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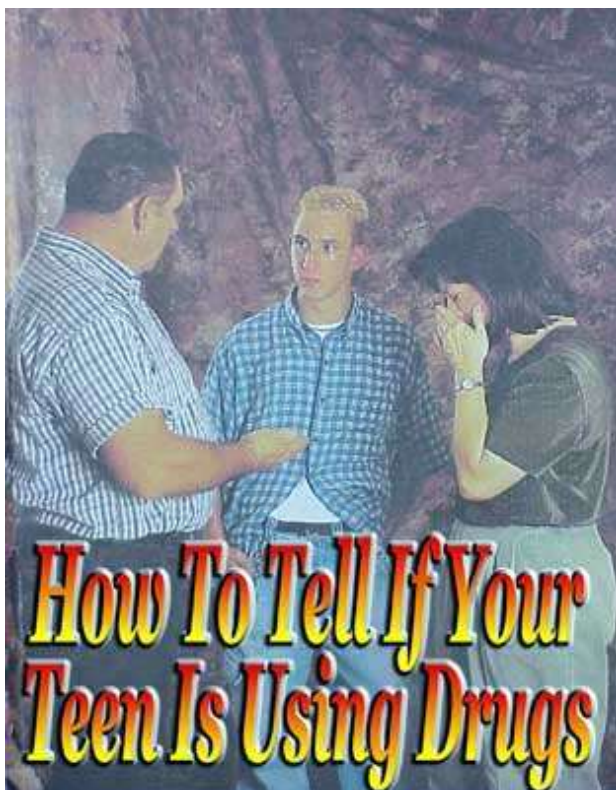
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Free Booklet: "How To Tell If Your Teen Is Using Drugs "



Nothing is more destructive to a teen and/or their family than the use of drugs. Consequently the earlier the intervention the better. The problem is that in most cases teens are using drugs for several months or even years before parents become aware of it. Even when parents do become aware of drug use, they often underestimate the extent of their child's involvement.

If you are suspicious your child may be using drugs, don't ignore the warning signs. Children seldom grasp the concepts of addiction. Most view themselves as imperious to peril. For some teens, the stress of adolescence and pressure from their peers is overwhelming, and drugs become an enticing escape from their real world.

Thirty Four **WARNING** Signs Of Drug Use

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Neglected appearance/hygiene | 18. Stealing/borrowing money |
| 2. Poor self image | 19. Change in friends |
| 3. Grades dropping | 20. Depression |
| 4. Violent outbursts at home | 21. Withdrawal |
| 5. Frequent use of Eye Wash | 22. Apathy |
| 6. Unexplained weight drop | 23. Reckless Behavior |

7. Drug Paraphernalia
8. Slurred speech
9. Curfew violations
10. Running away
11. Skin abrasions
12. Hostility towards family members
13. Chemical breath
14. Glassy eyes
15. Red eyes
16. Valuables Missing
17. Possessing unexplained valuables

24. No Concern about future
25. Defiles Family Values
26. Disrespectful to parents
27. Lying/Deception
28. Sneaky behavior
29. Disregards Consequences
30. Loss of Interest in healthy activities
31. Verbally abusive
32. Manipulative/Self-Centered
33. Lack of Motivation
34. Truancy

If many of these signs seem applicable to your child, and their behavior, do not despair. Denial and shame in response to drug abuse, for the user or their family, will only serve to be additional obstacles to overcome. Know that many young people can be helped, and there is effective help available.

Parental Awareness

Parents often say they want to know everything that is going on in their children's lives. But is that really true? Parents need to be aware that drug use generally begins months, or even years, before parents actually do become aware of their teens drug use. Certain topics, such as children's sexual behavior, underage drinking, and gang violence are subjects so uncomfortable parents often choose to ignore them, or perhaps only lightly approach them, often cloaked in denial, hoping these issues will not affect their family. Parents recognize consequences of these issues can be frightening. However, silently clinging to the denial and hope that these issues will not be part of their children's lives can create an equally devastating consequence. And no topic is any more frightening to a parent than teen substance abuse.

Parenting presents continuing challenges. Putting on blinders will never create resolutions. The subject of teenage drug abuse is very wide and multifaceted, involving many drugs and their variations. It will not be possible to cover all information regarding teenage drug abuse here, but rather it is our desire to broaden your information so that you may feel more confident about parenting decisions surrounding teenage drug use as it pertains to your children. For even when a parent does become aware of drug use, they often underestimate the extent of their child's involvement.

