The word “addiction” brings to mind different images for different people. It can be difficult for someone suffering with an addiction or potential addiction to identify with the term “addict.” And it can be especially trying for a young person.

Teens commonly associate addiction with movie images, or people they’ve seen at the absolute lowest, worst point of their addiction. Many have ideas about what an addict looks like: desperate, homeless, suicidal, criminal. With these ideas in mind, it’s hard for them to understand how their drug or alcohol use is a problem — after all, their consequences seem less extreme.

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Drug abuse is one of the top problems confronting the nation today especially among the youth. Incidences of drug and alcohol abuse and related anti-social behaviour have tremendously increased in recent years. This has become a matter of concern to the government, parents, teachers, Non-governmental organisations and all other relevant agencies. . The study found that drug use and abuse among youth is increasing despite the control mechanisms that have been put in place. The paper recommended that as a first step to prevent and control drug abuse, parents should be sensitised on the dangers of drug abuse, the attendant problems and their functions as role models; schools should have a drug prevention curriculum from Kindergarten onwards teaching that drug use is wrong and harmful and that there is need for initiation of rehabilitation programmes for drug dependent persons.

It’s true; the external effects of someone using at age 16 are often much less severe or obvious. They might get in trouble at school, get grounded by their parents, fight with their friends or lose relationships. And they’ll often write off these consequences as other people’s problems, not seeing how their own behavior is a direct result of their substance use. They often say things such as: “My parents are freaking out. If they would just chill out, everything would be fine,” “Everyone else is doing the same thing; I just got caught,” “I haven’t been using for that long,” or “I can stop whenever I want.” Combine false assumptions about addiction and placing blame on parents and other adults — and they have a ready-made excuse to distract them from taking an honest look at themselves and how their drug abuse is affecting their lives.

Just as teens do, parents have their own images of what someone with a drug problem looks like, and it can be as extreme as the child’s view. These preconceived notions help parents stay in denial of a potential problem. Plus, they lead to false measurement tools. Parents think, “If my kid had a problem, she’d be getting bad grades” or ”Clean-cut polite kids don’t use drugs.” Parents can easily fall victim to the false belief that if their child is not behaving in a way the parent associates with addiction, then there is not a problem.

With parents, kids and others sharing this stigma about addiction, many drug problems slip through the cracks, and that allows for worst-case scenario circumstances to develop when the warning signs might have been there years earlier.

What does this all add up to? Addiction or not, drug abuse is worthy of scrutiny by both the person using and his or her family. Worst-case scenarios are often avoidable by looking past preconceived ideas of addiction and looking honestly at the effects of substance abuse on the user’s life.

There is no need to wait until you are absolutely positive there is an addiction present to seek help or to stop using. Addicts are not the only people who benefit when they quit using drugs or drinking.Hence such problems one the

society can be curbed early and prevented

Prevention: parents can prevent drug abuse! Parents are the best protection youngsters can have against drug abuse. Prevention is the process, which builds into children a resistance to abusing drugs, so that drug use never begins. Prevention is a simple concept but it requires constant work to be successful. Prevention is a positive process. It is a process, which cannot be started too soon. Research indicates that children and teenagers diagnosed with ADHD are at greater risk to alcohol and drug abuse than children and teenagers in the normal population. The following are important elements in helping kids resist becoming involved with drugs and alcohol:

1. Love and affection as the child grows.

2. Consistent and fair discipline.

3. Open channels of communication for thoughts and feelings.

4. Opportunities for successful experiences at home and in school.

5. A stable family atmosphere (family time together, family rituals).

6. Tolerance of the child's mistakes (no put-downs).

7. Models of strong, thoughtful and feeling adults.

8. Accurate information about the problems of growing up today (sexuality, drugs, crime, etc.)

There is NOTHING more important in preventing drug abuse than spending time with your children. Take time to do what they enjoy, to share some skills, to build family rituals and rapport.

What else can be done? Educate yourself, have enough facts to clarify your point of view, and talk to your children. Unfortunately, many parents wait until after their children are involved with drugs or alcohol to sit down with them and talk. Don't make this discussion a onetime thing; children and teenagers need to be constantly reminded of where their parents stand. They also need parents who will listen without being critical and without over reacting.

