

**SURVIVAL GUIDE**

**For Parents of Teens**

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## SURVIVAL GUIDE

### FOR PARENTS OF TEENS

You are not alone. Having problems with teens isn't unusual and it does not mean that you are a bad parent. It does mean that the next few years are going to be more challenging than you might have anticipated. This booklet was designed to help you meet that challenge; it was initiated by some challenged parents.

**"I would there were no age between sixteen and three-and-twenty, or that youth would sleep out the rest; for there is nothing in between but getting wench with child, wronging the ancients, stealing, fighting."**

Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*

**THIS BOOKLET IS** intended as a guide to parenting and the resources and tools available to parents whose teens are starting to get in trouble. We hope it will reduce your frustration when dealing with a troubled, and troubling, son or daughter by providing you with avenues to explore and things to try if you feel you could use some help dealing with problems at home. Many other "good" parents have unexpectedly found themselves in the same situations you are dealing with. Numerous agencies and individuals are available in Missoula to help you.

**THIS BOOKLET IS NOT** designed to provide you with immediate solutions or complete answers. It will not solve your problems, but it might give you some insight or direct you to someone who can help you find solutions.

**THE JOB OF A PARENT** is to provide a safe, structured environment in which a child can grow into an adult. A responsible parent will:

- Provide incentives to reward good judgment and improved behavior,
- Set limits, and enforce consequences for not abiding by established rules.

**"A child is not something to be molded, but is a person to be unfolded."**

Unknown

**THE JOB OF ADOLESCENTS** is to stretch the limits set by parents, make limits of their own and practice using judgment in preparation for becoming independent adults. Their learning process will involve making mistakes, using poor judgment and stretching limits too far.

**"If you have never been hated by your child,  
you have never been a parent."**

Bette Davis, *The Lonely Life*

**BEING A YOUTH IS TOUGH.**

**DON'T MAKE IT TOUGHER  
BY NOT BEING THERE TO HELP.**

## **RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS**

Many factors play a role in shaping the attitudes and emotional health of young people. After much research, doctors Hawkins, Catalano and Miller have identified many of these factors and divided them into two categories, risk factors and protective factors. If you can enhance the protective factors and reduce the risk factors, you can improve the likelihood that your children will grow into emotionally healthy adults. Parenting classes will help you develop the strategies to do this.

### **RISK FACTORS**

Circumstances that increase the chances that an adolescent will have behavioral problems.

#### **At Home:**

- Parents who are unclear about their expectations for behavior.
- Parents who provide inconsistent or harsh discipline.
- Conflict between the parents.
- Parents who accept teen use of alcohol, tobacco or drugs, or misuse these substances themselves.
- A family history of alcoholism or drug problems.

#### **In School:**

- Availability of tobacco, alcohol or drugs.
- Academic failure.
- Lack of student involvement in class or school activities.
- Truancy or suspension.

#### **With Peers:**

- Alienation and rebelliousness.
- Favorable attitudes toward drug use.
- Greater influence by, and reliance upon, peers than parents.
- Friends who use tobacco, alcohol or other drugs.

#### **In the Community:**

- Economic or social deprivation.
- Easy access to tobacco, alcohol and other drugs.
- Community laws and standards that are favorable to tobacco, alcohol and other drug misuse.

### **PROTECTIVE FACTORS**

Circumstances that improve emotional health. Some of these are inborn, and some develop in family, school and community settings.

#### **Self:**

- Social competence, including flexibility, responsiveness, empathy, good communication skills and a sense of humor.
- Problem solving skills.
- The ability to distance oneself from problems of family and peers.
- A sense of a promising future, establishment of goals, educational aspirations, healthy expectations.

**In the Family:**

- Parents who value and encourage education, provide emotional support and encouragement, and spend quality time with their children.
- A discipline system with a high degree of warmth and a low degree of criticism, rather than an authoritarian or permissive system.
- A nurturing and protective family that manages stress well, shares family responsibilities and has high expectations.
- Supportive relationships with caring adults who are beyond the immediate family.
- An environment in which children are given responsibilities to contribute to family welfare and the opportunity to participate meaningfully in the life and work of the family.

**At School:**

- An environment with high expectations, that provides leadership and decision-making opportunities and encourages active student and parent involvement.
- Opportunities for involvement in a variety of programs including vocational work, libraries, art, music, and other extra-curricular activities.

**With Peers:**

- Friends who respect authority, appreciate the unique talent that each person brings to the group, are caring and supportive, and are involved in drug-free activities.

**In the Community:**

- Opportunities for youth to be contributing members of the community

## TIPS ON PARENTING A TEEN

***“There are times when parenthood seems nothing but feeding the mouth that bites you.”***

*Peter De Vries, Tunnel of Love*

**YOUR GOAL AS A PARENT SHOULD BE TO:**

- Help your child mature by establishing consequences and rewards that are appropriate for your teen’s emotional and intellectual level.
- Help your child realize the life-long consequences of some inappropriate behaviors.

As your child develops more emotional and intellectual maturity, many of the current problems will solve themselves. You may have to accept the fact that you cannot always effectively intervene in your child’s decisions, but you can take action that will keep her safe and alive until she does mature.

Even though your teen is becoming more independent, it is still important that you set realistic limits and boundaries and maintain discipline. Despite popular myths, parents and adolescents are not “natural” enemies. Kids just need time to re-examine and challenge their beliefs and practices. Making new (and sometimes shocking) friends, trying new things, and displaying independence are natural for teens who are getting ready for new ventures and explorations.

The challenge for you as a parent is to encourage growth and independence, while also guiding your child in making wise choices and good decisions. Parents who need to control and crack down may be setting unrealistic boundaries which increase rebelliousness. Most of us will accept guidance and encouragement but will rebel against being controlled.

Along the road to independence, your teen will make some mistakes. Discipline involves teaching proper and safe ways to behave, yet allowing your child to experience the consequences of their mistakes so that they will know what to do, and what to expect, as adults.

When anger is used to discipline, kids learn that anger is a way to solve problems. But it is not an effective way, nor does it provide opportunities for growth. It's OK to say, "I'm very angry right now and can't be rational. We'll talk this over and decide how to handle it after I have calmed down and have had a chance to think."

You will need to develop positive ways of meeting your teen's various needs by using good listening skills. Then work *together* to build a list of ways to meet those needs. Be sure to set clear consequences and rewards for each option. Everyone deserves to know the consequences of their actions ahead of time.

Pick one option and try it for a period of time (perhaps one week); then sit down together and see if the solution is working. If not, pick another option from your list and give that a try. You don't have to get it right the first time, but you do have to be flexible and creative. Yes, consistency is important, but rigid rules can be counterproductive. Be consistent when it comes to allowing your teen to experience the consequences of inappropriate behavior, or the rewards of good judgment and decisions.

In addition to guidelines and clear consequences, teens also need support and encouragement. Learn to praise them for good decision making, good judgment, thoughtfulness and cooperation, or for just being themselves. You can say things like, "I really appreciated you taking out the garbage this morning. That saved me from being late for work," or, "Your smile really makes my day."

When praising your child:

1. Focus all of your attention on your child.
2. Make eye contact.
3. Smile and look pleasant.
4. Touch them in a pleasant way (hug, pat on the back, etc.).
5. Be specific

Remember that communication is the key with teens. They want to have a say in what they can and cannot do. That means that both parents and teens need to be prepared to do some negotiating in order to achieve any level of harmony.