Why do kids use drugs?

As we search for solutions that would protect our children from the perils of substance abuse, the questions arises as to why they would ever want to use them at all. From an adult perspective the repeated question is, "Who's to blame?" Often looking to transfer responsibility, the adult population frequently points the finger of blame outward. Depending on who you ask you may hear a range of criticism that includes the media, peer influence, lack of supervision from school officials, drug pushers, law enforcement's lack authority, law enforcement's overreaction, kid's role models, parental indulgence, to lack of parental involvement. There is no denying that these can be contributing factors, as outside influences can be very powerful. But to ascribe blame solely on outside influences would be not only an exaggeration, but would be saying our kids are nothing more than victims of circumstance and thus would remove them from the accountability of their own choices. Where adults tend to look outward for 'the answers', the kid's explanations tend to point more towards themselves. They tend to explain it from a more personal choice, something inside them urging them on; wanting to fit in, a curiosity, or need for excitement.

Understanding the teenage perspective holds important keys. There are many pressures teens deal with on a daily basis. When kids are asked why they began using drugs, they do not look outward to outside influences. Rather their reasons include those similar to the following responses:

- They want to fit in, to feel part of the group

- To rebel against adult authority
- To escape their problems
- To hide their feelings of inadequacy, and low self esteem
- The thrill and excitement of taking a risk
- Wanting to feel grown up

The ‘Gateway’ Drugs

Most adolescents do not begin with the so-called hard drugs such as cocaine, crystal meth or heroin. Usage generally begins with drugs that are much more easily accessible and, in the adult population, are legal; nicotine and alcohol. Usage frequently begins with easy access to these in the home, be it the home of their family, friend or relative. Tobacco and alcohol are believed, by many experts, to be the gateway or entrance to a path towards drug abuse.

Generally, even teens recognize the serious health risks associated with smoking. Yet, if they are willing to smoke, it's an easy link to drinking alcohol. By this time, they have demonstrated they are risk-takers so the obvious next level is to marijuana. From there it can be a dangerous, even deadly spiral towards other drugs, and the destructive behaviors that go along with them.

Understanding Addictive Behavior

No matter what drug is involved, the disease of addiction appears to follow a predictable course. Typically, the user begins out of some level of curiosity. If the initial experience produces pleasurable results, the individual will more than likely move on to recreational use, such as with friends, at parties or on the weekends. As they come to enjoy the drug more and more, it is inevitable that the usage will increase, such as using during the week on a regular basis. Soon, their lives become more and more centered around getting the drug and finding opportunities to use it. It begins to interfere with relationships, school, work, and other formerly productive areas of interest in their lives. By now the drug-dependency, the addiction, have taken control, and the individual is unable to function without the drug. If there is not a physical addiction, there is most certainly a psychological dependency upon their drug of choice. And if their drug of choice is not easily accessible, they will resort to whatever it takes to obtain that drug.

Marijuana - What You Need to Know

The National Institute on Drug Abuse reports that marijuana is the illegal drug most often used in this country. Studies show nearly 50% of teenagers try marijuana before they graduate high school. Many parents of teens experimented with marijuana in their college days, and now find it difficult to talk to their kids about the use of marijuana. But today, marijuana use begins at a much younger age and there is a much more potent form of marijuana available to the kids today.

Kids site their use of marijuana as a way for them to cope with life's problems, to deal with anxiety, anger or depression, a way to escape, something to do so as to ease boredom. Long-term studies of high school students appear to demonstrate a pattern that few young people use other drugs without first having tried marijuana. Of itself then, marijuana is a gateway drug.

The Silent Epidemic - Huffing

There are over 1,000 common household and classroom products that can be used as inhalants, according to the National Institute of Drug Abuse. Huffing is a form of drug abuse that is on the rise with our young people at an alarming rate. These products are so common, you most likely would not be alarmed if you saw a teen buying them. After all, would you stop to realize that something as seemingly harmless as hairspray, whipped cream or air freshener could be used as harmful drugs? These products typically contain gases such as butane or toluene, which can harm the liver, kidneys and bone marrow, and also cause brain damage.