Finally, your attitude and use of drugs (including alcohol and tobacco) will influence your children. Children learn more by watching what their parents do than they learn by what their parents say. Children need models of strong, responsible adults who are aware of their own chemical use. One reason we're seeing younger and younger children use alcohol and drugs is that they are "second generation" users, simply modeling their parents behavior.

Zero tolerance for drug/alcohol use in our children and teenagers is the most reasonable stance for their long-term well being. Part of prevention is taking reasonable action at the earliest possible time. This means a parent should be vigilant to the subtle signs and symptoms as discussed in the preceding article and take immediate action when use is suspected.

Common drugs of abuse By far, the three most common drugs of abuse for teens are cigarettes, alcohol and marijuana. If that isn't bad enough, use of all three substances nearly triples from junior high to high school. Even worse, adolescents with ADHD have an approximately 35 percent greater likelihood of becoming involved with illicit substances. As parents of children with ADHD the more knowledge you have the more you can help your child in both a preventative and treatment manner.

According to statistics, about one in four adolescents report being a current smoker. Boys and girls reported similar frequency of use. Regular alcohol use is reported less frequently than regular cigarette use. Slightly less than one in five adolescents say they drink alcohol (including beer and wine) more than one time per month. Almost 10 percent admitted to drinking at least once per week. The highest levels of alcohol use are found among youth living in the suburbs. Approximately 25 percent of all adolescents report having smoked marijuana at least once in their lives and about 19 percent report using one or more times in the previous month. Approximately one in five teenagers report regular use of marijuana.

Figures indicate alcohol use is sometimes tolerated by parents, especially those of older teens. If that's the case, parents should think again! In small doses, like all depressants, alcohol has a calming effect but long-term heavy use affects the liver, muscles, bonus, digestive tract, heart and brain. For some, alcohol can provide an easy escape from dealing with boredom, fears, depression, symptoms of ADHD, and frustration. The major problem with alcohol, however, is that teenagers and alcohol don't mix. Impulsive and easily influenced by their peers, teenagers often underestimate the seriousness of driving while intoxicated. They are inexperienced as to how alcohol affects perception, coordination and judgment.

​One quarter of all young people have reported smoking marijuana at least once. Long-term studies indicate marijuana can cause serious physical and mental problems. Of particular concern are the effects of marijuana on young people who smoke while their bodies and minds are still rapidly developing. Marijuana, like alcohol, can affect a person's memory, driving ability and school performance. It is particularly dangerous for an impulsive teenager to be using marijuana. Would you care if you found out that the driver of car you were riding in was high on marijuana? What about your son or daughter?

Steps to solving a drug problem:

1. Identify the problem in your home. If you are unsure, but suspect of a problem, consult a trusted professional. It is often difficult to tell if a teenager is abusing substances. We have seen families where the parents were medical professionals, yet a substantial alcohol/drug problem was completely missed.

2. Talk with your teenager about your concerns. Listen to what he or she has to say. Your teenager may become very angry, defensive, non-communicative, hostile or disgusted. Don't be intimidated. Most teenagers when confronted will deny or grossly minimize a problem. If your teenager refuses to talk about a drug problem and you are still concerned you must act because a teenager with a drug problem won't take the first step. Take your teenager to a trusted professional (physician, psychologist, etc.) for an assessment. Your actions must convince your child that you mean business.

3. Put your plans into action! Firm rules must be set. As a parent, you need to recognize you can't stop your adolescent from using drugs if they really want to. However, you can control drug usage in some environments (like your home) and you can be a major reason for their deciding to stop using drugs. Research clearly shows parent/family connectedness and parental presence (before school, after school, dinner and bedtime) are definite protective factors in the use of alcohol and drugs.

Finally, because drug usage is often a complex problem, many parents find outside professional support is essential. Trained and experienced family physicians or psychologists in the treatment of teenage substance use are the best sources of help. Though the road to success and drug-free living is sometimes painfully long and difficult, we have personally witnessed many successes

Recovery programs for young people offer the chance for teens to identify with others who have similar experiences and stories. And thanks to these programs, many young people who have not crossed the line into addiction have stopped using and found happier, more fulfilling lives without experiencing the severity of long-term addiction.