**"Children aren't happy with nothing to ignore;  
And that's what parents were created for."**

Ogden Nash, *The Parent*

**HELP YOUR TEEN MAINTAIN GOOD SELF-ESTEEM.** It may be difficult, but it is crucial. Low self-esteem leaves a young person vulnerable to a wide variety of temptations. While it is normal for teens to question their self worth and try out different ways of being accepted by the group, general low self-esteem is often characterized by repeated self-criticism, doubt, and hesitancy.

**What To Do:** Fostering good self esteem in your child is a long process that involves focusing on the positive aspects of behavior rather than the negative aspects.

- Use frequent rewards and praise.
- Make a habit of daily compliments, respect, and approval.

- Be specific with compliments and praise if possible.
- Try to reduce reprimands, punishment, restrictions, discipline, criticism, or blame.
- Make physical contact with your child each day, in a way that is age-appropriate, and that he would be comfortable with.
- Make sure your child feels included in family activities and decisions.
- Encourage participation in any group activity in which the child shows a talent or interest, such as sports, dance, music, etc.

It can be a real challenge to notice good behavior in a rebellious teen, but making constant efforts to acknowledge good judgment, a pleasant attitude or positive behavior will have beneficial effects on your teen and his relationship with you.

**“Children need models more than they need critics.”**

Joseph Joubert, *Pensees*

**Communication:** Regular family meetings are a good way to insure that you and your teen have opportunities to discuss family goals, standards, rules and consequences. Set aside a regular time when each family member will have a voice and be treated with respect; this is not a time for lecturing, bringing up past conflicts, blaming or name-calling.

Another way to encourage family communication is by having dinner together at least 4 times a week, with the TV off. Conversation can include discussion of current events, sharing stories, offering suggestions, keeping in touch with what your kids are studying, etc.

## **PREPARE YOURSELF**

When successfully meeting any challenge you must be in tip-top shape. You must find and develop personal energy, the proper tools, and a good coach.

### **THE ENERGY**

#### **MAKE TIME FOR YOURSELF.**

- Maintain your own physical and emotional health. It is crucial to giving you the energy to deal effectively with your teen.
- Maintain a healthy relationship with your spouse.
- Set aside some time to enjoy your friends or interests without the distractions of your kids.
- Give your kids time away from you. Summer vacation from school can provide an opportunity to give yourself and your child a rest from conflict or tension if you can send her off to a summer camp, grandparents, non-custodial parent, etc. for a week or two. In addition, a summer camp will expose your teen to other adults in a casual, friendly environment who will be good role models, expect responsibility and cooperation from them, and not tolerate any alcohol, drug or tobacco use. Summer camps are conducted by Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Campfire, YMCA, and many churches. Call them for a schedule.

## THE TOOLS

**“Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them.”**

James Baldwin, *Nobody Knows My Name*

**BE A GOOD ROLE MODEL.** One of the most effective ways of helping your teen avoid risky behavior is to be a good role model. Although it might be painful, examine your attitudes and behavior to evaluate the non-verbal messages you are sending. You might be sending some powerful messages about acceptable negative behavior if you:

- Often need a drink to relax.
- Constantly worry about your weight.
- Are very self-critical.
- Drive too fast.
- Don't wear a seat belt.
- Brag about sexual exploits.
- Fill your speech with ethnic or racial slurs.
- Drink and drive.
- Lose your temper and behave destructively.

**RECOGNIZE AND AVOID ENABLING.** Enabling is anything that the parent does which makes it *easier* for the teen to persist in inappropriate behavior. It is often misconstrued as protecting your child, when in actuality it makes it harder for him to accept responsibility for himself and become independent. It can consist of:

- Parental denial of a problem. (“No, not my kid!”)
- Making excuses for the child.
- Allowing the child to make excuses or blame others to avoid dealing with consequences.
- “Protecting” the child from experiencing unpleasant consequences.
- Pretending that you don't notice the behavior.
- Focusing on why he has done something rather than on ways to improve.
- Telling your teen that you don't care.
- Assuming that bad luck, accidents or “the other guy” is responsible for your teen's inappropriate behavior.

### What To Do:

- Make sure your teen knows what you expect and why.
- Avoid power struggles, but state your expectation and what will happen if it is not met.
- Give encouragement and compliments.
- Be consistent with limits and consequences.
- Be supportive, but not protective, and allow your teen to face consequences.
- Don't make excuses for your teen's behavior.
- Have him take personal responsibility for what happens.
- Pay attention and ask questions even if you would rather not hear the answers.
- Make sure your children know that you will have discussions about sex, drugs, eating, etc. with them, and do it!
- Separate behaviors that you do not like and will not tolerate from the person whom you love and care about, and be sure he knows how you feel about him.

**Develop Logical Consequences.** Parents and teens together should discuss and decide upon rules and consequences when everyone is calm. The best time to do it is before behavior problems arise, before kids experiment with alcohol or other drugs, stay out past curfew, fail a class, etc.

When your teen is pushing you past your limit of patience, it may be tempting to threaten, "If you're going to act like a little kid, I'll just have to treat you like one. You're not too old to spank, you know." However, physical punishment will accomplish nothing. If you reach this point, it is time to back off and cool down.

Sometimes your teen will suffer the natural and immediate consequences attached to his behavior. At times like these, the guilt alone may be significant punishment, and additional discipline may not be necessary. Your teen can develop problem-solving skills by trying to figure out what went wrong, and what solutions might have worked.

Logical consequences are not punishments, but are choices for your teen to make. Have your teen help you choose appropriate, effective consequences. Most teens remember a lesson best when the consequence involves doing something rather than losing a privilege, and can also give a feeling of accomplishment.

#### **ACCEPTING RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- Make financial restitution for property damage.
- Do extra chores or errands.
- Write an apology letter
- Do community service work (See page \*\*\* - Encourage Your Child)
- Read a book that deals directly with that problem behavior from the child's point of view.
- Write a report discussing the long-term consequences of an unacceptable behavior.

You and your teen know what he values, as far as how to spend free time, etc. Loss of TV time as a consequence might significantly impact one child, but not another. However, sometimes a harried parent can run out of ideas for consequences, especially as their children get older. This is a list of ideas from area professionals. Friends and family might be able to help you come up with others.

#### **LOSS OF PRIVILEGES:**

- Television
- Computer games
- Use of car
- Radio/CD player
- Telephone use
- Having friends over
- Use of bicycle
- Allowance
- Rides from parents
- Spending time with friends
- Loss of vote at family decision-making meeting (for a short time)
- Loss of school or church activities
- Participation in a sports event.

Make sure that the length of time a privilege is lost is appropriate for the poor behavior, and not so long that it causes your child to give up hope of ever regaining that privilege. If your child has lost privileges for a long period of time, you might give him specific opportunities to earn time off, or reward improved behavior with a reduction of time.

## PARTNERS

**CHOOSING A COUNSELOR.** Experience and credentials don't necessarily make a good counselor, nor does the lack of them make a bad counselor. Word of mouth referrals on who's good and who's not may be useful. Members of the clergy can be good if they fit the family definition of a helper. Professional therapists are listed in the phone book yellow pages under Counselors, Psychologists, Psychiatrists, Psychotherapists or Drug Abuse Information.

Sometimes the teen will attend counseling sessions alone; there may be times for the entire family to go together; or parents may want to go separately. Parents and the teen should interview a prospective counselor to make certain that personalities are going to work well together, and that you and your teen will feel comfortable talking about intimate matters with the counselor.

