

PARENT'S GUIDE TO TEENAGE DRUG ABUSE & PREVENTION

What Parents Should
Know About Teenage
Drug Addiction,
Prevention &
Rehabilitation

1. Effective Prevention
2. Drug Testing
3. How you can get them to stop
4. Marijuana and Teens
5. Girls and Depression

Issue

2008

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INTRODUCTION

Parents have a tough job. Drugs are everywhere, teens think that substances like Marijuana are harmless, and you can't watch them every minute of the day, and nor should you.

So how can parents keep kids safe, really get the message across that experimentation with drugs has some real consequences and still retain a good and trusting relationship with a teenage son or daughter? Teens surely strive for increased freedom and autonomy as you wish only to protect them from the dangers of the world.

You can't live their lives for them, but you can teach them the risks, you can get involved, and you can intervene if you do suspect or know of drug experimentation or abuse.

The best way to fight drug abuse is to never let it grab a hold in the first place, and the best time to start drug abuse prevention is as soon as kids are old enough to listen and understand.

However, teens so full of promise too often become ensnared within the pain and heartache of addiction, and for parents, watching the decline is tragic. Fortunately, parents never need sit idly by, and active and educated prevention and a strong response is always the best course of action to the threat of teen substance abuse.

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This *ChooseHelp.com* E-Book offers life-saving advice: Learn how you can prevent experimentation, learn how to recognize the signs of drug use, and learn what types of intervention and treatment are most appropriate for your situation.

Learn when rehab is needed, and learn how to select a facility that's going to work for you. Also learn about the dangers of specific drugs and the peripheral risks of drug abuse.

Get educated, get empowered and start to make a real positive, and in some cases, life saving difference.

WISHING YOU SUCCESS,

JOHN LEE

CHOOSEHELP.COM, 2008

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CHAPTER 1 PREVENTION

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Addiction and drug abuse prevention begins in the home within the family, and although parents rightly believe that peer pressure and the influence of friends exerts a powerful force during the teenage years, **kids who don't drink or use drugs cite their parents' influence as the number one factor leading them away from early abuse.** Contrarily, the number one factor influencing kids that do abuse drugs and alcohol is the perception of permissive or lenient parenting styles.

Sometimes parents do everything they can toward drug abuse prevention and ultimately end up heartbroken as their child succumbs to abuse and addiction, and some parents who make no effort in prevention have children that excel without ever experimenting with use and abuse; there are no guarantees in life and especially when parenting an adolescent, but parents do exert a major influence, and prevention always starts in the home.

PREVENTION ADVICE FOR PARENTS

Drug and alcohol abuse prevention begins with speaking to your kids about drugs. Most schools integrate some degree of drug education and drug avoidance teachings into their curriculum, but sadly, although great resources have been spent, these school-based educational programs have been found negligible in their benefits. Kids seem just as predisposed to try drugs and alcohol after participating in school and community-based drug education programs than not having been exposed to them.

Thankfully, although the message doesn't seem to stick when delivered by strangers within the school, when parents speak kids listen. Not surprisingly, kids whose parents have spoken to them about the dangers of drugs and alcohol are less likely to use or abuse drugs and alcohol as teenagers; and the best way to prevent abuse is simply through speaking to your kids, speaking early and speaking often. Parents

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need to let their children know about the dangers of drug and alcohol use, and also explain the disciplinary consequences of underage experimentation.

Parents sometimes have a difficult time initiating a discussion about drugs and alcohol, and there a number of web resources available that can help to lead parents through this sometimes awkward discussion.

STAYING INVOLVED AND ACTIVE IN YOUR KIDS' LIVES

Parents sometimes have tough time with the explorative years of their children's adolescence, and it can be difficult to maintain the same strength of connection that families easily enjoy when kids are younger. But to prevent drug or alcohol abuse and to be ready to spot it if it is occurring, parents should stay involved and active in their kids' day-to-day lives. Family activities, enjoyable for everyone, are the best way to spend time together and reinforce a modeling of healthy adult behaviors without substance use or abuse.

APPROPRIATE DISCIPLINE IN THE HOME

Discipline as drug abuse prevention does not necessarily mean draconian enforcements or authoritarian parenting styles, but it does mean that parents must set clear boundaries regarding drug and alcohol abuse, and be prepared to enact on promised punishments should teens ever break the family drug or alcohol rules.

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Drug abuse prevention begins with an open and honest dialogue with kids about the dangers and consequences of drug and alcohol use or abuse, and a part of that dialogue should include a discussion on the consequences of a violation of the family substance abuse rules. Teens often respond best to family discipline when allowed to participate in the process, when the punishments are applied consistently and with even fairness.

MODELING APPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS

Do as I say, not as I do... doesn't tend to work too well with adolescents already exploring boundaries, and although you may justify your recreational drug use or your occasional alcohol intoxications, your children may see that you are sending mixed messages. They might logically wonder why if abuse was really so dangerous their parents would be willing to risk it.

You can argue until you're blue in the face about adulthood and responsibility but teens are always quick to spot a hypocrite, and if you are modeling drug or alcohol use behaviors, your children are more likely to also partake in these behaviors.

Family drug and alcohol abuse prevention occurs best when parents model responsible drinking behaviors, and no illicit drug taking behavior at all.

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PRESCRIPTION AND OVER THE COUNTER DRUG ABUSE PREVENTION

About half of all parents initiate prevention discussions about the dangers of drugs and alcohol with their adolescent kids, and only about half of these parents are educated as to the real dangers lurking through high schools and playgrounds today.

NIDA, a governmental drug research agency, confirms that only about a quarter of all parents are even aware of the true dangers of prescription and over the counter drug use and abuse amongst teens today... which is unsettling when NIDA also reports that out of current high school students, it is estimated that 2.2 million have abused prescription or over the counter medications at some time to get high.

Kids are using pain pills, sleeping meds and over the counter cough syrups; and these drugs are as easy to get as the neighborhood pharmacy or the click of a mouse. Both kids and their parents are little educated to the true dangers and addictive properties of many of these drugs, and prescription pill addiction has become the leading drug addiction after alcohol abuse in America today.

Prevention from drug abuse no longer means simply educating your kids about the dangers of drugs bought on the corner... it now also means talking about the dangers of the corner store, the medicine cabinet and the readily accessible pills bottles passed through teenage hands.

Some of these drugs are as addictive as heroin, and since prescribed by doctors or sold by pharmacists; both kids and parents are guilty of assuming that they are somehow safer than they are.

