



# The Addicted Teenager

If your teenager is addicted to drugs or alcohol (or both), get help. Use community resources for drug and alcohol information and talk with other parents and with members of self-help groups such as Al-Anon. It's important that you clarify your own thoughts and feelings about the situation. Learn how to get treatment for your son or daughter, and about what you can do to help your teen's recovery.

## Treatment

There are many types of treatment available. Expensive hospital care is probably no more effective than your local recovery organizations, although there may be other reasons to choose in-patient care, such as removing your teen from his or her peer group during the first stages of recovery. Your teenager may also have a preference.

Investigate the options thoroughly. Ask for referrals to other parents whose youngsters have experienced a particular treatment or treatment facility. Talk to those parents and to their teenagers.

## Be Supportive

If your teen is in treatment or in a self-help group, be supportive of his or her efforts. Get involved with the group, or an affiliated group if possible. While in treatment, and for some time after, your son or daughter will be in a precarious position between addiction and sobriety. Be honest while discussing addiction and behavior issues with your teen, but try not to place blame on yourself, your teenager or your teen's peers. If your teen is making an honest attempt to change his or her behavior, recognize these achievements.

## Set Standards

Be clear about your expectations. Your teenager will be looking to you to reinforce his or her decision to maintain sobriety. If you decide that you must set stricter standards, discuss them with your teen so that he or she doesn't feel punished for having come forward about the addiction.

## Be a Model

To provide maximum support for your child, be aware of your own behavior in relation to drugs and alcohol. Even if you're only a social drinker, or if you only occasionally take tranquilizers or sleeping pills or other substances, it might be a good idea to eliminate all mood-altering chemicals and alcohol from your home. This sends a supportive message to your teenager that you're willing to change your own habits in order to be supportive of his or her recovery from addiction.

Show your son or daughter that people can experience a range of emotions without mood-altering substances. Real life, without drugs or alcohol, is a challenging, positive experience.

## What Parents Can Do