To find the best type of professional help for your child, consult your school counselor, check the resource list (page 39), or call First Call for Help (page 40).

Here are what all those initials and descriptions after counselor's names mean:

MSW - Master of Social Work.

DSW - Doctorate of Social Work.

Licensed Clinical Psychologist - a psychologist with a PhD.

Board Certified Child & Adolescent Psychiatrist - an MD specializing in working with the emotional needs of children and adolescents.

LPC - Licensed Professional Counselor: a person with an advanced degree in counseling and state certification.

ACSW - A Certified Social Worker: an advanced degree with national certification.

LCSW - Licensed Clinical Social Worker: advanced degree with national and state certification.

LAC – Licensed Addiction Counselor. State certified to assess and treat dependency on drugs (including alcohol).

Only an MD or Nurse Practitioner can prescribe drugs, including anti-depressants. This may be a family physician or a psychiatrist.

**YOUTH COURT.** At some point, you may become involved with Youth Court. This is not necessarily a bad thing. The Youth Court system tries to give kids an opportunity to straighten out their lives without long-reaching consequences. They try to help young people and their parents survive the teen years by making referrals to various agencies, helping them understand what is happening to them, and helping families and teens succeed.

District Court judges have given Youth Court the authority to handle any youth charges. Most cases are received as a referral from law enforcement as the result of a citation being issued to the child. However, they also accept referrals from schools, parents, and even youth themselves.

Juvenile citations are reviewed by Youth Court and a probation officer is assigned. That officer will handle the current citation, as well as any others that the youth gathers until he or she reaches the age of 18. An intake hearing is held with the probation officer, the youth, and the parent(s). The youth is advised of her rights. If she admits to the charge, a punishment/discipline plan will be instituted that may include curfew restrictions, restitution, community service, counseling, etc. A period of probation may be established that will require the teen to check in periodically with her probation officer. No matter how many times a juvenile appears in Youth Court, she will not have a permanent criminal record upon turning 18.

However, a youth charge will be referred to the county attorney's office for prosecution in District Court if the charge is serious, if the youth already has a lengthy record, or if he denies charges. Convictions through District Court *do* become part of the person's permanent record. District Court also has the power to send juveniles to a state institution. A youth cited for

possession of alcohol/drugs may be referred to Drug Court and sentenced to one of three special programs involving education, counseling and/or treatment. Parental participation in these programs is essential.

## **COPING WITH A DISRUPTIVE TEEN**

**STEPS TO PROMOTE CHANGE:** If you, as a parent, feel that your home life is filled more with tension, anger, or frustration than nurturing shared enjoyment, or mutual respect, it may be helpful to re-examine how you interact with your teenagers.

**Check the give-and-take balance in your family.** Do you feel your child frequently takes advantage of you or your goodwill? If so, change how you are handling problems that affect you.

**Take responsibility for yourself.** Become proficient in the use of “I” messages. Reclaim your independence, rights and freedoms in situations that do not require your child’s cooperation.

**Seek your child’s cooperation in situations that require it.** With one adult and one child, in a private place, describe the situation, state how you feel, and why. Use the democratic problem-solving approach. Seek creative solutions.

**Use logical consequences effectively to get your needs met.** Do not allow a teenager to ignore the direct impact his behavior has on parent’s rights and freedoms.

**Recognize your limitations in the face of difficult teen problems.** Continue to communicate with your teen, identify your rights, and take care of them. Seek assistance from knowledgeable people. Respect your teenager’s power and desire for self-responsibility.

**WHILE YOU ARE WAITING:** Be patient. The process of growing from a rebellious kid to a responsible young person takes time.

- Make time for yourself.
- Make time for relationships with supportive adults.
- Compliment your kid at least once each day.
- Do something with your child at least once each week that you **both** enjoy.
- Get your teen into a supervised activity that he will enjoy so you can relax, at least for a short time, knowing that he isn’t getting into trouble.
- Seek counseling for yourself.
- Network with other parents.
- Take a parenting class.
- Smile at your disruptive teen at least once a day.
- Keep your sense of humor.
- Learn to listen, not lecture.
- Enlist the aid of others by reporting illegal activities (even stealing from family members) or ungovernable behavior to the police.
- Develop a plan.

When attempting to avoid consequences, a teen will often argue logic, reason, excuses, etc. The best way to avoid these destructive arguments is also the hardest thing to do: Remove yourself . . . do not engage in the fight! Let your teen have the last word, leave the room, leave the house, or lock yourself in the bathroom. This is not the time to negotiate any further, or attempt to discuss reason. At this point, your teen is not listening to you anyway.

## **THE FIRST STEPS WHEN DEALING WITH A PROBLEM**

If your child is getting into trouble, chances are that he will be having problems in many areas. When a group of parents was asked to identify the specific problem with their teens (such as drugs, alcohol, truancy, crime, an eating disorder, ungovernable behavior, family relationships, sexual activity, etc.) they all indicated at least four problem areas. As a parent of a challenging teen, you need to be aware of the warning signs of developing problems so you can recognize them early, when intervention might be an easier task.

**FIND OUT THE FACTS.** If you don't know the facts on a subject (e.g. the real effects of drugs), do a little research at the library or on the internet, ask a school counselor, drug addiction counselor or physician for booklets with current, accurate information. All through their pre-teen years your children have looked to you as "The Knower of All Things." You've probably done a great job with your toddler and young child. However, as your kids have gotten older, their questions have gotten harder. Make sure that you are still a reliable source of accurate information.

**PICK THE RIGHT TIME.** At a time of high stress, in a crisis, or when a person is affected by drugs or alcohol, it is impossible to have a rational discussion with anyone about anything. Wait until tempers have cooled, or sobered, and you can be somewhat objective. This may take an hour or a day, but don't wait too long! Tell them that when you both are calm and somewhat rational, you will talk about the problem further.

**DISCUSS IT.** If you don't confront a problem, it (as well as your feelings of resentment, anger or frustration) will continue to grow. If you are uncomfortable talking about a subject (perhaps sexual activity), say so, then TALK ABOUT IT ANYWAY! Chances are that your teen will be a little uncomfortable as well, but this may break the ice. It will also reveal your humanness to your son or daughter. Parenting classes can help you develop good communication skills. Discussing a concern is different from lecturing. Sometimes it helps to talk about a touchy subject in the third person, such as, "I know a friend whose son has . . ."

Discussion involves:

- Inviting the teen to tell you how they feel about something.
- Listening and reflecting your teens' feelings.
- Sharing stories of how you felt at their age.
- Sharing your experiences.
- Respecting your child's privacy, trust and approval.
- Sharing information.
- Sharing positive feedback.

Discussion does NOT include:

- Judgment.
- Criticism.
- Lecturing.

Always leave the door open for more talks later.

Your child has reached the age when he or she is probably capable of making decisions based upon the values you displayed and taught during their early childhood. To make a wise decision, all that most teens really need are input, respect, and perhaps gentle guidance. They are also capable of dealing with the consequences of inappropriate decisions.

**SHOW YOUR HONEST CONCERN FOR THE LONG-TERM WELL-BEING OF YOUR CHILD.** Because we often nag our kids about their hair styles or clothes, they can easily perceive that their parents are just picking on them. Reassure them that you love them and are concerned about *their* future.

