

# Bring Your Teen Back From The Brink

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*Get Educated, Get Tough, and Get Help  
to Save Your Teen from Drugs*

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Bring Your Teen Back From The Brink:

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## **Dedication**

This book is dedicated to parents everywhere who are seeking to reclaim the health of their families. Not just health for their troubled teens, but for the sisters, brothers, friends, and relatives who are all affected by drug use and the behavior and damage it causes. May these parents one day – hopefully with the help of this book – walk arm in arm again with their sons and daughters, enjoying the peace, happiness, and love that a family should embody.

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## Introduction

My kid is on drugs, what do I do? That's the question this book will answer.

The treatment of substance abuse is becoming a reality for more families every year. According to a national study released in June 2011 by The National Center of Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) (Adolescent Substance Use: America's #1 Public Health Problem), 9 out of 10 Americans who meet the medical criteria for addiction started smoking, drinking, or using other drugs before age 18.

The good news is that use of illicit drugs, alcohol, and cigarettes is declining among U.S. 8th, 10th, and 12th graders, according to the 2014 University of Michigan "Monitoring the Future" study. The annual survey, funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, includes 40,000 to 50,000 U.S. middle school and high school students. (See a full summary of findings here: [www.monitoringthefuture.org/pressreleases/14drugpr.pdf](http://www.monitoringthefuture.org/pressreleases/14drugpr.pdf))

The bad news reflected in the results is for the teen who is abusing drugs and/or alcohol, as the behavior is most certainly an anomaly and cause for concern. One of the well-worn excuses by teens who are using – "Everybody does it" – is quickly shot down by the survey results. If it is happening in your family, this information is a call to even more swift and decisive action on your part. These numbers can all help you gauge how deeply your teen is involved with drug abuse. If you have found that they are using these drugs, you'll know your teen is in a very small minority of his or her peers and needs help.

Here are some of the key findings of the 2014 survey:

- Alcohol and cigarette daily use are at their lowest points since the

study began in 1975.

- Use of a number of illicit drugs also show declines in student use this year, the greatest decline being use of synthetic marijuana, which fell to 6% from 11% when it was first included in the study in 2011. Also known as “spice” or K-2, the substance is highly unpredictable in its effects, but unfortunately most students don’t perceive it as a dangerous class of drugs.
- Marijuana, after increasing reported use for five years, declined slightly from 26% in 2013 to 24%. However, the belief that regularly smoking the drug is harmful continues to fall, according to the study’s authors.
- Teens using marijuana on a near daily use – 20 or more occasions in the prior 30 days – declined some, but is still showing 5.8% of high school seniors (one in every 17) (5.8 percent) using this frequently.
- Reporting of prescription drug misuse is reported only by 12th-graders, but is showing a statistically significant decline between 2013 and 2014, from 16% to 14%. Abuse of prescription drugs has been on a gradual decline since the 17% reported in 2005.
- Thankfully OxyContin abuse is also still on the decline since peaking in 2009, with reported use of 1% for 8th-graders, and about 3% for high school sophomores and seniors.
- Students using any illicit drug (other than marijuana) in the prior 12 months declined by about 2% to 15.9% among high school seniors, but in was virtually unchanged for 8th and 10th graders at 6.4% and 11.2% respectively.

The one new addition to the study this year was the use of electronic cigarettes. While use of regular tobacco cigarettes is at historical lows, to just 8% reporting any smoking, past-month “vaping” by 8th graders is 8.7%, for 10th graders is 16.2%, and for 12th graders is 17.1%. The trend

here will be an interesting one to follow. As general acceptance of electronic smoking devices is losing popularity with adults, the marketing has shifted towards young adults, if not teens.

In December 2014, the American College of Emergency Physicians released 2012 data from the National Poison Control Center ("Poisoning in the United States: 2012 Emergency Medicine Report of the National Poison Data System" (NPDS)) revealing that poisonings from prescription drugs are the leading cause of injury death in the United States, and that poisonings from "bath salts" and synthetic marijuana are emerging threats to public health. The news release said that "The majority (83 percent) of poisonings that ended in death in 2012 were linked to a pharmaceutical product, most commonly opioid painkillers, though NPDS also recorded deaths from cardiovascular and antidepressant medications."

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2013 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, there were an estimated 2.2 million adolescents who were illicit drug users in 2013, about 8.8% of all 12 to 17 year-olds. Drugs of choice broke down this way:

- Marijuana – 7.1%
- Non-medical users of prescription drugs – 2.2%
- Hallucinogens – 0.6%
- Cocaine – 0.2%
- Heroin - 0.1%

Though alcohol remains the leading choice of drugs of abuse, all three grades showed a decline in the proportion of students reporting any alcohol use in the 12 months prior to the survey; the combined total of students in the three grades reporting use dropped from 43% to 41%. That's down from a peak of 61% in 1997.

Roughly one in five (19%) of 12<sup>th</sup> graders report binge drinking (consuming five or more drinks in a row) at least once in the prior two weeks, but binge drinking overall was down to 12% across the three grades, again from a peak in 1997 of 22%.

While sales of non-caffeinated “alcopops” are in steep decline, they have shown to be very attractive to teens, especially girls and young women, who find them a very easy -to-drink way to get intoxicated. One study by the Center for Science in the Public Interest found that teens were twice as likely to have tried these beverages as adults. Even with sales slowing, alcohol beverage companies continue to introduce new products to the market, including margarita, hard lemonade, and other pre-mixed drink flavors.

Because of the way alcopops are marketed and packaged, they are definitely something for you to not only be aware of, but to make sure you know what is and isn’t an alcoholic beverage.