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YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

The influence of parents factors highly in teens' decisions on substance use and abuse. Parents can never watch their kids every minute, and as teens grow they need some space to explore; but by initiating family dialogues on drug and alcohol prevention, by issuing clear rules and consequences for the violation of usage rules, by modeling appropriate sober behaviors and by staying involved as much as possible; parents can exert a strong and positive preventative influence.

Nothing is guaranteed, but parents who make prevention of drug use and abuse a priority are less likely to suffer the heartbreak of a child's abuse and addiction.

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CHAPTER 2

DRUG TESTING – SHOULD YOU?

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A very controversial and not without risks procedure, many parents do drug tests on teens they perceive to be at risk to use or who have demonstrated a history of use, and some parents simply perform prophylactic drug testing as a way to catch problems at their earliest possible opportunity.

With teens already seeking autonomy, suspicious of control efforts by parents and with fragile trust issues, the risks of drug testing include damaging a maybe tenuous parent child relationship, and the risks may also include false positives or negatives that wrongly reassure or call to action parents based on faulty drug testing equipment, evasion measures by teens, or incorrect test handling.

THE ADVANTAGES

Drug testing advocates bemoan the whole "trust" issue as a bunch of nonsense, and state as a matter of fact that all teens will lie to their parents at some time, and that kids using drugs are very likely to lie about that usage. They also point to very high statistics of illicit drug and alcohol use amongst high school students in the country as a justification for the intrusive testing.

Advocates say that the tests offer a number of benefits to parents, and possibly the greatest benefit is one of deterrence. They recommend that teens be informed of an impending test 30 days before the test is to be issued (long enough for drug metabolites to fall below the detectable levels) and after that to perform the tests on a monthly basis. Performing monthly tests as standard practice gives kids a great reason to decline when drugs are offered, and may help to lessen the influence of peer pressure towards drug use.

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Another big positive is early detection of a substance abuse problem. Kids using drugs or alcohol are not only likely to lie to their parents about use and extent of use, they are also just as likely to be self denying the existence of a problem (just as all addicts use self denial). Parents with accurate and conclusive evidence of drug or alcohol use can take action appropriate to the severity of use, and since the odds of successful intervention or treatment decline the longer the abuse is allowed to continue, parents with an early awareness of use can be in a great position to help teens overcome some very tough situations and dependencies.

Advocates also say that drug testing allows innocent teens a means to prove their good behaviors, and allows parents the concrete evidence they need to reward kids who do stay drug and alcohol free, despite the inevitable temptations and peer pressure to use.

THE RISKS

Whenever drug testing is performed against the full consent of the individual to be tested, there is a privacy rights violation. Parents do not need to worry about a violation of privacy rights in the legal sense, and are legally able to perform these tests; but there may be repercussions from teens who feel they are being unfairly tested.

Some would argue that drug testing non-compliant teens damages a sometimes already tenuous relationship, and makes the parent child relationship more combative and adversarial than it needs to be.

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The testing kits may also not be as accurate as is implied on websites selling the medical devices. A recent independent study noted that the testing kits were off by as much as 6% to 40% on false negatives depending on the drug to be tested, and they may be giving parents a false sense of security when there is in fact a problem. Also, the testing accuracy can be further reduced should parents incorrectly handle the sample, or should kids manipulate the testing process. Teens may dilute urine with water to reduce the efficacy of the tests, and may even take drug masking agents sold to beat the tests, and easily available through the internet.

Also complicating the process of non-compliant drug testing is the need to physically observe the testing. To ensure accuracy it is recommended that testers observe the performance of a urine sample...which is something that most parents and all kids will object to on some levels; and taking a hair sample may also be problematic from a teen resisting the process.

SO SHOULD YOU BE TESTING?

Family by family, and teen by teen, parents need to make individual and family appropriate decisions about whether drug testing is justified, and whether it in fact does more good than harm. The advantages of early detection and prevention do offer two compelling reasons to perform regular testing on your at risk teens, but the adversarial nature of the tests complicates an already difficult period of the parent child relationship, and may make children less likely to confide in you on other important matters.

Whether or not drug testing is used, it can never be considered the most important family strategy in the battle against drugs, and family preventative and educating

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techniques are the best ways parents can help their teen's stay drug and alcohol free. Parents need to talk with their kids about the dangers of alcohol and drugs, stay involved and alert in the lives of their kids, and most importantly, spend quality time with kids... at any stage in development.

Many parents do not use drug testing as a preventative measure, but do implement testing policies after evidence of drug use occurs; and some addictions professionals do recommend that drug testing be performed on kids who have already developed and been treated for problems with drugs or alcohol. With the dangers of relapse after treatment being so high and with the importance of early intervention in this situation, parents can almost always justify the use of drug testing.

IF YOU DO DRUG TEST YOUR TEEN...

If you do make a decision to implement a family program of drug testing, experts advise speaking candidly with your kids about your motivations for doing so and about your fears for their safety. They may not accept your rationale, but they may better respect your right to perform the tests if they are more included in the decision to implement them.

You also need to get educated on the drug testing process and methodologies. An inaccurate drug test is worse than no test at all, so you need to do some research to make sure you get a reliable test, to learn how to perform the test properly and also to learn ways that kids can beat these tests. Kids get that information from the internet...so you can too; and your family doctor or a local drug treatment facility may be a better place than the internet from which to get information about reliable and effective medical drug testing kits.

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Because the possibility of error is relatively high, a positive drug test does not necessarily mean that your child has in fact been indulging. Do not immediately enforce punitive measures unless your teen does admit to use, and get a second and more medically stringent test to confirm the initial positive result.

To best deter drug or alcohol use, the consequences of a positive result should be known to all, and parents need to ensure that they stick to promised consequences and enforce punishments for use.

Parenting an adolescent is never easy, and with all the dangers kids are exposed to it can make the best of parents anxious for the safety and wellbeing of adolescent kids. Drug testing does offer a tempting insight into the real behaviors of reticent teens, and does give parents the information they need to really help kids who may be having substance use or abuse problems.

The risks and benefits of use make the decision very complex and emotionally charged; and each parent and each family will have to make their own decision about whether drug testing their teens is the best way to protect kids through these dangerous formative years.

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CHAPTER 3

HOW TO SPOT TEEN SUBSTANCE ABUSE

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You may catch them in the act, you may get a call from the school, the police or be dealing with a positive drug-test; and then although your worst suspicions are confirmed, at least you know the truth and at least you know for sure what you are dealing with.