**DEVELOP A PLAN** of action (attack!). Build a team with Youth Court, the school counselor, the school principal, and your personal counselor, if you have one. Make sure each one understands the importance of his role in working with your child. Encourage them to communicate and collaborate fully with each other. Communicate with them in person and in writing, so they have a record. Work closely with your spouse, ex-spouse, or significant other to present a unified front and provide a consistent and firm but loving and nurturing environment in your home.

This is where consistency comes in: Once you have established guidelines and consequences, stick to them. Do not change the limits or ease up on the consequences when your child presents an excuse. Teens can be very creative and manipulative. It may take a while for your child to learn that limits exist and he will be held 100% accountable for staying within them, but eventually he will accept that responsibility and learn to enjoy himself within established limits, just like adults do.

As your child matures and accepts responsibility for herself, limits can be renegotiated.

**ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD TO GET INVOLVED WITH THE COMMUNITY.**

- Sign him up for membership at the YMCA or at an athletic/health club.
- Encourage him to register for an adult education class.
- Take an adult education class with your teen.
- Ask a friend whom your child is fond of to spend some time with your child.
- Perhaps your teen would like to co-coach a kids sports team, or co-lead a scout troop.
- Encourage your teen to do some volunteer work.

(Some volunteer opportunities are available at: The Food Bank, St. Patrick Hospital, Community Medical Center, Public Library, Extended Family Services, the Humane Society, United Way, American Red Cross, Nursing Homes (ask the activities director), some veterinarians, Missoula Children's Theater, City Parks and Recreation, Little League (grounds maintenance, assistant coach), Animal Control, YMCA, YWCA. Missoula's Forum for Youth and Families has a Guide to Youth Programs available at [www.missoulaforum.org](http://www.missoulaforum.org).

**KNOW YOUR TEEN'S FRIENDS AND THEIR PARENTS.**

- Introduce yourself.
- Call the parents of your teen's friends and arrange to meet them.
- Go to the door when you drop your child off at her friend's house.
- Have your child's friends stay for dinner.

## **EARLY WARNING SIGNS OF UPCOMING PROBLEMS**

The earlier you can recognize some of the subtle changes in your child that indicate attitude and behavioral changes, the sooner you can intervene, and the easier it will be to head off trouble.

An early warning sign of any developing problem is often marked by a change in your child. It may be dramatic, such as failing grades by a previously good student, or subtle, such as being very quiet at the dinner table. It may involve asking permission to do something that she has never before shown an interest in. An example would be someone who didn't like to hike asking to go hiking with friends in an attempt to camouflage experimenting with drugs or alcohol. It can be helpful to

reflect objectively on your child's behavior routinely and note any changes. Have a discussion with her to share your concerns and create an opportunity to answer questions.

**ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS.** At some point, most young people will experiment with drugs or alcohol. Some will have a physical predisposition to addiction which will have to be dealt with differently than those who occasionally use these substances. Few actually become addicted, but even experimentation can have tragic results, especially when driving is concerned.

Furnishing alcohol for teens is a misdemeanor punishable by a fine of up to \$500, and 6 months in jail. Civil liability can also be an issue if any injuries result. Providing illegal substances for teens fosters disregard for the law.

**What To Look For:** No one indicator by itself is a sure sign of a developing problem, and some kids who start using drugs or alcohol may continue to keep up good grades. But a combination of common indicators may clue you in that it is time to talk about drug and alcohol use. If your teen is arrested for possession of alcohol, chances are it is NOT the first time he has been drinking.

- The smell of alcohol on breath or clothing.
- Unusually heavy scent of cologne or mouth wash.
- A child who needs more money than usual.
- A child whose friends use alcohol or drugs.
- Unusual listlessness or restlessness.
- The presence of drug paraphernalia.
- Finding a fake ID card or driver's license.
- A sudden resistance to following rules at home or in school.
- A sudden decline in attendance or performance at school or work.
- A loss of interest in usual activities, such as sports, clubs, church, etc.
- Problem drinkers or drug users in the immediate or extended family.
- Sneaking out at night.
- Alcohol missing from your home.
- A change in friends.
- Frequent physical illnesses
- Reluctance to discuss new friends.
- Secretive behavior.
- Loss of initiative.
- Changes in sleep patterns, appetite, attitude.
- Blood shot eyes, or using lots of eye drops.

**Signs Of Use Of Inhalants:** This is breathing in fumes that may cause a "high". These chemical substances are poisonous and using them may have tragic consequences.

- Clothes that smell of gasoline.
- Empty tubes of model glue in their room or in the trash.
- Empty aerosol cans.
- Asthma inhalers when you child doesn't have asthma.

**Signs That Your Teen May Be Selling Drugs:**

- Sudden increase in popularity.
- Kids you've never seen before showing up at your house and not staying for long.
- He has more money than you would expect, or purchases more than he ought to be able to buy.

**Signs of Tobacco Use:**

- Clothes or breath that smell like tobacco.
- Smell of tobacco in bedroom or bathroom.
- Cigarettes found in book packs, pockets, under the mattress, etc.
- Friends who smoke.
- Yellow-stained fingers.

**What To Do:**

- Educate yourself. (See Suggested Reading, page 38.)
- Discuss your observations in an open, non-confrontive manner. If your child gets angry or defensive, remain calm. Perhaps postpone your discussion for a later time.
- Share your honest concern about your child's health and safety.
- Discuss the risks of alcohol or other drug use, i.e. may lead to addiction, the use of more dangerous drugs, exposure to hepatitis or HIV, arrest, death, etc.
- Model responsible behavior.
- Be clear and consistent about expectations and consequences regarding alcohol, tobacco and other drug use.
- Make your child's time with friends dependent upon good performance in school or at home.
- Remove all guns from your home, or lock them securely.
- Set goals and incentives for "no use" with your kids. Have them help decide on appropriate rewards.

**CLUB DRUGS:** "Club Drugs" or "Designer Drugs" have increased in popularity in recent years. Typically these substances were taken at all-night dance parties called "raves", but are being used/abused out of that context as well. The use of these substances can cause serious health problems, particularly when used in combination with other drugs or alcohol. Many youth feel these drugs are "safe". This is partly due to lack of knowledge about some of the negative effects of these drugs, since they are relatively new.

GBH (gamma Hydroxybutyrate): Sedative, relieve anxiety. Made in home labs from Internet recipes, resulting in unknown strength and purity. Can depress heart rate and breathing to dangerous levels.

Ketamine: Anesthetic used by veterinarians. Produces hallucinations. Impairs attention, learning ability and memory. Can cause delirium, amnesia, depression, fatal respiratory problems.

LSD: Hallucinogenic. Produces delusions. Can experience terrifying thoughts; can have flashbacks. Chronic use can cause schizophrenia or severe depression.

Rohypnol: "Date Rape Drug". Legal in other countries as a sedative. Use can cause dizziness, confusion, drowsiness, visual disturbances, lowered blood pressure.

Methamphetamine: Stimulant. Potent, toxic, highly addictive. Produced in home labs resulting in unknown strength and purity. Abuse causes erratic or violent behavior, increased nervousness, irritability, memory loss, paranoia.

**THE NEXT STEP:**

If your child has been arrested for possession of alcohol, has been obviously intoxicated or high on drugs, or admits to drug or alcohol use but refuses to discuss the issue or reconsider use, it is probably time to consult a professional. The school counselor might be a good place to start, or find a counselor or agency that specializes in the treatment of chemical dependency.

**RISKY DRIVING.** As both drivers and passengers, teenagers are more likely than other age groups to be involved in motor vehicle crashes. Motor vehicle injuries are by far the leading public health problem for young people 13-19 years old. Nationally, 1 out of 4 boys will be involved in an alcohol related traffic crash before the age of 18.