### **Experience backs up the numbers**

All those numbers are very important, and dangerous, statistics that mirror what I see daily as a professional drug counselor to teens. The pages ahead will explain why.

The reason for this book is to help answer some of the questions that we professionals hear on a regular basis. The commonalities that we see among families facing this situation have made treatment, at times, a series of standard mental checklists that counselors sort through and adapt to effect change in teen attitudes and drug abuse. We want to show you that you are not alone. Many, many parents just like you have been down this road before.

This book, by design, will help guide your family through your own war on drugs. As a counselor who has worked with teens since 1995, I do

call it a war. It's a dirty, painful, draining, stressful battle at times, and it must be looked at as such. Very often you'll gain only small victories, and you will suffer setbacks as well, but every step will lead you to the ultimate goal: pulling your teen back from the brink of self-destruction.

### **Not our child**

The number one question I have been asked again and again is, "How did we not see this happening in our home?" The answer is simple. Kids have made drug abuse a fine art, at times making it their focus to behave outrageously, yet all the while inducing you to think that you are crazy for suspecting something is wrong. The goal of teenagers is to push the limits you set and get away with it.

Parental denial of the problem is a very powerful tool that kids use to their advantage. Denial is the number one focus of many of the groups that I facilitate. Denial in the form of "my kids are not like those kids", and also that this is the type of problem that will just go away when you tell them to stop. As anyone who has had a teenager will tell you, it can be a daily challenge to deal with normal teenage behavior, but adding drugs into the mix makes a toxic combination that compounds the turmoil. Left unaddressed, it will leave your family in crisis for years to come.

### **More than just getting clean**

With teens, drug abuse in itself is rarely the only problem. The ultimate problem is actually the behavior and the decisions that they make while under the influence. Anger, negative attitude towards the family, poor motivation to achieve or even set goals, failing academic performance, and depression are the hallmark signs that someone is abusing drugs.

As parents you may feel that these behaviors are a passing phase for your child. You remember similar things that the teenage-you or your

friends may have been through. You'll say, "I made it through, so what's the big deal if my kid is experimenting too?" You may go so far as to try to parent as if you can reason with your teen, while hoping that if you relate to them, then they'll be safe.

Hope on your part is a wonderful thing, but not without solid action. Your teen's friends should be made at social settings or school, not at home. Your child is not your friend and treating them like a new buddy to do things with is just poor parenting.

But your child is the most precious gift that you have. Along with that gift comes tremendous responsibility. Step up to the plate and tackle that responsibility head on through discipline, reinforcement, role modeling, and love.

I have seen many families that could not handle me telling them what they needed to change in order for their child to change; some walk out of group in the middle of a session. They may say that they just want their child to "cut down" on drinking alcohol or marijuana, and focus more on school. If that's where you are, then I highly encourage you to read this book as fast as you can.

### **Educate yourself as your teens do**

With the advancement of technology – the Internet, instant messaging, social networking, cell phones, hundreds of TV channels – kids have access to more information (most of it incorrect) about drugs and the short- and long-term effects. If your kids are educating each other, you must do the same.

But there hasn't been an efficient way for parents to get that information quickly. *Bring Your Teen Back From The Brink* is designed to do that.

In this book, we will tell you what you can expect your teen to say and

do. We'll also teach you about popular street terms for each drug and how each is ingested. From simple household objects used to get high, through advanced paraphernalia bought through the Internet, kids are becoming more resourceful not only with what they take, but how to get it. And of course, we will bring you information on what you can do to save your child from this destructive behavior.

The changes that you will need to make might be hard and most likely will feel unnatural, but they are essential to changing your child's behavior.

### **Tear it down to build it up**

Have you seen a total house remodel? It starts with a demolition that is a dirty, dusty, chaotic mess. Only one wall or room might be left standing. When you first see that stripped structure, you probably can't imagine the beautiful new home that will be built in its place. But with lots of patience and time – and of course a dollar investment too – you'll get something that looks and feels like the vision you've had in your mind all along.

That could easily describe bringing your child back from drug and alcohol abuse as well.

I invite all parents to sit down and write out a description of the kind of person you want your child to become as they grow and mature: healthy, responsible, honest, trustworthy, motivated, etc. (See the chart at the end of this introduction.) Now look at the reality of what your child's beliefs and actions are right now. Do they match up? If not, don't feel like you have failed as a parent. You haven't. But now is the time to educate yourself and take action.

Leading your teen through this process and back to a healthy, productive life is possible. I have seen hundreds of families move from total dysfunction to becoming a supportive group of individuals who

grow together and share strength to help achieve recovery. Through this book I hope I can play a part in that process.

### Exercise 1 – Reality Check

**Reality Check**  
**When your child was born, what did you want for them? How did you see their lives unfolding? What milestones and achievements did you expect of them? What moments did you want to enjoy with them?**  
**Answer in terms of the different facets of their life below.**

	Expectation	Reality
<b>Family</b> (Spend time together? Happy, loving, cooperative, grateful...? Mindful or defiant? Contributing or taking? Conforming to your beliefs or faith)		
<b>School</b> (Grades and attendance? Does effort and achievement match potential? Will they graduate high school, college? Just getting by or taking full advantage?)		
<b>Personal</b> (Integrity and honesty? Thinking of others or egocentric? Treating others with respect? Humble or arrogant? Gravitating to positive or negative influences, e.g., music, TV, etc.? Physical appearance?)		
<b>Friends</b> (Positive or negative? Achievers? Respectful, supportive, open, accepting? Appearance?)		
<b>Activities/Sports</b> (Finding something to be passionate about? Gaining or losing desire? Achieving to their potential? Working to be better? Having fun? Coachable? )		