

## Talking to your teenager about addiction

**Its good to talk.** Don't leave an addiction untreated – it can lead to physical complications and can affect the academic, social and emotional development of your teenager in a significant way.

**1 Listen first. Suspend your judgements.**

Decide on when and how to bring up your worries. Be prepared for your teenager to initially deny they feel bad.

**2 Respect their point of view.**

Validate how they feel rather than dismiss – they may present their view by dismissing themselves – 'I know it's silly but...' - don't agree with them.

In terms of what to say – focus on your observations and your concerns. Statements are better than questions. For example, 'Jeri, I've noticed you haven't been catching up with many of your friends, seems like things are difficult at the moment'.

**3 Be tentative.**

Don't start with sensitive subjects, eg. 'I notice you've got drunk every time you've gone out with your friends.'

**4 Keep communicating with your teenager.**

If getting your teenager to accept help is difficult, don't give up – keep trying. Remember one feature of an addiction is denial.

**5 Don't be angry or blame your teenager.**

Listen out for anything that might motivate them and push that one factor.

**6 Arrange for things to be easy.**

For example instead of expecting them to do something on their own accord, break into small steps and do it with them, or if they don't want to go out, arrange for things to happen more at home.

**7 Arrange for a medical evaluation.**

Its important to assess risk and early intervention usually means a good outcome.