assorted people in the know. With all of them, I promised total discretion. I wasn't looking to tell secrets or get anyone in trouble. I just wanted to know what really happened. They were frank and open.

The writer in me was thrilled - there was a trove of information and potential plotlines.

The parent in me, however, was horrified.

The storylines that most interested me involved love, heartbreak and coming to terms with personal identity. (These tend to be major themes in my writing.) But, so much of what I was being told centered on serious [alcohol abuse](#). Apparently, there is an understanding among many teenagers that prom is the night of nights. This is the night when teenagers become adults and with that comes alcohol and sexual activity. (Often, these go hand in hand for really poor decision making.)



The schools seems to be doing a pretty good job of keeping alcohol (and drugs) away from the prom. At our local high school, students have to walk a cordon of administrators who are checking everything from breath to coordination to any other group of signals that something is wrong. Many schools also have after prom events that are completely alcohol free.

But, teenager after teenager told me about hard core drinking - mostly happening at after prom events and much of it with tacit if not explicit approval of some parents. It was this last part that really shook me. When my child goes to another teenager's house, my expectation is that the parents won't be supplying drinks. Luckily my son is still a few years from prom. During those years I'll

try to figure out how to make sure his Prama is limited to broken hearts and bad fashion decisions. If you have any suggestions as to how to do this, I'm all ears.



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