Arguably worse is merely suspecting drug use. Not knowing for sure, and feeling powerless to act, to make things better or to get help, always uncertain about whether you are acting appropriately.

There is nothing easy about parenting a teen through the formative years of adolescence, and drugs rightfully scare the pants off of us. And it's not as though teens are going to make an announcement of their use, or leave their rolling papers on the kitchen table. Sometimes we need to read between the lines, look for the signs, and add up the pieces.

Here are some of the signs of drug, use. Signs that don't necessarily mean drug use for certain, but signs that should cause you concern, and may require you to investigate more formally.

15 SIGNS OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE

- i. Dramatic changes in behavior. Teens will evolve throughout adolescence and you can expect some variations in behavior, but your teen is essentially still the person you know well, and dramatic shifts in personality are worrisome. If your

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normally placid kid becomes very aggressive, or your normally outgoing son becomes very withdrawn, you need to investigate why this is so.

- ii. Rolling papers, pipes, a bong, roach clips, burnt spoons etc. Drug paraphernalia is a pretty good indicator of a problem, and once teens acquire drug taking accessories, you can be sure they've passed the initial experimentation stage of use. They are not holding these things for friends. Also, if you find a bottle of eye drops while doing the laundry, you have real cause for concern. Healthy teens don't often need eye strain medication, red eyed marijuana smokers concealing use do.
- iii. Incense. A lot of teens will develop an interest in cloying and perfuming incense as they attempt to cover up the smell of drugs. Incense in the bedroom or a smell on the clothes can be a warning sign of drug use. Also, mouth wash, air fresheners etc. Like incense, if your teen suddenly develops a need for scent masking agents, you might want to wonder why all of a sudden this is so.
- iv. Teens can be a bit slow moving in the morning, but very unusual sleeping habits should cause some alarm. If your teen seems to stay awake for days on end, or sleeps for days on end, they may be using and recovering from drugs, most worryingly, crystal meth.
- v. Small burns on the thumb and forefinger; a characteristic injury caused by smoking a joint down to the very end. Nothing else causes this type of burn injury.

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- vi. Marijuana stickers or posters. A lot of teens like to advertise their usage and do so through stickers, pins on school bags and books, or through posters in the bedroom. A marijuana poster above the bed is a pretty good sign of an unhealthy interest in the drug. The code 420 always refers to marijuana smoking, and you can often see 420 stickers on teen school bags.
- vii. Seemingly talking in code or in a secretive manner with friends while you are in earshot.
- viii. A sudden change in friends, especially if long lasting good friends are discarded for a new group of seemingly less savory friends.
- ix. A sudden need for more money without much to show for it (drugs and alcohol are expensive).
- x. Signs of depression or isolation from the family. Teens do crave independence and autonomy, and will go through some phases of change, but an unusual demand for isolation in the bedroom and a refusal to participate in family activities may be a cause for concern.
- xi. A sudden drop in academic performance. When your previously A and B teen becomes a C and D teen, something is going on.
- xii. Your teen no longer participates in activities they used to find very enjoyable and rewarding. Suddenly abandoning sports, music or clubs without replacing

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these activities with anything other than "hanging out with friends" is not a good sign.

- xiii. Appearing intoxicated, an obvious one, but a lot of parents tend to explain away odd behaviors with wishful thinking. If your teen seems confused, slow and lethargic or oddly energetic and erratic...they may be high.
- xiv. Bottles of cough syrup or discarded prescription pill bottles found in their room or possessions indicate drug abuse. Additionally, you are probably not imagining things if you wonder why that pain pill or anti anxiety medication prescription needs refilling sooner than you'd expect.
- xv. They don't seem motivated to accomplish any worthwhile goals. Normal healthy teens will have interests, passions and desires to accomplish. These desires may not be academic, and they may not be interests that you approve of, but most teens have interests and activities. If your teen doesn't seem to have any, they may be abusing drugs or alcohol.

Obviously, unless you catch them in the act it's hard to be sure (unless you catch them with paraphernalia...that's a real giveaway) but the more worrisome changes in behavior and activities that you see, the more concerned you need to get.

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CHAPTER 4 TEENAGE GIRLS

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WHY MOODINESS IN TEEN GIRLS OFTEN MEANS DRUG ABUSE

It's been known for a while that teen girls suffer far greater rates of depression than do teen boys, but it's only recently that researchers have figured out why.

It turns out that girls who don't abuse drugs or alcohol are no more likely than teen boys to get depressed, but those girls that do have substance abuse problems are two and half times more likely to also get depressed.

Teen girls just seem affected differently by substance use and abuse, and since teen girls are now using drugs and alcohol more than teen boys, this co-occurring depression is certainly a big problem.

Fundamentally, girls use drugs and alcohol for different reasons than boys do. Boys on average use drugs for recreational experimentation, excitement and fun. Girls may use for these same reasons but also tend to use to better feelings of social insecurity or anxiety, to fit in with a group of peers and because certain drugs are perceived to have favorable properties for weight loss.

Also problematic is that teen girls tend to hide their use far better than teen boys do. Teen boys with substance abuse problems tend to get into fights, tend to get in trouble at school, and tend to act in ways that make their substance abuse problems apparent to all. Girls seem far better at concealing their use, are more likely to use in isolation, are more likely to just appear moody or depressed, and are far less likely to get noticed for their drug abuse. Girls with drug problems will often just shut themselves in their rooms and away from their friends and families. Watch out for this.

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BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR DEPRESSION. IT MAY BE MORE THAN JUST DEPRESSION.

Parents need to be looking for abnormal moodiness and depression. Adolescence is a challenging period, and some oscillating moods can be expected, but long lasting moodiness, social isolation and withdrawal from friends and family are not normal behaviors of adolescence and parents need to be ready to intervene should they see behaviors of concern.

Because teen girls are so adept at hiding their use behaviors they don't often get help until addiction has entrenched to such a degree as to make treatment problematic. The earlier abuse behaviors are treated the better the prognosis and parents cannot just continue to hope that worrisome behaviors represent a normal phase of adolescence.

Parents must get involved, get help, and make sure that everything is alright

Few parents ever regret overreacting to the threats of depression or substance abuse, but there are a legion of parents who only wish they could go back in time to take action before things became so tragic.