Most huffers begin very young. According to a study by The Cape Cod Islands Partnership to Reduce Substance Abuse it was found that 1 out of 5 students had tried 'huffing' by 7th grade. And inhalants were found to be the 3rd most abused substance, behind tobacco and alcohol, in the 12-14 year old age group, per the National Institute on Drug Abuse. A California physician, who lost his 13 year old son to huffing spray-can propellants said he knew more about inhalants than most parents, yet there were important things he didn't know. "I didn't know about Sudden Sniffing Death. I didn't know about the brain damage." He also said he didn't know it was habituating, and that it wouldn't be easy for his son to stop. Kids can die from abusing inhalants repeatedly, or even just once.

States a Wichita Juvenile Court Judge, " . . . I see a lot of kids coming into court in all kinds of trouble and all kinds of problems. The one group of kids that scares me the most are kids using inhalants, or huffing as they call it." Would you recognize the warning signs of huffing?

- Chemical smell on child or child's clothing
- Correction fluid on nose, fingers, or clothing
- Markers in pockets
- Red eyes, nonsensical talk, irritability
- 'Drunk' appearance, slurred speech
- Unusual breath odor
- Decreased appetite
- Frequent headaches
- Sores around mouth
- Lack of concentration
- Low grades, school absences

Meth - The Equal Opportunity Destroyer

Crystal meth, crank, speed, glass, ice . . . met amphetamine drugs go by many names and have many forms. Typically, it is found in powder or crystallized forms and can be smoked, inhaled, eaten or shot-up intravenously. Users are referred to as 'tweakers'. It's very available and cheap to buy, and produces an extended 'high' making it extremely tempting to the young and foolish.

Meth speeds up the central nervous system causing physical and psychological effects that, at first, seem pleasurable: increased alertness and energy, decreased need for sleep, euphoria and increased sexuality. Meth is highly addictive as users often continue using to avoid the inevitable 'crash' when the drug's euphoric effects begin to wear off. Meth tricks the body and brain into believing it has unlimited energy supplies, which is how meth users are able to stay awake for long periods of time. But these chemical imbalances in the brain and sleep deprivation result in hallucinations, extreme paranoia and often bizarre, violent behavior. Once meth entraps the user it wreaks havoc with their body from weight loss and malnutrition, to welts on the skin known as 'crank bugs', shortness of breath, hyperactivity, severe depression, paranoid delusions and suicidal tendencies.

A Letter from a Teenage Addict

I'm a fifteen year old alcoholic/addict, though I've been clean and sober for seven months now. Right now I want to persuade you not to shoot heroin or anything else. Drugs force us to cross the invisible line of fact and reality. Sometimes so often that you forget where that was, and will have trouble finding where that line used to be. When you first shoot up, you will most likely puke and feel repelled, but soon you'll try it again. It will cling to you like an obsessed lover. The rush of the hit and the way you'll want more, as if you were being deprived of air. That's how it will trap you.

Soon your money will run short and your 'suppliers' will start asking 'favors, Instead of giving you the occasional freebie, all because they know they've got you hooked and they can see the way your body aches for it. All this is part of crossing the line. Finally, when you have humiliated yourself in every way you could

possibly think of, the darker side hits; ongoing despair and deep depression.

With me, it was the thrill and the rush that made the need tolerable I felt like there was nothing without it and freedom within it. I would walk with my arms folded up so that people would not see how swollen they were from missing my vein and the with puss bubbles with a black dot on top from me poking through my vein with a needle. I still struggle with thoughts of 'were the hard times really that bad or were they part of what made them so good?' Then I realize that I was just pretending that I enjoyed the mania so that it would not hurt so bad.

Someone once described withdrawals as tiny, evil animals; chewing their way out of your skin, and as if all your pores were opening like a dehydrated plant for just one more drink of toxic water.

I paid dearly for an expensive assassin to still my life, mind and body. I am now glad it did not succeed. So please, for the love of all that is dear to you, just think before you welcome a killer into your body.

Intervention

I The goal of this booklet has been to provide an overview of teen drug abuse and to make you keenly aware of the warning signs. Again, if the warning signs indicate that intervention is necessary.

This free booklet is offered as a Public Service, for families struggling with teen challenges

For a copy of this booklet and other resources helpful for parents please call toll free...

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