

“Deception”

This video in our series, classified as “Parenting 101” is a must see by parents.

Parents, it is normal to trust what your children tell you, to believe their stories and to defend them at all cost. While parents have the need to trust their children, they must also have courage and strength to question when faced with concern or doubt.

Questions for parents to ask themselves:

- * Does my child have a drop in grades, excessive tardiness or skipping school?
- * Does my child have emotional highs and lows, defying rules or becoming more secretive?
- * Has my child’s circle of friends changed?
- * Has my child shown a loss of interest in favorite activities?
- * Has my child become more secretive, more isolated or have a loss of initiative?
- * Has my child not been where he said he was or given excuses for staying out late?
- * Have I been suspicious of money or possessions missing?
- * Has my child come home with alcohol on his breath or have evidence of drug paraphernalia?
- * Has my child become more irritable, physically or verbally abusive to me or other family members?

Responding “yes” to any of the above questions does not mean that your child is experimenting or using alcohol or other drugs. However, changes in your child’s behavior are a sign that something might not be right and should not be excused as typical teenage behavior. Parents should also be aware that sometimes our brightest children are the most capable of deception.

Denial

Denial is a defense mechanism that is used to protect one’s self from the realization that they are chemically dependent. Denial distorts reality and has many faces:

- * *Simple Denial:* Maintaining that something is not so when in fact it is so.
- * *Minimizing:* Admitting to using alcohol or drugs but in such a way that it appears to be much less serious than is actually the case.
- * *Blaming:* Denying responsibility for certain behavior and maintaining that the responsibility lies with someone or something else.
- * *Rationalizing:* Offering alibis, excuses, justifications and other explanations for behavior. The behavior is not denied but an inaccurate explanation of its cause is given.
- * *Intellectualizing:* Avoiding emotional personal awareness of the alcohol or other drug problem by dealing with it on a level of generalization, intellectual analysis or theorizing.
- * *Diversion:* Changing the subject to avoid threatening topics such as one’s drinking or other drug use and related behavior.
- * *Hostility:* Becoming angry and irritable when reference is made to one’s possible alcohol or drug use. This is a good way to avoid the issue as people have a tendency to back off from potential confrontation.

Enabling

Enabling describes any action taken by a concerned person that removes or softens the effect of a harmful consequence of chemical use upon the user. Enabling prolongs the illness of chemical dependency by hiding or ignoring the harmful consequences from the afflicted user.

Examples of Enabling:

- * Bailing out of trouble
- * Giving them “one more chance” and then another when they get defensive
- * Using drugs along with them
- * Joining them in blaming others for their bad feelings
- * Lending them money
- * Lying or making excuses for them

Enabling is part of the illness:

As a person becomes chemically dependent, he or she develops an uncanny ability to deny the problem. This ability is rooted in a sincere delusion that there is no problem. A victim of this illness can say and believe, “I can quit anytime”, when it is obvious to you that they cannot. This denial system is the most baffling part of chemical dependency. The enabling actions of others strengthen the denial system of the user. It is part of the disease process.

Enabling is automatic:

We begin to enable spontaneously and naturally when a person we care about develops chemical dependency. Most of us want to help our family members or friend. When we enable, we assume that the caring and good intentions behind our actions will get to the user and persuade him to stop using drugs. That is what should happen. Unfortunately, we don't realize that unlike other people, the chemically dependent person has a system of denial and delusion that is strengthened, not diminished, by well meaning attempts to remove or soften the inevitable damage caused by his continued drug use. We continue to enable because we fear the loss of the user's love if we should question the pattern of chemical use.

Enabling becomes your habit:

Enabling is habit forming. The chemically dependent person helps you maintain the habit because he needs you to support the denial system. The dependent person becomes very skilled at using your guilt, fear and love to keep them sick.

Enabling has to stop or they won't:

Enabling must be stopped. Each time you remove a negative consequence for the user, you deprive him of an opportunity to see the problem. Enabling therefore helps to keep the drug user sick.

How to quit enabling:

It is not easy but get help for yourself from a parent support group or individual therapist. Many concerned people have been helped by Al-Ateen, Al-Anon, and various treatment centers. The Alliance website offers numerous resources for where to turn for help and support. Please visit these resources at drug-alliance.org