The first year of licensed driving is the riskiest of all for crashes. High school driver education programs can successfully teach driving skills, but attitudes strongly influence how driving skills and knowledge are put to use.

**What To Look For:** When a driver has certain personality traits coupled with some problem behaviors, the result is an increased crash risk.

- Rebelliousness
- Risk-taking
- Independence
- Defiance of Authority
- Speeding
- Drinking and Driving
- Marijuana Use
- Heavy drinking
- Smoking
- Trouble with the Law

**What To Do:**

- Establish a period of supervised driving before they can take the car out alone.
- Restrict initial driving to daytime hours.
- Limit "recreational" driving.
- Set night driving curfews - prohibit late night driving that's unsupervised.
- Insist upon use of seat belts by all occupants all the time.
- Restrict the number of passengers.
- Enforce a no-drinking-and-driving rule.
- Choose safe cars. Large ones are safer than small ones, and air bags enhance safety.
- Avoid performance cars - the combination of high performance and a young driver is deadly.
- Prohibit motorcycle riding. If your teen does drive a motorcycle, insist on helmet use.
- Be a positive role model and set the right example!

It is against the law for persons under the age of 21 to purchase, possess, or consume alcohol. It is against the law for anyone under 21 who has an alcohol concentration of 0.02 per cent or more to drive. The fine can be up to \$500 and include the loss of driving privileges.

**SHOPLIFTING.** You might become alerted to a shoplifting incident when the police call to inform you that your child has been arrested. Chances are this is not the first incident.

**What To Look For:**

- New or different clothes.
- Items that seem to exceed your child's financial resources.
- A sudden change in friends.
- Significant changes in language and attitude, especially if they appear at the same time as new friends.
- Groups of 3 or more hanging out at the mall a lot.

**What To Do:**

- Communicate frequently, sincerely and with an open mind.
- Allow your child to feel the full brunt of consequences, including paying fines himself, doing community service, returning stolen items and apologizing, etc.
- Discuss the issue from the victim's point of view.

**GANG ACTIVITY.** Gang involvement often fills the void for acceptance, approval and belonging that children may feel as a result of alienation from parents, other family members and close adult friends. It may also add an element of excitement to their lives.

**What To Look For:**

- A sudden change in friends.
- Significant changes in language and attitude, especially if they appear at the same time as new friends.
- Weapons. A youth with a weapon sees himself as either an aggressor or potential victim. Find out which, and why.
- Gang-related clothing.

**What To Do:**

- Include your child in family activities, decisions, vacations, meals, etc.
- Limit unsupervised time with peers.
- Get your child into the judicial system by reporting illegal activity and turning in any weapons.
- Discuss reasons that kids join gangs and ask your child if he sees any reason to join a gang.
- Discuss how the way a person dresses might send a message about him. What message does your child want to send to his peers?
- If you suspect gang activity, tell him why. Listen to his response. If he wants out of the gang you are halfway home. If he denies involvement, you will probably need to wait for law enforcement to get his attention. Tell him that you will be there when he wants to change, and get out of the gang.
- Remove all guns from your home, or lock them securely.

**EATING DISORDER.** While this is most common in girls, it also occurs in boys, especially those who must meet certain weight requirements for sports. Most eating disorders are not primarily about food. Issues such as family background, inhibition of anger, excessive self-expectations, the need for control, a tendency toward depression and low self-esteem are contributing factors to an eating disorder.

Anorexia and bulimia are severe illnesses. Seek professional help early if you believe an eating disorder is developing. A younger person living with a supportive family has a better prognosis for recovering from an eating disorder than a person who struggles through high school or college and makes it to her twenties or thirties before seeking help. The most appropriate professional would be a clinical psychologist, psychiatrist or a Master of Social Work who has training in treating eating disorders.

**What To Look For:**

- A preoccupation with food, body appearance, or discussions of being “fat”.
- Fasting (not eating at all).
- Binge eating (incredibly large meals).
- Vomiting after eating.
- Use of laxatives.
- Excessive exercise.
- The absence of menstrual cycles in girls.

**What To Do:**

- Be a positive role model. Don't criticize yourself or others for being fat, don't criticize your various body parts, accept diverse body shapes.
- Support healthy eating habits and discuss proper nutrition.
- Discuss her feelings about her body.
- Discuss the negative effects of dieting and laxative use, especially long-term.

- Discuss the benefits of moderate exercise and the negative aspect of excessive exercise.
- Do NOT get involved in dieting or weight loss schemes or criticizing your child's body shape.

**DEPRESSION.** Signs of depression are often subtle, easily confused with other symptoms, and sometimes contradictory. No one sign by itself indicates depression, but a number of symptoms, over a period of time, that interfere with his ability to carry on normal activities could signal depression.

**What To Look For:**

- Less interest in, or pleasure from, usual activities.
- Sadness, discouragement, negative reactions or withdrawal.
- Wide temper swings, anger, or restlessness.
- Sleeping too much or not enough.
- Eating too much or not enough.
- Loss of motivation.
- Difficulty concentrating.

**What To Do:**

- Show your concern.
- Listen, don't lecture.
- Point out that bad feelings are usually temporary and that everyone experiences them at times.
- Encourage him to do some activities even though he may not feel like it.
- Encourage your teen to set aside a short period of time each day to think about how to approach problems, then set those problems aside and follow the normal routine.
- Agree with feelings, but reject unreasonable ideas. "Yes, I can see how that might make you feel bad, but I'm sure you still have friends."
- Try problem-solving together.
- Suggest positive ways of looking at things or acting.
- Remove all guns from your home, or lock them securely.
- Keep prescription medications, over-the-counter drugs, and alcoholic beverages locked away.

**WHEN TO SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP:**

If your teen is having excessive problems in day-to-day activities, seems highly distressed, or the problems persist, seek counseling early on.

**SUICIDAL TENDENCIES.** It is normal for adolescents to think about suicide as a way of avoiding problems or consequences, but they usually reject the idea as too scary, too harsh, or too unrealistic.

**What To Look For:**

- Threats or hints of suicide.
- Expressions of hopelessness or inability to cope.
- Extreme withdrawal.
- Extremely reckless or life-threatening behavior.
- Alcohol abuse.

**What To Do:**

- Calm yourself.
- Talk to your teen about your observations and your concern. Then LISTEN.

- Tell your child that you care and offer your support.
- Acknowledge that feeling you want to die is a rotten feeling, but assure her that these feelings don't last.
- Assure her that a person does not have to act in accordance with feelings all the time.
- Ask her to promise to talk to you, or a trusted adult friend, before making any attempt to end her life.
- Monitor and supervise your child.
- Dispose of any lethal means of suicide (guns, medications, alcohol, poison chemicals, etc.)

**WHEN TO SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP:**

Whenever a teen acknowledges suicidal tendencies or the parent has concern, even if the teen denies these tendencies, a consultation with a professional is advisable. Parents should consult a mental health professional highly trained in assessing and intervening with suicidal tendencies, such as a clinical psychologist or psychiatrist.

**SEXUAL ACTIVITY.** We are all sexual beings, from the moment we are born. But we learn appropriate ways to express our sexuality dependent upon our level of maturity, religious beliefs, status of relationships, etc. Sexual activity can be defined as "behaviors that involve sexual anatomy and response." This could include arousal, masturbation, and intercourse, as well as reading or viewing erotic materials, interacting with persons socially who may be seen as potential partners, or even talking about potential partners or other people's potential partners.