The teen years are tough, and if your teen girl shows a prolonged period of social isolation and seems depressed, you need to get some help. It may not indicate substance abuse, but depression on its own is a serious challenge in an already difficult phase of life; and since treatments for depression are so effective, there is no reason to allow her to suffer in silence. With depressive behaviors and substance abuse so closely linked, looking out for depression may be the best way you can protect your teen from the dangers of substance abuse and addiction.

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CHAPTER 5

THE REAL RISKS OF TEENAGE DRUG ABUSE

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Teens that start experimenting with drugs or alcohol run a great risk of developing a substance abuse problem or even a dependency; and even those youth who do manage to avoid addiction suffer through any involvement in drug taking behaviors.

Not only is the use and misuse of alcohol or illicit drugs a very risky behavior, it is also especially detrimental to the still developing minds and bodies of teenage users, and the negative health consequences of use are magnified in still growing adolescents.

In addition to the risks of addiction and the direct risks of physical and mental developmental delays and deficits, participation in even recreational drug or alcohol taking behaviors increases the risks for a host of peripheral social, academic, psychiatric and legal challenges; and those youths who do not engage in substance use and abuse are far better protected against a great many serious challenges during adolescence.

Parents who can keep kids from experimenting with drugs and alcohol until the age of majority protect them from a range of problems, and may even save their lives.

In addition to the risks of addiction, to chronic mental and physical health deficits and to acute overdose or poisoning; the peripheral risks of drug or alcohol experimentation include an increased risk of suicide, decreased academic performance, greater rates of mental illness, more violence both committed and experienced and a greater likelihood of traffic accidents and DUI's.

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SUICIDE AND VIOLENCE

SUICIDE

Experimentation with illicit drugs stronger than marijuana is directly correlated with an increased risk of suicidal ideation. Kids who use drugs harder than marijuana are almost 3 times more likely to self report thinking about suicide than kids who did not use drugs or alcohol.

VIOLENCE

Kids who use drugs or alcohol are far more likely to engage in violent acts, and also to experience violence committed against them.

Kids who self reported having participated in a group violent assault were twice as likely to have also used drugs or alcohol in the past year as kids who had not, and over half of all kids who reported having committed two or more types of violent assault over the past year had also used alcohol or drugs.

Estimates have over 800 000 American kids carrying handguns each year, and the odds of carrying a hand gun are greatly increased by concurrent use of illicit drugs or alcohol, and kids who had used illicit drugs were 3 times more likely than non users

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to carry a gun, kids who binge drank 4 times more likely and kids who drank heavily 5 times more likely.

Whether due to the behaviors of intoxication, association with other risk taking youths or other factors, the data clearly indicates that teens who engage in illicit drug or alcohol use are far more likely to also engage in violent acts...and the heavier the use, the more likely the violence.

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Both drug and alcohol use is directly and negatively correlated with academic performance.

Alcohol or illicit drugs are very harmful to the still developing mind, and cognitive and memory impairments can be both transient, and sadly also permanent. The greater the frequency of use the worse the academic performance, but on average, any drug or alcohol use correlates with a lower overall grade point.

Of kids who do not use alcohol or drugs 72.5% maintain an A or B average, yet only 57.7% of kids who binge drink can attain the same level of performance. 72.2 % of kids who reported not having used marijuana in the last month maintained an A or B average, while only 44.9% of kids who had used marijuana 5 or more times in the last month could maintain better than a C average.

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MENTAL HEALTH

In addition to a greatly increased risk of suicide, teens who experiment with drugs or alcohol are at a greatly elevated risk for a number of mental health conditions. Mental health challenges are always related to increased rates of substance abuse, but it seems as though teens who start using younger and who use more, are far more likely to develop psychiatric conditions that both complicate the treatment of substance abuse, and also often exacerbate substance abuse behaviors.

The younger that kids start experimenting with marijuana the greater their eventual risk for mental health challenges. Marijuana has been conclusively linked with psychosis like conditions and with anxiety and depression.

A recent study comparing the rates of mental health illness in adults with different ages of marijuana use onset revealed that youths who started using marijuana before the age of 12 were almost twice as likely to suffer from mental health challenges as those who waited until the age of 18 before experimenting. Of youths who used before the age of 12, 21% had experienced a mental health challenge in the past year.

Mental illness also exacerbates rates of drug and alcohol abuse amongst teens, and teens that experience depressive symptoms are more than twice as likely to use illicit drugs, and almost twice as likely to use alcohol.

The mind is a fragile thing, and teens who experiment with intoxication and drug or alcohol abuse too often fall victim to concurrent mental health conditions. Although substance abuse increases the risk for psychiatric conditions at any age, the very

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young are especially susceptible to increased rates of mental health illness with substance abuse.

CRIMINALITY AND DUI

Traffic accidents kill more teens than anything else, and far too many teens are involved in fatal DUI's (29% of teens killed in car accidents had been drinking alcohol).

A far greater number are involved in non fatal alcohol induced accidents and hundreds of thousands are arrested for impaired driving...and face legal repercussions. Nearly 21% of all teens aged 16 or older reported having driven under the influence of drugs in the last year, and 16% having driven under the influence of alcohol.

Almost half of all kids ever interned in a jail or detention center report last-month use of drugs or alcohol, and almost 24% of these kids report an addiction to either drugs or alcohol...far above the average for youths never involved in the criminal justice system.

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KEEPING KIDS SAFE FROM DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

Adolescence is a normal period of exploration and experimentation, and these behaviors are a necessary part of the growth and maturation process, but they also lead teens into certain dangerous and harmful behaviors. For their own safety, health and wellbeing, they need to be protected from the devastation of drug and alcohol use and abuse.

Statistics show that every year parents can keep their kids from using drugs and alcohol the better the chance of a life free from addiction and a decreased risk for a great many serious peripheral problems.

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CHAPTER 6

MARIJUANA AND TEENS

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Compared with substances like Heroin or Crack, Marijuana is no big deal... if you only smoke it in real moderation and if you wait until you are an adult with a developed mind to do so. Unfortunately, a lot of teens are smoking it in great quantities... a lot of teens are addicted to the drug.

Underaged smoking of Marijuana can inflict great harms to their still developing minds. If parents can keep kids from using the drug until after the age of 18 the risks that they will ever have a real problem with it decline dramatically. Additionally, since the risks of mental illness related to marijuana usage rise greatly with earlier ages of experimentation, the younger teens start smoking, the greater the damage done.

Prevention is the key, and preempting a problem before it emerges is always the best course of action, but even after experimentation ensues, the earlier you intervene and you earlier you stop that drug use, the better the eventual outcome, and if needed, the easier the treatment.

