

The Winning Hand: 21 Questions for Parents



Is my child abusing drugs or alcohol? These questions will help you find out. Answer all 21 questions for each child in your family age 9 or older. Have your spouse take it independently of you without discussing anything until you are both done. Then compare your results. Any biases will cancel out. You will both then have a unified winning hand of information. Ask each other how objective you are in each of your answers.

	YES	NO
1. Is your child exhibiting sudden, inappropriate mood changes (irritability, unprovoked hostility or giddiness)?	___	___
2. Is your child developing friendships with older kids of legal drinking age?	___	___
3. Is your child hanging out with an identified drinking or drug crowd?	___	___
4. Is there trouble at school - grades dropping, missing classes, unexplained truancies, especially on Mondays and Friday's?	___	___
5. Is your liquor supply dwindling? What about your pills in the medicine cabinet? Do they use considerably more over the counter medications (cold preparations, pain killers, allergy meds) than you think is reasonable?	___	___
6. Has anyone (siblings, neighbors, school officials) tried to tell you your child is using drugs or drinking too much, whether or not you believe them?	___	___
7. Is your child in trouble with the law, for any reason? Have they been suspended from school for an alcohol or drug related incidence, no matter what they said the circumstances were?	___	___
8. Does your child bad-mouth and/or ridicule education, television shows, or literature about alcoholism or drug abuse?	___	___
9. Are there signs of medical or emotional problems (stomach problems, sudden weight loss or gain, depression, overwhelming anxiety), suicide talk or gestures?	___	___
10. Is your child beginning to tell lies, cover his/her tracks, say they are going one place and go to another, asking other parents or siblings "not to tell" you things?	___	___
11. Do you find obvious signs such as a stash of bottles, beer cans or drug paraphernalia in their bedroom, basement or garage?	___	___
12. Do you detect physical signs such as alcohol on the breath, pupil change, redness of eyes, slurred speech or staggering, uncontrollable giggling, motor mouth and unprecedented energy?	___	___
13. Does your child smoke cigarettes and/or eat a lot of breath mints?	___	___
14. Does your child have flimsy excuses for not being where s/he said they would be, coming home late or not at all, for getting into trouble at school?	___	___
15. Has your child experimented with alcohol and/or drugs, maybe admitting to "once or twice," but insists that at parties and other functions they stay away from the kids who are doing it and in fact, they try to get their friends to stop?	___	___
16. Does your child have a particularly bad attitude, unprovoked, toward any type of authority figure such as yourself, the police, school officials? Do they ridicule the DARE program or TV coverage of teenage alcohol and drug abuse?	___	___
17. Is your child concerned about his or her use of alcohol, or other drugs, including marijuana?	___	___
18. Is there a heightened secrecy about actions, possessions, and has your child made their room off limits? Locks on door, drawers, or book bag?	___	___
19. Is he or she wearing sunglasses indoors and often at night?	___	___
20. Is s/he going through money (yours or theirs) and you can't figure out where it's going?	___	___
21. Is your child giving up family and supervised activities like sports, debating teams, or other supervised activities they used to enjoy but it would be very difficult to drink or drug at? They may continue activities that have less supervision and make it easier to sneak off and smoke or drink.	___	___

SCORING: If YES is the answer to 4 or more of these questions, it indicates that your child may be in trouble with alcohol, marijuana, or other drugs. If you answer yes to any *one* of the questions in **bold**, professional help is recommended.