

Stages of Addiction and Parental Reaction



EARLY STAGES

Young Addict	Parental Reaction
Begins smoking cigarettes	Annoyed by shift in child's attitude
Begins smoking pot and drinking	Awareness that their influence is waning
May steal medications from parents	Is confused about missing medications
Blackouts	Notices child won't give straight answers
Heavy experimentation with drugs	Notices change in appearance and clothes but tries to be understanding
Urgent requests for money, cons and manipulates to get requests met	Tries to tie chores to money but finds their demands usually go unmet
Preoccupation with finding drugs and orients activities around them	Starts to nag about child not spending time with family
School problems begin, maybe trancies or begging parent to make excuses for them	Tries to be understanding and complies and wonders why school fails to motivate kids
Hangs out with the drugging and drinking crowd	Begins to think their friends are a bad influence on them
May not come home when requested, staying out all night or isolates while at home	Need to control increases but as more requests for compliance are made, resistance increases
Hides most of this from parents	Rationalizes that this is exasperating but normal teen behavior

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MIDDLE STAGES

Young Addict	Parental Reaction
Abusive or mocking attitude toward non-users	Begins to cover-up for teens bad behavior
Tries to limit use	Extracts promises for better behavior
Changes drugs to gain control over use	Guilt about parenting skills begins
Blames others for personal failures	Blames child's friends for trouble
Drastic mood swings including deep anger and resentment toward parents	Begins to threaten, plead, or bribe the child to make things right
Relief using begins (the morning after drink)	Escalates disciplinary tactics but makes little progress
Emotional withdrawal and guilt inducing accusations when confronted	Desperately tries to gain control but maintains front to family and friends
Probable promiscuity (both boys and girls)	Physical problems such as headaches, high blood pressure, and nervous conditions begin
May shift stealing to sources other than home to support use or begin dealing	May increase own drug use even if prescribed
Legal, school, and social problems escalate and dishonesty increases	Feels used and angry but is determined this will not get worse
<i>Can no longer hide the mounting problems</i>	<i>Puts out the first feelers for help but minimizes the severity</i>

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CHRONIC STAGES

Young Addict	Parental Reaction
Routine weekend binges or daily use	Assumes blame for bad parenting
Paranoia, locking of doors, heightened secrecy regarding everything	Blames spouse for bad parenting also, may increase marital problems
Physical symptoms common to drug of choice, overdosing, loss of weight (or conversely weight gain)	Over reactive attempts to prove love for the child thorough magnanimous offers and shows of self-sacrifice
Gives up hiding and controlling drug use, and uses openly	Retaliation begins by calling police or beginning verbal and physical abuse
Irrationality regarding friends, school, authorities, siblings, life	Goes to great lengths to “reason” with child, figuring that somehow, someday they will get through to him
Has to deal, steal and prostitute self to support use	A cycle begins of expelling them from the house and recanting for fear of their safety
They are a chronic problem and embarrassment in the family	Energy and resources go to the sick child and other family members are neglected.
Addiction blatant	Sincere search for help begins