WHAT ARE THE TEEN-SPECIFIC RISKS OF MARIJUANA USAGE?

ADDICTION

Teens seem especially vulnerable to the addictive properties of marijuana, and with the strength of today's marijuana, too many teens get caught up in what begins as casual experimentation and ends up in dependency and pain.

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ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Teens who smoke marijuana don't do as well in school. Marijuana smoking teens are less likely to finish high school, less likely to get good grades and less likely to go to college. Smoking marijuana can seriously derail academic performance, and during a time in life when school success has such a great influence on later life success.

The teen years are a time of exploration, a time to have a lot of fun, but also a time when your job is to go to school, get good grades and move on into successful adulthood. Marijuana lowers the chances.

Marijuana decreases cognitive performance for about 24 hours after it is smoked; decreases the ability to consolidate memories and concentrate, and on tests of mathematical and verbal reasoning, marijuana smokers perform significantly worse. If you smoke daily, you are never as smart as you would otherwise be and even if you are still a motivated student (something that seems less likely with greater marijuana usage) you are not as able to perform well, not as able to learn what you need to know.

The damage done is not permanent and your mind can recover, but at the same time you can't get those years back, and if you do poorly in high school there can be long lasting and serious life consequences.

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THE RISKS OF MENTAL ILLNESS

The earlier you start using marijuana, the greater your risks of psychosis-like illnesses later in life. Teens who smoke before the age of 18 have 2-3 times the chances of experiencing a schizophrenic like condition in the their 20's. Marijuana use also seems linked with later in life depression and anxiety disorders, although the link has been less causally proven.

Marijuana usage is also linked with increased rates of teen depression, especially in teen girls. Teen girls who do develop marijuana-prompted depression are very likely to self-medicate their condition with ever more drug and alcohol abuse, further compounding the problem.

PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Marijuana decreases your ability to learn, and what you do learn tends to be state dependant learning. Essentially, you can learn while high on marijuana, but you need to be high once again to retrieve that information and to make full use of stored marijuana consolidated memory.

Marijuana also blunts emotional experiences. While high on marijuana you do not accurately experience social and emotional challenges that are essential for full emotional and social development. If you are high on marijuana enough of the time, you never learn how to deal with the challenges and social situations of life, and you never mature into a real developmentally appropriate adult. The earlier you start smoking the greater the delay, and the more you smoke the less social learning that

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is accomplished. If a teen starts smoking at 13 and becomes a daily user throughout their teens, even where they ultimately stop in their 20's, they would present in many ways with the emotional and psychosocial maturity of a 13 year old.

LEGAL RISKS

Marijuana remains an illegal substance in all states of the nation, and in some jurisdictions, even the possession of a small amount of marijuana is punishable by jail time. Additionally, having a drug conviction on your record can disclude you from eligibility for governmental student aid and other federal grant programs and may also bar you from entry into certain career fields.

We tend to minimize the risks of "mere marijuana" possession, but it is a controlled sustenance, it is illegal, and it could land you in jail.

Many schools will also enforce zero tolerance policies towards drug infractions, and mandatory suspensions and expulsions are quite common when students are found with drugs.

Smoking a single joint is very unlikely to harm anyone, but smoking a joint every day harms everyone, and when you are still a teen, still developing mentally and socially, the risks of marijuana can be great and grave.

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CHAPTER 7

CRYSTAL METH AND TEENS

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Incredibly addictive, and also one of the most destructive substances a person can put into their body, even recreational users of crystal meth are at great risk for dependency and personal tragedy. The long term health effects of crystal meth abuse are an extremely accelerated aging of the body and mind, a ruined appearance, and a severe and lasting period of psychological depression and despair. Of all the drugs out there, crystal meth is arguably the most dangerous and destructive, and it's also increasingly used by American teens today.

A recent commissioned study by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) puts the number of teens experimenting with the drug at about 3%, which is significantly higher than previous studies had indicated. Because the drug is so addictive and so incredibly destructive, the key to successful treatment and abstinence is early intervention; and parents need to be aware of the dangers presented by meth use, and on the lookout for characteristic signs of abuse.

Meth use and abuse cannot be tolerated, and parents who have any suspicions of use need to get immediate professional help and intervention.

SOME SIGNS OF METH USE

The following signs do not necessarily indicate meth use, but they may be considered strong evidence of experimentation or abuse. Parents cannot ignore warning signs of abuse, and teens need immediate intervention should they be experimenting with crystal meth.

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PARENTS SHOULD BE CONCERNED IF THEY OBSERVE:

1. Very unusual sleeping patterns. Kids using meth may stay awake for days straight and then sleep for days on end...this is not normal adolescent behavior. Teens that seem incredibly alert and energized even after having been up all night may well be using meth.
2. Nervous tics or behaviors. Scratching at the skin or twitching are warning signs of meth usage.
3. Loss of appetite and extreme weight loss. Meth users often avoid food, and as a result become emaciated.
4. Burns on the lips or fingers. Kids using meth often smoke it out of a pipe than get very hot.
5. Lying and withdrawal. If your teen is suddenly always lying or secretive about behaviors and no longer wants to spend any time with family or old friends, this can be as a result of meth usage.
6. Sudden carelessness about appearance. Teens always care about how they look, even if their choices of dress seem odd to you. If your teen is no longer concerned about personal hygiene or dress, they may be experimenting with meth.

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7. Aggressive or violent behaviors. Meth can induce uncharacteristic behaviors of aggression or violence, even in previously peaceful kids. This is also not a normal behavior of adolescence.
8. Missing valuables or money from the home. Although meth is priced at a level conducive to experimentation and recreational use, heavy meth use can get very expensive, especially as a teen develops a tolerance or dependency. Missing valuables may be sold to fund an increasing need for drugs.

THE RISKS OF CRYSTAL METH FOR TEENS

Few drugs can derail a promising future faster than crystal meth. Heavy crystal meth use destroys the appearance and the teeth, and a few years of meth use can add decades to a person's face. The lasting psychological despair and depression induced by a meth addiction can endure for years even after meth use has stopped, and some people can never recover completely from their meth addiction.

Meth is extremely addictive, even occasional recreational users are at great risk for dependency and addiction.

Meth use damages the organs and the heart, and greatly increases the risk for heart attack and stroke. Additionally, cognitive functions, including memory are extremely distorted by meth use, and a few years of meth use can induce severe cognitive and memory impairments.

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Meth use also puts addicts at a greatly increased risk for HIV and other STDs, for involvement in the criminal justice system, and for exposure to violent assaults.