Normal teenage sexual activities include:

- Preoccupation with one's image and that of others.
- Masturbation.
- Sexual touching.
- Exploration of sexual orientation (homosexuality).

Risky sexual activity may be another matter. Nationally, 1 out of 10 girls will become pregnant before the age of 18. Sexually active teens are at a high risk for contracting a sexually transmitted disease, some of which can cause infertility, or be life-threatening.

**What To Look For:**

- A perception that sexual conquests and exploits are appropriate.
- Statements of myths about sex (e.g. a girl can't get pregnant if she's having a period).
- An "innocent" facade (note clothes, makeup, cologne), but flirts/touches others directly.
- Being a member of a troubled family: may act out sexually for attention or affection.
- A parental history of sexual abuse: the cycle may repeat itself.
- Opportunities to participate in sexual activities, such as parties without a chaperone.
- Use of alcohol or other drugs.
- A teen who sees himself or herself as an outsider.

If your teen is diagnosed with a sexually transmitted disease, the Health Department will be notified. Their communicable disease specialist will contact your son or daughter to make sure he or she has received treatment and education to prevent re-infection. The nurse will also need the names of your teen's sexual contacts in an effort to reduce further spread of the disease. This information is kept strictly confidential.

## **What To Do:**

**TALK.** Break the ice with finesse and sensitivity to a teen's need for privacy. It may be more helpful for a trusted or knowledgeable relative or friend to talk with the teen. Don't limit birth control and disease talks to only the negative aspects; talk about the positive aspects as well. Acknowledge the normal and extremely pleasurable things about sex in addition to the risks. Head off the risks at the pass, as it were, by identifying the strong likelihood of lifelong sexual behavior in one's child. Try to help them grasp the possible outcomes of their sexual behavior.

If a parent discovers a teen engaged in sexual activity, the initial confrontation should be done with the greatest respect for the sensitivity of the situation for *all* parties concerned. Postpone discussion for a later time. Discuss the negative aspects of the behavior objectively, and allow the teen to learn from the "mistake." Otherwise you risk causing life-long psychological damage, or pushing the entire subject behind an impenetrable wall. It might help to think of this as giving the teen a safe way out, and approaching this as just another temporary bump on the road to maturity.

**ROLE MODELING.** Let your kids know who you respect as healthy sexual beings. Set clear and strict limits on what is okay and what is not, and be consistent. Remember that showing is better than telling: discuss your reactions to a person convicted of incest, a woman whose baby has Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, etc., rather than saying, "You shouldn't do that!"

**SEEK HELP.** When things are beyond the parent's ability to resolve, seeking help is appropriate. Other parents, friends, etc. would be good first steps. The literature from Planned Parenthood, the library, or bookstores are also useful. Counseling might also be appropriate.

**BECOME WELL INFORMED.** Seek information frequently to refine your values. Realize that your child might be gay or lesbian. Search for materials and information that fits your existing thinking about sexuality, and incorporate new ideas. A parent or teen might consider auditing a class on human sexuality, offered through the University, which provides accurate information and many points of view. Texts on human sexuality are available at the UM bookstore, other bookstores, and Planned Parenthood. Make sure your teen knows the symptoms and seriousness of sexually transmitted diseases and will seek medical treatment if needed.

**RUNAWAY.** It may be hard to decide if your child has run away unless there is a note. When you decide that your child does not plan to come home, call 9-1-1 right away. You will have to go to the police station to fill out a report and be interviewed by an officer. Take along a photograph of your child and a description of the clothes he was wearing. Unfortunately, law enforcement does not have the manpower to actively look for your child, nor do they have the authority to take him into custody.

While your child is gone, call his friends and put out the word that you want to know if your child is safe, and that you want him to come home and work things out. However, if you are extremely angry or hurt, you should involve a professional in sheltering and talking with your child. The Attention Home or Friends to Youth might be able to assist you.

When law enforcement finds your child they will phone you to come pick him up. If your child returns home voluntarily, you must notify 9-1-1 immediately. Figuring out why your child ran away and preventing it from happening again will be a long process that might involve counseling for both parents and child.

Even if your child returns home voluntarily, if you have called in law enforcement, you should have your child cited for runaway. This will bring Youth Court into the picture as another authority figure. At this point, he needs one! The court can provide limits and structure and enforce them if you cannot. It is important that your child learn to follow rules and stay around to work things out. Running away is not an effective method of solving problems.

**UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS.** Sometimes the strong relationships teens have with their peers can become unhealthy.

**What To Look For:**

- A teen unable to stop thinking about a relationship when he wants to.
- A relationship that requires isolation from other friends, male and female.
- The need to control what a friend eats, drinks, wears, does for fun, etc.
- Lots of arguments in a relationship.
- Physical, emotional or sexual abuse.
- Jealousy.

**What To Do:** Be sure to talk about these topics with boys as well as with girls.

- Stay involved in your teen's life and discuss thoughts and feelings on relationships.
- Include your teen's friends and romantic interests in family activities frequently.
- Reassure and empathize with your teen about how challenging relationships can be.
- Listen to your teen's relationship problems in a non-judgmental way.
- Model healthy relationships.
- Make opportunities to discuss healthy and unhealthy male/female relationships---those seen on TV, in movies, of friends and relatives.
- Read about, discuss and practice ways to improve relationships at home between siblings, parents and children.
- Learn about, and practice, conflict resolution skills.
- Teach your child to evaluate relationships and make sure they provide opportunities for both parties to grow and expand as individuals
- Discuss the circumstances that can lead to date rape, the fact that it is a crime, and the importance of reporting it.

**PROBLEMS IN SCHOOL.** Just as most kids experiment with drugs and alcohol, most of them will skip a few classes or be late getting back from lunch period. However, this can create problems if they become involved in illegal behavior during that time, or accrue enough absences from a class to lose credit for that class.

**What To Look For:**

- Repeatedly spending no time on homework or studying.
- A frequent desire to get to school early or stay late when they are not participating in a school activity.
- Talk that lessens the importance of graduation.

These signs will most likely be accompanied by phone calls from teachers or the attendance office and failing grade reports. Your teen will likely make excuses about having teachers who are boring, unorganized, or too demanding. Don't buy their excuses! While they may really have a poor teacher, explain that those types of people abound in our society and as adults we must learn to work with and deal with them daily. Flunking their classes will not punish the teacher, or help him improve. But it will definitely cut down on your child's chances of becoming an adult independent of support by parents or society.

**What To Do:**

- If there seems to be a problem in just a class or two, talk with the teacher first, then progress to the guidance counselor, and then the administrator in charge of discipline (this is often the vice-principal).
- If your child has a definite negative attitude toward school in general, make an appointment to meet with the guidance counselor and administration as soon as possible. No one can make your student study or attend school. However, there are many things that you and the school can do to make it easier and more pleasant for your child to participate in school than to drop out.

