



INDICATORS OF TEEN SUBSTANCE ABUSE



Below is a list of *possible* indicators of teenage substance abuse. This list was created with the cooperation of recovering adolescents on Renaissance Campus. Any of these indicators alone do not necessarily mean a teen is abusing substances. However, sudden changes or clusters of these signs *may* indicate a problem.

PHYSICAL INDICATORS:

- Pale complexion
- Poor hygiene
- Slurred speech
- Staggered walk
- Use of eye drops
- Burns on lips
- Yellowish or brownish stains on fingers
- Eyes bloodshot, swollen, glossy, dilated
- Weight loss
- Decrease in coordination
- Slow reflex action
- Runny nose, sniffing
- Self mutilation

SOCIAL INDICATORS:

- Isolating in room
- Change in type of friends
- Associating with older teens
- Coming home late at night
- Money or objects missing from home
- Selling of personal items (games, ipods, dvds, etc.)
- Loss of interest in leisure/recreational activities
- Change in attire
- Using a lot of slang terms when talking with friends
- Becoming secretive or defensive
- Suddenly having money, but no source of income
- Decrease in communication with family
- Deterioration of healthy relationships

SCHOOL INDICATORS:

- Excessive absenteeism/tardiness
- Drop in grades
- Loss of interest in school activities
- Loss of interest in educational goals
- Sleeping during class

EMOTIONAL INDICATORS:

- Change in appetite
- Suspicious or paranoid behaviors
- Loss of concentration
- Depression or lethality
- Periods of memory loss
- Increase in irritability and agitation
- Restless or jumpy
- Sudden mood swings

LEGAL INDICATORS:

- Shop lifting/larceny
- Arrest for possession, buying or selling drugs
- Loitering
- Driving impaired or intoxicated
- Assaulting others
- Possession of new items that are not affordable to teens
- Fake ID
- School suspensions or expulsions

COMMON PARAPHERNALIA:

- Tip of cigar that is burned
- Knives with resin
- Mirrors with scratches
- Glass, metal, rubber tubing
- Burnt pen barrels
- Tin foil
- Metal spoons
- Sandwich baggies
- Lighters
- Razor blades
- Small pieces of screen
- Bottle caps
- Molded bottles or cans

COMMON HIDING PLACES:

- Battery compartments of stereos
- CD and DVD cases
- Garbage cans (under plastic bag)
- In socks
- Under tiles in drop ceilings
- Jewelry boxes
- Back of picture frames
- In parent's room
- Under rugs or floor boards
- Under or inside mattress
- Taped to bed frame
- Behind dresser
- Underneath dresser drawers
- In air vents

TIPS FOR PARENTS

- When teenagers lose your trust, they need to work hard to earn it back; trust is privilege, not a right!
- Follow your gut instincts, they are usually right!
- Monitor your teenager's use of electronic devices
- Hold your teenager accountable for their actions and decisions
- Don't implement consequences if you can't follow through with them
- Educate yourself about teenage substance abuse
- Don't be afraid to ask questions
- Don't ever think "not my child"
- Never confront your teen while they are under the influence, and try to remain calm