Meth destroys the body, the mind and the soul; and does it faster than any other drug of abuse.

INTERVENTION AND TREATMENT

The earlier intervention and treatment ensues, the better the eventual probability of success and sobriety. Because of the dangers, parents who suspect meth use or abuse cannot wait before acting, and need to get their teen into treatment as soon as possible.

Teens do best in treatment specific to teens, and with age appropriate therapy and true peer support groups. Teenage meth treatment needs to be intensive and long lasting, and needs to occur on an inpatient basis, away from access to meth.

Teens do not need to consent to treatment or even to a need for treatment for it to be effective, and many reluctant participants in therapy come to see the value of drug treatment only after achieving sobriety and through intensive therapeutic participation.

The single greatest predictor for success in teen drug treatment is extensive family support and involvement, and parents and siblings need to participate fully in all offered family counseling and educational seminars.

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Meth is very scary, very destructive and even a short period of abuse can have health repercussions for life. Meth addiction can also be beaten, and people are overcoming meth addictions everyday. There is always hope for a better future, and parents need to make sure they stay involved, stay alert, and get their kids any needed treatment at the earliest possible opportunity.

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CHAPTER 8

SO HOW CAN I GET THEM TO STOP?

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Once you do know for sure that your teen son or daughter is experimenting with marijuana, you have to take steps to ensure that they stop their harmful drug taking, and take steps quickly to make sure that the problem doesn't get worse.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Firstly, take it seriously but don't panic.

Even if your teen is using heavily, when you get emotional and when you lose your objectivity, you reduce your ability to affect change and you reduce the chances that your teen will listen to what you say. You may be furious, but you need to act concerned and in control.

Addictions professionals generally recommend that when dealing with drug use, you start with the least intrusive method and move upwards if that doesn't work. If you catch your teen experimenting with marijuana, it's not necessarily the time to send them to drug rehab. That may come later, but only as a last resort.

Start first in the family, if that doesn't work, get some professional outside assistance on an outpatient basis, and if that doesn't work, consider inpatient treatment.

You do have to act and in some cases, when you can see that the problem has become severe and is having harmful consequences, you may want to disregard the above stages of intervention and move directly to professionals help.

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For most teens though, you have a good chance to affect change dealing with the situation within the family.

IN THE FAMILY

You need to start with a real communication of your concerns for their health and well being, and before you start talking, you'd better get informed. Your teen likely has a pretty good body of knowledge about the drug...and probably knows more than you do about it. What they know may not be accurate, but if they think it is and you can't contradict them accurately and reasonably, your words aren't likely to have much impact.

Get educated as to the real risks...and no scaremongering either! You'll lose all credibility if you blow the risks out of proportion, and since the real damages done by marijuana are legitimate and serious, you have no need to lessen your credibility with half truths your teen will very likely spot from a mile away.

Explain the risks, explain your concerns, and explain the family policy on drug use once again. Explain how things are going to change because of their drug use (drug tests, curfews?) and explain clearly and rationally what the consequences for further experimentation or use are. Be prepared to follow through in full with any promised disciplinary consequences.

By talking rationally and with concern your teen is far more likely to listen to what you say, and less likely to react defensively or in anger. Be prepared to reward your teen for an improvement in behaviors. It can be tough to resist the pulls to abuse,

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especially when friends are all "doing it" and if they can stay off marijuana, they deserve credit and reward for doing so.

If it becomes apparent that drug use continues after your attempts to keep things in the family, it's time to enlist professional help.

PROFESSIONAL HELP

Find an experienced family or teen therapist with knowledge of addiction issues, and get your marijuana-smoking teen participating in some drug counseling. If use has not yet become addiction, brief professional interventions can have a very significant bettering influence on behaviors, and a few sessions of individual and whole family counseling can leave all involved better empowered to deal appropriately with the situation.

Counseling can be expensive, but it's far less costly than inpatient care, and if it can better the situation, it is definitely money well spent.

In addition to individual counseling, you may want to get your teen participating in group support therapy and in teen specific NA or MA

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INPATIENT CARE

Getting your teen into rehab should be a last resort, but when it's obviously needed you need to act with confidence and strength to get your teen into a program that's going to make a difference. If nothing else you try seems to have much influence, you can't expect the problem to go away on its own, and you need to take serious steps to protect your teen.

Teen specific drug rehab offers your child the most intense therapies, a necessary and enforced period of sobriety away from access to marijuana and enough time for them to gain a little self awareness and control over their drug seeking behaviors.

You need to stay actively involved in the process for the best chance of success though. Teens are little removed from the kids they recently were, and although they can act tough, they still need the support and love from mom and dad when going through challenging phases of life. Involved parental participation and loving support throughout the rehab process has been proven to exert the single greatest influence over the likelihood of eventual rehab success.

DON'T PANIC - DO ACT

You must take serious action when you find your teen experimenting with marijuana, but for the best chance of success you need to stay in control, get educated and take the steps that are going to work. Have the courage to do what's needed, even when it gets difficult. Teens are still little more than children, and

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although they need and deserve some additional freedoms, they require our protection and support from life's challenges and pitfalls.

Very few parents ever look back regretfully from an overreaction to the threat of drug use, but far too many parents, whose kids get trapped in the web of addiction, wish that they had acted before things got bad, and while they still had a real chance to make a difference.

Your kids may now resent your actions to protect them, but they'll thank you for it later.

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CHAPTER 9 DRUG REHAB

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The decision to finally intervene in your child's life and either convince or mandate drug rehabilitation is rarely a decision taken lightly, and whether your child bottoms out (legal problems, school expulsion) or intervention occurs before the worst has arrived, the emotional stress and trauma of addiction and the difficulty in knowing how best to help can easily overwhelm.

MAKING THE DECISION TO GET HELP

Once the decision is made to get help, parental involvement continues to play an integral role in the drug rehabilitation process. Although during drug rehab your teen may no longer be living under your roof, you as parents remain the strongest people of influence in his or her life, and you need to remain supportive and involved even as your teen receives treatment in a residential facility.

Research has shown that a high level of parental involvement throughout the residential drug rehab period is the single greatest factor influencing eventual completion of the program and long-term sobriety. Occasional phone calls are not enough, and parents need to be involved with the therapy, education and counseling, to encourage the best eventual outcome.

