



NOT JUST A PHASE February 2002

A study conducted by Dr. Paul Rohde of the Oregon Research Institute indicates that those with diagnosed drinking problems, or even symptoms of drinking problems as teens were more likely to develop increase drinking problems, smoke cigarettes and use other drugs, and develop depression and personality disorders. Other than "going through a phase" that they will out grow, the study indicates that their drinking and mental health problems will get worse with age if left untreated. And previous studies have shown that these "early onset" substance abusers become the most difficult to treat in adulthood.

Rohde interviewed 940 high school students twice during adolescence and again at age 24. Of these students with alcohol problems as teens, a full 80% also had psychological problems such as depression or behavioral disorders. Rohde wrote, "Clearly for many adolescents, alcohol use disorders and problematic alcohol consumption are not benign conditions that self-resolve." (This study was published in the January Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry.)

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

In her book, Parents Need to Know: Teenage Addicts Can Recover, Shelly Marshall gives 21 Questions for Parents, which she calls "The Winning Hand". She recommends parents answer the 21 questions for each child in the family age 9 or older. Have each spouse take it independently, without discussing anything until both are done. Then, compare results.

THE WINNING HAND: 21 QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS

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 Fridays?
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?**
7. Is your child in trouble with the law, for any reason? Have they been suspended from school for an alcohol or drug related incident, 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 use?
- 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 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, then there are strong indications that your child may be in trouble with alcohol, marijuana, or other drugs. If you answer yes to any one of the bold questions, you definitely need to seek professional help.

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Contact the SCIP Team Leader at your child's school for assistance.