



## REMEMBER

- Addiction is more than simply 'wanting' something; it is better described with words like craving, compulsion, and inability to stop despite the consequences. An addiction means that the drug has become more important than everything that formerly held importance in the person's life and stopping comes with great discomfort.
- Often, teen addictions are covering up larger hurts and stresses in their lives. Make your relationship a safe place for them to share these without judgement and without telling them what they need to do or stop doing.
- Helping them learn healthy ways of coping with chronic stress can be the best protection against dependence on drugs.
- Let them know you recognize the courage and strength it would take to stop and that it's going to be really hard, but anything that's really valuable is expensive.
- Romans 7:18-19. If the teen is a believer, remind them that this verse tells us that God gets how hard this is - and they are not alone.



## RECOGNIZE

- In the past year: 42% of teens used an illegal substance; 15% of Canadian teens misused prescription drugs; about 25% used marijuana.
- Marijuana is highly habit forming and, contrary to common belief, can be addictive. Up to 50% of daily users show signs of addiction including symptoms like irritability, difficulty sleeping, decreased appetite, anxiety and restlessness when not using.
- A signs of dependence on weed is believing you need to use before you can truly relax, be creative, or deal with tough things in life. If a teen decides which events to attend/whom to hang out with based on whether or not they can use or be high there, they have likely moved from use to dependency.
- One common indicator of beginning drug use is change:
  - ▶ *in habits (appetite, friends, grades);*
  - ▶ *in appearance (bloodshot eyes, tremors, strange bruises, unusual smell);*
  - ▶ *in behaviour (secretive: avoiding eye contact, disappearing for periods of time, going out at odd times);*
  - ▶ *in the home: (the presence of drug paraphernalia/strange containers, missing prescription drugs).*



## RESPOND

- **Start collaborative conversations** that are full of:
  - ▶ *Open-ended questions - these can't be easily answered with 'yes' or 'no'. They make space for a teen to share more than information (eg. "Tell me about what's going on with you and drugs lately").*
  - ▶ *Reflective listening - No guilting, arguing or demanding; instead we need to help the teen hear themselves by actively listening and then clarifying/feeding back what we are hearing them saying.*
  - ▶ *Affirmation - Notice and speak out what is good and loved by God in them - whether you agree with their choices or not. This is part of gaining permission to stand with them and tells them what is true about themselves.*
  - ▶ *Exploration - Ask if anything has changed since before their alcohol/drug use (i their family relationships, their values/goals, their friendships, their time and thoughts, their money, or their moods). Compare the impact they see to what others see and talk about the difference.*
- ▶ *Motivation - Help them think about why they use drugs and what it would take for them to consider stopping. Your job is not to talk them into changing, but to help them discover motivation for change within.*

**Search the web for local treatment options and support** in getting a youth there. Refer a willing teen to a professional who can take them further than you can.

**Don't forget to walk alongside parents** on this journey; they will need support. When addiction has taken hold, it's often a long road home.



## RESOURCES

- [www.cpyu.org](http://www.cpyu.org) - Practical articles and podcasts from a faith-based perspective. Search "drugs".
- [www.ccdus.ca](http://www.ccdus.ca) - The Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse and Addiction
- [www.drugrehab.ca](http://www.drugrehab.ca) - a 24-7 contact number to connect you with treatment in your province.
- [www.teenagewhisperer.co.uk](http://www.teenagewhisperer.co.uk) - Search "motivational interviewing" to learn about having conversations that open the door to change.