The period of residential drug rehab is a period of enormous growth and challenge for an adolescent coping with a transition away from drug or alcohol abuse, and the process is rarely free from trauma or abuse. Parents need to remain involved, and remember that some of the behaviors as exhibited against the parents are not necessarily true expressions of emotion, but a process of acting out against the facility and the required changes to be made.

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THE FIRST STEP... GETTING HELP

When speaking with parents who have enrolled their children in a residential rehab program for drug or alcohol abuse, you invariably encounter a great deal of personal pain, sadness, frustration and anger; but you also hear of guilt and regret.

Most parents regret having allowed a situation to get so desperate before being forced into action, and most would recommend needed action and intervention sooner rather than later.

The truth is that if your son or daughter is using or abusing drugs and alcohol, the problem is not likely to go away on its own; and if you continue to witness abuse behaviors despite your best efforts to intervene, it's time to consider whether professional outside help may be required.

Intervention at an earlier stage in the abuse and addiction makes the eventual treatment easier and improves the odds of recovery; and since research indicates that addicts do not need to be willing or motivated participants at the time of entry to a rehab facility to benefit from the program, waiting for your son or daughter to agree to needed treatment is not necessary for success.

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CHOOSING A TREATMENT FACILITY

Whenever a child is abusing drugs or alcohol, the stress on the family and on the parents especially is profound; and when the decisions to intervene and mandate residential treatment is ultimately made, the stress of selecting an appropriate rehab facility can begin to overwhelm.

What type of facility is needed? How much will it cost? Will it work? The questions parents ask themselves can compound the difficulty of the situation.

Teens require a treatment facility specific to their age, and do not do well in rehab for adults. The rehab facility should be close enough to home to allow for frequent visits and family participation. The treatment facility should encourage family participation, and there should be a significant component of family education and therapy involved. The rehab should offer high school equivalency courses, and should offer a positive, disciplined and comfortable place for your son or daughter to recover.

Professional advice and support during the intervention period can both help parents with the needed intervention, and also in selecting an appropriate facility, and even to arrange transportation to the facility for reluctant participants.

Your adolescent son or daughter may not want to admit their problem, and may be adamant that they do not need rehab. Using a professional intervention service can strengthen parents from the emotional manipulation of addicted teenagers, and allow for as smooth a transition as possible into the rehab facility.

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PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

The growth and change needs to occur from within, but parental involvement in drug rehab is the single greatest indicator of long-term success.

A rehab facility that does not offer, or worse, does not allow significant parental involvement should never be considered.

Parents should be prepared to expect a range of emotional expressions during this transitional period, and because your teen may greet you with anger and or hatred, this does not necessarily represent truly felt emotions, and should never deter parents from continuing involvement in the rehab process.

Parents and siblings of the recovering teen addict need to participate in healing family therapy sessions. These sessions with a psychologist or addictions counselor help the teen and the family to better understand the abuse and the behaviors that have occurred, and help the family to heal some of the rifts caused by the behaviors of abuse. Although emotionally difficult and draining, family therapy in drug rehab teaches the family as a whole a better model for support of the recovering addict once back home, and helps to resolve any underlying family dynamics that may be contributing to the expression of abuse behaviors.

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PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT CAN MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

Acting sooner rather than later is always a positive step, and generally, if parents are considering the need for a residential rehab, there probably is a real need for it.

The earlier an addiction is tackled, the better the ultimate prognosis and most people who battle addictions throughout their lives started down the road to abuse as teenagers. Abuse and addiction rarely solves itself, and outside professional intervention is usually required. Because the behaviors of addiction, and the difficulties involved in selecting a treatment facility, can overwhelm, it can be useful to enlist the services of a professional addictions therapist or interventionist for advice on how best to enable the transition into rehab, and for recommendations on the most suitable local rehab.

The most important thing that parent can do during the period of residential rehab is to maintain continued contact, regardless of the resentment and anger that may be expressed by the recovering teen; and to get fully involved in all of the family therapy and education as is offered in the rehab program. Making sure to heal the family as the rehab heals the addict ensures that the recovering addict comes home to a strong and supportive family, and reduces the risks for younger siblings.

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HIGH SCHOOL IN A DRUG TREATMENT REHAB

High school in a drug treatment program for adolescent substance abusers should offer youth the opportunity to use the time spent in addictions recovery to their academic benefit, and to continue their education as they get healthier. Because substance abuse programs for teens can be longer and more intensive than for adults, it is crucial that students do not fall behind in their studies; especially since many students enrolling in high school programs at drug treatment facilities already suffer from academic deficiencies as a result of their substance abuse.

AN OPPORTUNITY TO GET AHEAD

Ideally, the quality instruction and low teacher to student ratios of high school in a drug treatment program offers adolescents an opportunity to catch up to, or even surpass, age and level appropriate curriculums offered in standard high schools.

Although the primary objective when enrolling in an adolescent drug treatment program is to break free from addiction and substance abuse, the importance of high school in drug treatment rehabs is such that parents should examine the academic programs offered when evaluating the relative merits of different drug treatment rehab facilities.

Some of aspects of academic programming that indicate educational excellence are an intensive and individual assessment program and the development of a tailored and personalized curriculum, the employment of certified teachers with additional training working with sometimes behaviorally troubled teens, and a very low

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student to teacher ratio in the classroom. Also, high school in drug treatment rehab should offer additional study skills and remedial programming for students deficient in different areas of the mandated curriculum.

Students should not be penalized for participation in a life bettering substance abuse program, and as such they should be rewarded with full academic credit for the courses they complete while in drug rehab. Make sure that the rehab facility is willing to work with the student's community high school to arrange for credit transference, and willing to apply appropriate testing and evaluation to ensure this easy transference of earned credits.

Because better high schools in drug treatment programs offer quality instruction, excellent student to teacher ratios and tailored curriculums to the needs of the individual student, the period of drug rehab ideally induces academic achievement as it promotes better health and sobriety.

DISCIPLINE

Although the educational programming should be designed to maximize academic potential, it remains integrated within the overall drug treatment programming and it must maintain the same standards of behavior and discipline throughout to induce behavioral and social change.

Teachers should be educators first and disciplinarians second, but they must be trained and experienced in working with troubled youth with the potential for behavioral disruptions. Demanding a strict code of conduct benefits the students as

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it accelerates the pace of learning and also as it increases the student's ability to interact appropriately in social educational situations.

ACADEMIC PRE-ASSESSMENT

Because the class sizes are much smaller, and because each student will be entering the classroom with varied skills and proficiencies, a comprehensive and intensive academic assessment testing is required.

