



When Someone You Know Has a Drug or Alcohol Problem...

The drug problem of one person often becomes the problem of many people. Those around a drug abuser - spouse, children, parents, friends, co-workers - can all be affected. Often the friends and loved ones of a drug abuser can see a drug problem developing long before the drug abuser can.

How can you tell if someone has a problem with drugs?

It can be hard to tell if a person is abusing drugs. Changes in their behavior may indicate a drug problem, but these changes may also be related to other problems such as depression, stress or other psychological/emotional problems. The following warning signs indicate that a friend or family member may have a drug problem:

- Uses drugs on a regular basis.
- Severe mood swings
- Modification in sleeping habits (sleep more, sleeping less)
- Experiences withdrawal symptoms when person attempts to quit (shakes, vomiting, headaches)
- Undergoes personality changes when under the influence of drugs.
- Has trouble on the job or misses time from work
- Experiences relationship problems at home (with spouse, children, parents)
- Has money problems because of drug use.
- Gets into trouble with the law
- Avoids family/friends.
- Lies about drug use.
- Experiences blackouts (loss of memory for events that happened or of actions performed while drinking or using)
- Increases high-risk behavior (e.g. shares needles, has unprotected sex).
- Does not follow through with commitments/promises.
- Feels run-down, hopeless, depressed, suicidal.

Does their drug problem affect you?

It is important to recognize when you are being affected by someone else's drug use. The following questions will help you determine if you are affected by someone's use of drugs:

- Do you worry about how much someone uses drugs?
- Do you have money problems because of someone's drug use?
- Do you lie to cover up for someone's drug use?
- Do you feel that if the drug user loved you enough he or she would stop using?
- Do you threaten to leave or hurt yourself in order to scare the person into quitting?
- Have you been embarrassed or hurt by a drug user?

If you answer "yes" to any of these questions then you are being affected by someone else's drug use.

How family/children are affected

When one member of a family is abusing drugs, all members of the family are affected. All family members, including the children, learn to adapt to meet the needs of the using parent. Family members must often assume responsibilities of the drug abuser to keep the family going, while the drug abuser becomes less involved in the family. Family members can quickly fall into the trap of making it easier for the person to continue using. Family members often live in fear, real or imagined, never knowing how the drug abuser may react. They may also feel guilt, believing that if only they were a better partner (parent, son, daughter) the person would stop using drugs.

Children raised by a parent abusing drugs are often required to take on responsibilities far beyond their abilities or maturity. They may spend a lot of time and energy worrying about the parent using drugs, the non-using parent, and their siblings. The drug problem can turn into the "family secret" and the children learn not to talk about what is really going on at home. They may stop bringing friends home to avoid the embarrassment of having their friends see what is going on.

As a person's drug problem progresses, using becomes more important than family commitments. Children learn that they can't rely on their parents to follow through with promises. Some of these children will develop problems such as academic or social difficulties, depression or personality problems. Some of these children will grow up and develop substance abuse problems of their own.

Where to get help

If you are concerned about the drug use of somebody you care about, help is available. Marin Services for Women offers Inpatient Residential Treatment and Day or Evening Outpatient Treatment specifically for Women; individual counseling and group programs for family members are included in all of our treatment options.

The MSW Difference

MSW is unique because it is the only agency in Marin that provides a full continuum of gender-responsive, trauma-specific alcohol and drug recovery programs. We also allow women to bring their children under six years of age into residential treatment with them. Recently published research shows that women who receive treatment services in women-only recovery programs are more than twice as likely to complete treatment as those in mixed-gender programs. Marin Services for Women graduates a remarkable 70% of clients who enter our programs.

Marin Services for Women is located in beautiful Greenbrae, California (Marin County) just 10 minutes from the Golden Gate Bridge and San Francisco. It is easily accessible from highway US-101 and we are located just 45 minutes North of San Francisco International Airport. We help women from all over California and the United States in a safe, welcoming and supportive environment that empowers women in their journey towards sustained recovery from addiction and trauma.

What Can You Do?

Pass on the MSW website to your loved one or fill out the confidential form on our admission page to have a conversation with one of our Admissions Staff members. They will be happy to answer your questions and can help determine if MSW is the right fit for your loved one. You can also check out our extensive resources page listed on our website where you will find additional support groups, community agencies, and information to assist you.

www.marinservicesforwomen.org

gethelp@mswinc.org

1-866-924-2220

What if my family member or friend won't go to treatment? Are there other options?

One option you have is to work with an interventionist, a trained professional who will help you arrange a structured meeting with the alcoholic or addict. An intervention is an educational process for the whole family about the progression of untreated alcoholism and other drug dependency. The intervention begins the process of recovery for the whole family. This will usually include facilitating admission of the addicted person into an appropriate treatment program.