- Work with the guidance counselor to identify any learning disabilities.
- Have your child set aside a time for homework/studying. Link privileges to studying time such as TV or phone time only AFTER studying.
- Require that your child come directly home after school. If he says there is an after-school activity, do a few random checks to verify participation.
- Work with the counselor and vice-principal to set up a strategy to thwart your child's efforts to be a drop-out. This may involve in-school suspension or lunch period restrictions for skipping a class.
- Require that your child bring home a weekly progress report with a passing grade from each class in order to earn weekend freedoms.
- Spend time with your child and learn his interests.
- Discuss the realities of dropping out of school.
- Encourage your child to become involved in community activities such as Children's Theater, scouting, 4-H, a church youth group, a martial arts class, music, an evening class through Adult Education, etc.
- Discuss with the counselor whether an Alternative Learning class might suit your child. The district also has an Alternative Learning Center for kids 16 or older who have trouble fitting in to a regular, structured high school classroom.
- Keep your cool! Sometimes academic changes are caused by peer pressure to rebel.

**Tips to Help Your Teen Stay in School:**

- Keep parenting all the way through high school---be involved with the school, teachers, homework, etc.
- Communicate with school counselors and teachers---if there are problems at home, make sure they are aware of them.
- Help your teen see the importance of developing a long-term plan for the future.
- Help your teen see the relevance of what she is learning and how it applies to real life situations.
- Offer rewards for not skipping classes, or take away privileges for skipping.
- Support the school's unexcused absence discipline policy.
- See if your teen could be placed with a different teacher for a particularly difficult subject.
- Discuss the possibility of enrollment in the Alternative Learning Center with the school counselor.
- Keep her involved in family and community by expecting that she contribute work to family and society.
- Encourage participation in extra-curricular activities.
- Discourage work or job from taking precedence over school.

Some teens feel that a GED (General Education Development, only an option after age 16) is as good as a high school diploma. While a GED may be easier and quicker to get, it is not the same thing as a high school diploma. A GED indicates that the graduate has mastered the basic skills in reading, writing, science, social studies, and math, without benefit of socialization skills or knowledge in other areas. The military is reluctant to accept recruits with a GED, and many local employers prefer high school graduates. However, it is adequate to apply for admission to most vocational programs or colleges.

Another alternative to traditional high school is Job Corps, open to boys and girls, age 16-24. They may earn a high school diploma, or GED, and receive specific vocational training while earning an income. For more information and a completed listing of trades offered, contact Job Corps through Job Service, 542-5745, or 800-544-5627.

**BULLYING.** Bullying may be fairly common, especially in middle-school years, but it is NOT a common right of passage. Bullying is a serious problem that can dramatically affect the ability of both victim and bully to progress academically and socially. A student is being bullied when he or she is exposed repeatedly and over time to negative actions on the part of one or more students. Bullying implies an imbalance in power or strength. Direct bullying involves relatively open attacks on a victim such as fighting, shoving, kicking or name-calling. Indirect bullying involves social isolation and or exclusion from the

group, as well as getting the victim in trouble, damaging or stealing belongings, threats, taunting and teasing. Both the bully and the victim may benefit from intervention to stop the pattern.

School District One has a zero-tolerance policy for bullying and harassment. If you suspect a problem, talk to the school principal.

### **What To Look For:**

#### **Victim –**

- Reluctance to go to school or loses interest in school.
- Stolen possessions.
- Cuts, bruises, torn clothing.
- A very timid child with few friends.
- Missing lunch at school---bully may have stolen lunch money.

#### **Bully –**

- A cunning, manipulative or controlling child.
- Often says that classmates “gave” him their stuff.
- Exploits others weaknesses or areas of vulnerability.
- Excessive “teasing”, especially of those who are weaker or younger.
- Lack of empathy for others.
- Defiance.
- Reports of bullying problems from school administrators.
- When confronted, may attempt to turn things around so he looks like the victim.

### **What To Do:**

Talk to your children about bullying. Make sure they know what it is and what a negative impact it can have on the victim so they won't become one. Encourage them to intervene when they witness verbal abuse by a bully and to stick up for the victim, or, in cases of physical abuse, immediately report incidents to school officials or police. Reassure them that reporting the problem will not make it worse.

#### **Victim –**

- Ask your child about school bullies, and if they are bothering him.
- If your child says it's happening, take him seriously.
- Remain calm. Do not over react.
- Encourage your child to discuss the problem with the principal, and offer to accompany him. If he won't report the problem, tell him that you will, and then follow through.
- It can be pretty risky to try to discuss the problem with the parents of the bully. They may react with denial, violence or aggression.
- Keep a diary of incidents

#### **Bully –**

- **Take action: 60% of school bullies grow up to have at least one criminal conviction.**
- Assess your family situation. Living with aggression or violence at home can justify it at school.
- Learn how to build a balance of structure and emotional support in your family and hold your children responsible for their actions.

- Discuss the negative impact of his actions on his victim. If he says, "It was all in fun!" Ask, "Fun for who?" It's only fun if everyone is laughing.
- Spend more time with your child, and re-evaluate curfews and activities.
- Cooperate with the school's plan to help modify your child's behavior.
- If punishment is called for, make sure it is non-violent. Physical punishment carries the message that Might Is Right, the wrong message to send to a bully.
- Genuinely praise your child's efforts toward non-violent, responsible behavior.
- Monitor television programs, movies, music and video games to eliminate role models of violence and aggression.
- Practice non-violent, tolerant, empathetic attitudes at home.
- Seek help from school counselors or other professionals.
- Help him understand how his actions and words make the victim feel.
- Teach negotiation skills.
- Don't let your children intimidate and control you.

#### **How to Bully-proof Your Child:**

- Help your child develop self-respect.
- Help your child understand correct ways to vent anger or dissatisfaction
- Stress the importance of correct body language---making eye contact, relaxed body.
- Encourage friendships. It can be easier for a shy child to seek out another "alone" child to buddy with, rather than try to get into a "group".
- Teach your children to express themselves clearly with "I" statements.
- Use humor to deflect bullying.
- Know when to assert oneself, but make it verbal, not physical.
- Avoid the bully when necessary.
- Teach your children the art of self-affirmation.

## **SUGGESTED READING**

#### **GENERAL:**

*Parent / Teen Breakthrough, the Relationship Approach*, by Kirshenbaum and Foster.

*Raising a Responsible Child*, by Dinkmeyer and McKay.

*Positive Discipline*,  
by Nelson.

*Teenagers: When to Worry and What to Do*, by Powell.

*You and Your Adolescent: A Parents Guide for Ages 10-20*, by L. Steinberg and A. Levine, 1990.

*Feeling Good, the New Mood Therapy*, by D. Burns, 1980.

*The Feeling Good Handbook*, (2nd edition of above book), by D Burns.

*How To Talk So Kids Will Listen, and Listen So Kids Will Talk*, by Faber and Mazlish.

*The Parent's Handbook - STEP - Systematic Training for Effective Parenting*

*Jump Start Parenting*, by Deadmond.

*10 Talks Parents Must Have with Their Children **About Sex and Character***, by Schwartz & Cappello, 2000

*10 Talks Parents Must Have with Their Children **About Violence***, by Schwartz & Cappello, 2000

### **EATING DISORDERS:**

*Everything You Need to Know About Eating Disorders: Anorexia and Bulimia*, by R. Kubersky.

*Preventing Childhood Eating Problems: a Practical, Positive Approach to Raising Children Free of Weight Conflicts*, by J.R. Hirschmann and L. Zaphiropoulos, Gurz Books, 1993.

*A Parents Guide to Eating Disorders and Obesity*, by M.M. Jablow, Delta Books, 1992.

### **SEXUALITY:**

*Our Bodies, Ourselves*, by R. Bell, and its relatives are good books on sexual development.

*A New View of Woman's Body* has very accurate anatomical discussions of femaleness.

*How to Talk with Your Child About Sexuality*. Available for loan or sale at Planned Parenthood.

