

Adolescent Development and Behavior

Signs and Symptoms of Abuse

Middle School and Early High School Years:

1. *Movement Towards Independence*

- Struggle with sense of identity
- Feeling awkward or strange about one's self and one's body
- Focus on self, alternating between high expectations and poor self-esteem
- Interests in clothing style influenced by peer group
- Moodiness
- Improved ability to use speech to express one's self
- Realization that parents are not perfect; identification of their faults
- Less overt affection shown to parents, with occasional rudeness
- Complaints that parents interfere with independence
- Tendency to return to childish behavior, particularly when stressed

2. *Future Interests and Cognitive Changes*

- Mostly interested in present, with limited thoughts of the future
- Intellectual interests expand and gain in importance
- Greater ability to do work (physical, mental, emotional)

3. *Sexuality*

- Display shyness, blushing, and modesty
- Girls develop physically sooner than boys
- Increased interest in sex
- Movement toward heterosexuality with fears of homosexuality
- Concerns regarding physical and sexual attractiveness to others
- Frequently changing relationships
- Worries about being normal

4. *Morals, Values, and Self-Direction*

- Rule and limit testing
- Capacity for abstract thought
- Development of ideals and selection of role models
- More consistent evidence of conscience
- Experimentation with sex and drugs

Chemical Dependent Adolescents

- ***Socially withdrawn: stays in their room a lot or just wants to be alone***
- ***Identifies themselves as a “druggie” is obsessed with drug-using activities***
- ***Becomes excessively moody***
- ***Debates and argues with authority***
- ***Rejects previously held values and authority (church, respect for teachers, pastor, etc.)***
- ***Blames others for their own feelings***
- ***Peculiar odors of marijuana, alcohol, or solvents on your child, on their clothing, in the house or in the car***
- ***Presence of drug paraphernalia in your child’s laundry***
- ***Use of eye drops, room deodorizers or incense***
- ***Slurred speech***
- ***Noticeable change in school performance***
- ***Sudden change in social pattern (friends, activities, choice of music that is different)***
- ***Secretiveness about friends or activities***
- ***Loss of motivation or interests***
- ***Deterioration in physical appearance (general unhealthy appearance, blood shot eyes, lack of alertness, decrease in neatness or personal hygiene)***
- ***Involvement with legal problems or delinquency***
- ***Wanting to sell their stuff***
- ***Extreme dress, language, opinions or behavior***

Just because these things listed under chemically dependent behavior does not necessarily mean the child has a drug problem; what it means is to take notice and start making an effort to ask more questions, be more involved to find out what is going on with the child.