Performing intensive abilities testing uncovers skills and interests, learning styles and also academic deficiencies; and allows for the development of a tailored and personalized lesson plan. High school programs in drug treatment rehabs that do not perform comprehensive assessment testing do not likely offer the kind of individualized instruction that the students deserve and require if they are to use the period of drug treatment to improve their academic performances.

High school in drug treatment should have programming designed to meet the needs of each student, and this will often mean remedial intervention and study. Substance use and abuse can often interfere with concentration on studies, and many students enter rehab deficient in one or more areas. Using the time of drug treatment for remedial attention and personalized tutoring improves their ability to excel academically once they rejoin their community high school. Some students benefit from basic study skills training as well as curriculum specific remedial attention.

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BECOMING A GENERALLY BETTER STUDENT

Quality academic programming can increase the benefits of both the sobriety training and as well improve the academic abilities of students who may not have been focusing on education while concurrently abusing drugs or alcohol.

Because the best academic high school programs in drug treatment facilities offer remedial education, small class sizes and tailored and personalized lesson plans, students in a drug rehab facility have an excellent opportunity to earn academic credits, improve core proficiencies, and become generally better students as they also learn how to live happy and productive lives without the use of drugs or alcohol. High school programming in a drug treatment rehab program needs to be considered when evaluating the best rehab program for your needs.

Education for the family is another important facet of rehab programming, and through educational seminars, parents come to better understand the progression and mechanisms of addiction and learn more effective discipline and support models most likely to allow for long-term success and sobriety.

Peer group sessions with other families are beneficial to the family and adolescent addict alike, and through a mutual expression of the pain and heartache caused by teen addiction, there can be some measure of healing and better understanding promoted.

Phone calls and family visits are equally important, and your son or daughter needs regular parental support and encouragement throughout this very challenging and frustrating period of self-growth. Even if this contact is difficult, it's very necessary

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and shows the recovering addict that family and parents offer unconditional love and support, and this can be the most helpful of all.

CHAPTER 10

DON'T SEND A TEENAGER TO AN ADULT REHAB

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Teens have enough to deal with during the formative years of adolescence, and when they compound these difficulties with substance abuse, it's not surprising that they can get in over their heads. Teen treatment requirements are unique and must be age appropriate; teens do very poorly in any form of general adult rehab.

But when given the opportunity to conquer their problems in a treatment facility purposefully designed for teen treatment, that combines the essential participation of the family with effective therapies; and one that treats adolescent developmental concerns as an integral aspect of the healing process; teens respond very well and gain a great opportunity to get their lives full of promise back on the right track.

PARENTS NEED TO PLAY AN ACTIVE ROLE

Although it doesn't always feel like it, parents continue to play the singular most important role of influence in their teen children's lives, and that influence must continue through the days of treatment and therapy for a rehab stay to have any real chance of success. Participation can never end with phone calls and parents need to get actively involved, get into family therapy sessions and learn to support the recovering addict as they also begin to heal the wounds that characterize any family addiction experience.

NOT A VACATION FROM SCHOOL

A teen rehab must offer educational support to addicts in recovery. Rehab is not a vacation from responsibilities, and since teen substance abusers often fall behind

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their peers academically, rehab education offers them a chance to catch up. Rehab schooling offers low student to teacher ratios, and students can get the kind of individual attention and tailored curricula they need to once again excel in the classroom.

DISCIPLINE - COMPASSIONED BUT FIRM

Teen rehabs must provide loving, but very firm discipline. A great many teens suffering through substance abuse and addiction respond to their trials with poor behaviors and an inappropriate response to legitimate figures of authority. Teen rehab counselors understand why teen addicts act as they do and do not react emotionally to outbursts of inappropriate behavior, but neither are these inappropriate behaviors tolerated. Teens coming out of rehab will have learned better how to deal with authority in a constructive and healthy way, and be far more able to participate effectively in school, on the job and in life.

TEENS SHARING WITH TEENS

Teens recover best with other teens. Group therapy gives a voice to teens feeling silenced, and through a collective exploration of the trials of adolescence and addiction, shared strategies to success are learned, and comfort taken from the knowledge of shared pains and difficulties. Working with a therapist also empowers teens to retake control over their lives and actions, and through intensive therapy, teens learn why they act and feel as they do, and how they can choose do better.

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Cognitive strategies work for all addicts in recovery, but help teen addicts especially to avoid relapse. Cognitive educational seminars give teens the tools they need to minimize relapse provoking temptation in their lives, and even to avoid the kind of thinking that can get them into trouble.

TEENS WILL RESPOND WELL WHEN GIVEN A CHANCE

Teens show remarkable resilience to the troubles of addiction, and when given professional and appropriate assistance, respond with great changes in behaviors and attitudes.

Growing up is hard, teens are vulnerable, and sometimes they need a little help. Once an addiction presents there is little point in willing it away, and substance abuse problems very rarely get better on their own. Teens respond far better to treatment when they get it early, and waiting for too long before taking action only entrenches addiction, and increases the difficulties of treatment.

Teen substance abusers can get better; they want to lead a great life and hunger to fill all the promise of their potential. Don't let an early addiction derail their lives, get them help, and get them better...they'll thank you for it.

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CHAPTER 11

PARENTS ALSO NEED HEALING

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When a son or daughter is suffering with an addiction, and the family is dealing with all of the negative behaviors and pain created by this addiction, it is too easy for the family to suffer just as the addict is suffering.

The family cannot offer useful strength and support to the teen addict in recovery if it falls apart, and as such it is vitally important for the family to look after itself as the addict recovers.

Al-anon or Narc-anon meetings have proven invaluable to many parents and families struggling through addiction; and the method of family preservation preached has been clinically proven very effective both for better family health, and as a very effective way to support a recovering addict through the transition to sobriety. Experts recommend that families try a minimum of 6 meetings to best evaluate their comfort level with this style of peer group support.

The drug or alcohol addiction of an older sibling is statistically very likely to promote the later addiction of a younger sibling, and as such it is important that even when one member of the family requires an inordinate amount of attention, that other family members are not neglected. It's important to speak candidly about the situation with other siblings, and to thank them for any increasing responsibilities they may have been required to take on as a result of the addiction of a brother or sister. Some one on one time with each child needs to be maintained, and important events like birthdays, and the attendance at plays, recitals and sporting events should be considered a continuing priority.

Parents should also examine their own alcohol and drug use, and should consider maintaining a drug and alcohol free home during the period of adolescence.

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