*Changing Bodies, Changing Lives*, by R. Bell.

### **RELATIONSHIPS:**

*Solving Your Problems Together: Family Therapy for the Whole Family*, by Annunziata and Jacobson-Kram.

*Learning the Skills of Peacemaking*, by Drew.

*What Do You Think? A Kid's Guide to Dealing With Daily Dilemmas*, by Schwartz.

### **FOR TEENS:**

*Closing the Gap Between You and Your Parents* by Jay McGraw

*Life Strategies for Teens* by Jay McGraw

*10 Laws of Life* by Jay McGraw

## **RESOURCES**

### **LAW ENFORCEMENT: 9-1-1**

When problems with your child exceed the usual or cause you a great deal of concern, calling law enforcement (by using the 9-1-1 Dispatcher) is an effective tool in getting your kid's attention and getting him into "the system". Police officers cannot solve the problem, nor can they haul your kid away to jail. However, they can intervene in a crisis, and their citation will get your child on the path to other appropriate intervention measures. Be sure to explain the situation fully to the dispatcher. If it is an emergency or extreme crisis, an officer will usually respond within 10 minutes. Otherwise, you will have to go to the police station to fill out a report in person. Be sure to share with the officer as much of your child's unacceptable behavioral history as you can to help them better understand what they can do to help.

**Weapons:** It is illegal for a youth under 21 to own a handgun (or under 18 to own a rifle). It is illegal for anyone to possess a switchblade, a butterfly knife, a blackjack (weighted leather club), or brass knuckles. If you find a weapon in your child's possession (on him or in his room), you may request that an officer come, confiscate the item, and cite your child.

**Drugs:** White powders in strange containers, pills with no pharmaceutical markings, or dried grasses in a baggie may or may not be illegal substances. Explain the situation and your suspicions to your child. A law enforcement officer can test the substance, confiscate it, and cite your child. Today's marijuana is stronger and more harmful than it was in the 60s. It can cause depression or learning disabilities.

**Alcohol:** It is illegal for anyone under 21 to possess alcohol, in the bottle or in the body. If your teen is using alcohol and is not responsive to your requests to quit or seek treatment, calling 9-1-1 if he comes home drunk will get the ball rolling. It is illegal for a person under 21 to drive a vehicle with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of 0.02. (In comparison, it is illegal for an adult to drive with a BAC of 0.08)

**Ungovernable:** This is when a kid is out of control. She is refusing to obey house rules, destroying property or upsetting her parents. "Giant temper tantrum" might be an adequate description. If you have an officer come to the house and cite her, Youth Court will come into the picture as an ally on your side.

**Suicidal Tendencies:** This may accompany an ungovernable episode. If your child is combative or extremely depressed and threatening suicide, complete with weapon or locked in her room, the 9-1-1 dispatcher will send an officer. It would also be a good idea to call the hospital emergency room and let them know what is happening.

**Assault:** If you child hits you, under any circumstances other than self defense, call 9-1-1. Your child is out of control and needs help. You could use some help, too.

**FIRST CALL FOR HELP:** 549-5555, Noon to 5 p.m.

Many agencies and individuals offer assistance in dealing with youth and their problems. If you are unsure of what specific help you could use, First Call For Help would be a good place to start. They are an information referral service providing resource information for all needs, including personal, family, medical, institutional, organizational, support groups, etc. They provide referral information only, from a data base of 550 Missoula listings. They are affiliated with the Alliance of Information Referral System and can give referral sources for other parts of the country.

**OTHER AGENCIES.** This is a partial listing of agencies that might be able to help you.

ALANON: Support group for adults who are affected by someone else's addiction. 721-5818

CASEY FOUNDATION: Long-term foster care. 543-2890 [www.caseyfamilyprograms.org](http://www.caseyfamilyprograms.org)

COMMUNITY CARE: Adolescent drug and alcohol prevention and intervention education. 549-2890 [www.communitycare.org](http://www.communitycare.org)

FAMILIES FIRST: Parenting classes, individual consultations on a sliding fee scale, Single Parent Support Group. 721-7690 [www.familiesfirstmt.com](http://www.familiesfirstmt.com)

FAMILY VIOLENCE COUNCIL: Through the YWCA. An organization of citizens and other agencies concerned with family violence issues. Provides education and public awareness; investigates complaints of agencies and personnel who respond to family violence. 543-6691

FORUM FOR CHILDREN & YOUTH: Home of MUSAP, Healthy Start Coalition, Youth Development Coalition. 523-2798

FRIENDS TO YOUTH: Individual, family and group counseling to youth; offers classes in effective parenting; short term intervention for runaways and their families. 728-2662

HUMAN RESOURCE COUNCIL, DISTRICT 11: Summer youth employment program for persons aged 14-22 from low-income families. 728-3710

MISSOULA CITY/COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT: Provides informational brochures and community talks on issues such as AIDS, tobacco use, traffic safety, sexually transmitted diseases, other communicable diseases, etc. 523-4775 [www.co.missoula.mt.us/healthpromo](http://www.co.missoula.mt.us/healthpromo)

MISSOULA FORUM FOR YOUTH AND FAMILIES: Works to help Missoula grow healthy, resilient children youth and families. [www.missoulaforum.org](http://www.missoulaforum.org)

MISSOULA INDIAN CENTER: Provides out-patient services, alcohol and other drug counseling, prevention services, anger management and Positive Parenting for ALL RACES. 829-9515

MISSOULA YOUTH HOMES: Open to referrals from Youth Court or social services. Provides short-term crisis shelter or long-term housing. 721-2704 [www.youthhomes.com](http://www.youthhomes.com)

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR ANOREXIA NERVOSA AND ASSOCIATED DISORDERS: Hotline – 847-831-3438.  
[www.anad.org](http://www.anad.org)

THE PARENTING PLACE: Parenting classes; support group and telephone assistance for any parent needing support or guidance with parenting issues, such as: discipline techniques, anger and stress management, communication skills, self-esteem, etc. Parent Aid Program. 728-5437

PLANNED PARENTHOOD: Provides general and reproductive health care and counseling; maintains a library of sex education information; conducts parent workshops. 728-5490 [www.impp.org](http://www.impp.org)

TURNING POINT: Provides alcohol and drug assessment and evaluation. Offers a range of services including adolescent intensive out-patient program, aftercare treatment program, out-patient therapy, Drug Education for Teens (DEFT). 532-9800

YMCA: Programs for youth including Teen Theater, dances, summer day camp, Teen Leadership, etc. 721-9622  
[www.ymca.missoula.org](http://www.ymca.missoula.org)

YWCA PATHWAYS: Domestic & Sexual Violence Program; emergency shelter for domestic violence victims and their children; peer counseling, professional counseling and support groups. [www.ywcaofmissoula.org](http://www.ywcaofmissoula.org)

## HOW DID WE DO?

How has this information been helpful to you? Please print, and complete this form, and mail it to:

Survival Guide

Health Promotion Division, Missoula Health Dept.

301 West Alder

Missoula MT 59802.

(We do not have an e-mail address for comments.)

1. How did you receive this booklet? (circle)

From a:    police officer        school counselor        youth court  
                 friend                    Internet                    other\_\_\_\_\_

2. What specific information in this booklet was helpful?

3. How could we make this booklet **more** helpful to parents? What information should we include in future editions?

4. Should we continue to make this booklet available to parents? \_\_\_\_\_

5. Any other comments?

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