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Can I Tell? How Do I Know?



Contributed by Bruce Pemberton

Recognizing the overuse of alcohol and other drugs is sometimes difficult. Most addicts quickly learn how to hide their signs and symptoms of alcohol and drug abuse. Denial is a very stubborn habit. It is a pattern of deception by which addicts hide the truth of their dependency from themselves and others. For example, when addicts feel something is not right, they will usually blame it on something other than their use.

One way is behavioral changes. Behavior can vary widely from person to person. At a party, one person may start dancing after five drinks, then get in a fight after two more drinks. Some can be happy one minute and sad the next. Addicts may suddenly lose interest in doing things they once enjoyed.

Other addiction related problems are skipping school due to poor grades in class and changing friends frequently. Addicts may have unusually strong feelings of panic, anxiousness, and guilt. They may mistrust their friends, be irritable and become secretive. Some people may become argumentative with loved ones, family members and friends, as well as run into trouble with authority figures (police, court judge, boss at work, or parents).

Some questions may pop-up in your mind: "Can I tell if a person has a drug problem?" "If I suspect drug problems, should I do something about it?" "If so, what should I do?" Unless you actually see someone take a drug and know what the drug is, or smell alcohol on

someone's breath, you cannot be sure. You may wonder what is causing the behavioral or physical signs and symptoms that alerted you in the first place. You can use your intuition and make educated guesses, but you should also contact professionals to discuss your concerns and get more information and guidance.

If you or someone you know and care about has a drug problem, you can contact any of these organizations in the Rochester area:

- Substance and Alcohol Intervention Services for the Deaf (SAISD)
585-475-4978 v/tty, vp
- John L. Norris Addiction Treatment Center
461-0410 (v) 461-4253(tty) 461-4545 (fax)
- Alcoholics Anonymous 232-6720 (v)
- Narcotics Anonymous 24 hour hotline 234-7789 (v)

