

### OTHER TITLES

#### Create It

*Teaching your children to talk about their feelings*

*How can I help my young child learn to get along with others?*

*If you're a parent, you're a role model: How to teach your children by example*

#### Nurture It

*How can I teach my young child to deal with peer pressure?*

*Teaching your children the truth about drugs and gambling*

*How can I help my young child to be more confident?*

*How to listen actively to your children*

#### Choose It

*How can I help my child if my partner is addicted?*

*Helping your teen work through anger*

*The truth about popular drugs*

*How do I know if my teen is using drugs?*

*How do I talk to my teenager about drugs?*

*Raves and club drugs: How do I protect my kids?*

#### Get It Back

*Helping teens evaluate their drug use*

*How bad is my teen's drinking or drug use?*

*Does your teen's drug use leave you feeling like you're losing your sanity?*

*How to get through to your teen*

*Intervening when your teen is using drugs*

*Getting help for your son or daughter who is drinking, using other drugs or gambling*

*Supporting your son or daughter in recovery*

RECOVERY IS A JOURNEY filled with challenges. For many teenagers, recovery means developing a new lifestyle: different friends, different activities, different attitudes. This can be frightening. Your love and support can be essential to helping them maintain these changes in their lives.

It is not only a difficult time for your teen. It can be difficult for you as well. You might be wondering if they will be able to maintain these changes. You might also be feeling nervous about letting them make their own decisions and trusting them to make healthy choices. These are normal feelings.

#### What can I expect?

Recovery is a process that continues long after your child has stopped gambling or using alcohol and other drugs. Whether your child went through formal treatment, used a support group or attended outpatient counselling, they have learned many new things and this can be overwhelming.

Sometimes relapse happens. Your son or daughter might go back to drinking, using other drugs or gambling. Often this is a one-time slip and your teen will learn from the experience and get back on track. Sometimes, the use continues and your son or daughter will return to the old behaviour. Although nobody wants to encourage slips or relapses, they are often a part of recovery. If your teen relapses, help them to get back on track. Remember the progress that has been made so far. What is important is to help them get back on track without feeling like they have failed.

Talking with other parents about their successful strategies, and continuing to attend family counselling or other treatment options, is important. Don't allow the current problem to make you forget the success you've had so far. Things will likely get back

on track soon enough. Try to treat your teen as if they will succeed. It can be hard to let go of some of the disappointments of the past, but having expectations of success is more likely to bring success.

Also remember that you can help shape your teen's behaviour. You can behave in a way that helps them to keep using, or in a way that helps them to stop. Behaviour that helps using is sometimes called "enabling." Parents often do this out of love for their child. Enabling will help your child in the moment but in the long run it hurts. Try not to make excuses for your child's behaviour, cover up mistakes they make, bail them out of trouble or simply ignore the problems. They need to be accountable for their actions and their decisions. This is an important part of sobriety and of growing up.

Though it is important to be aware of your teen's friends and activities, they will still need to face life without your help sometimes. You can be there for your teen, but you will not be able to help them through every struggle. Supporting your teen in recovery includes realizing that they are separate from you. They will need to make their own choices and learn from the consequences of these choices.

#### How will this affect the rest of the family?

Addiction affects everyone in the family. Just because your teen is in recovery does not mean old problems will just go away. Everyone has been affected and everyone needs to learn new ways of responding.



Try to live in the present. It is natural to treat your teen as you did when they were using, not acknowledging the changes they have made. Set boundaries appropriate to their current behaviour. Respond to current breaches of rules, don't hold grudges or bring up the past. Encourage your teen, as well as others in the family, to attend a support group. Encourage your teen to attend, but remember, although you can provide support, you cannot force recovery. It may be a good idea to get family counselling to help everyone learn new ways of responding.

### **For more information**

We understand that everyone's needs are different. Whether you want to prevent your child from using alcohol, tobacco or other drugs, or you want to help your child deal with a drug problem, we can help. Information and prevention programs, group and family counselling, outpatient and residential treatment, and the Protection of Children Abusing Drugs program are offered by Alberta Health Services and its funded services to help your child and your family.

For more information and to find an addiction services office near you, please call the 24-hour Helpline at 1-866-332-2322.



## Activity Page

In early recovery, sometimes people feel disheartened about the recovery process. Perhaps they feel that they have been working so hard and still have so far to go. It will get easier. Try not to look at how far you've got to go, but how far you've come already!

Discuss these questions with your son or daughter to help focus on the positive changes:

1. What changes have you already made to help you stay away from alcohol, other drugs and gambling?
2. How has your life changed since you've stopped using alcohol, other drugs and gambling?
3. What are the good things about not using alcohol, other drugs and gambling?
4. What changes do you still have to make in your life to help you stay abstinent?
5. What are some of your goals right now?

Quit drinking, using other drugs or gambling —>

No drinking, using or gambling at all during the month —>

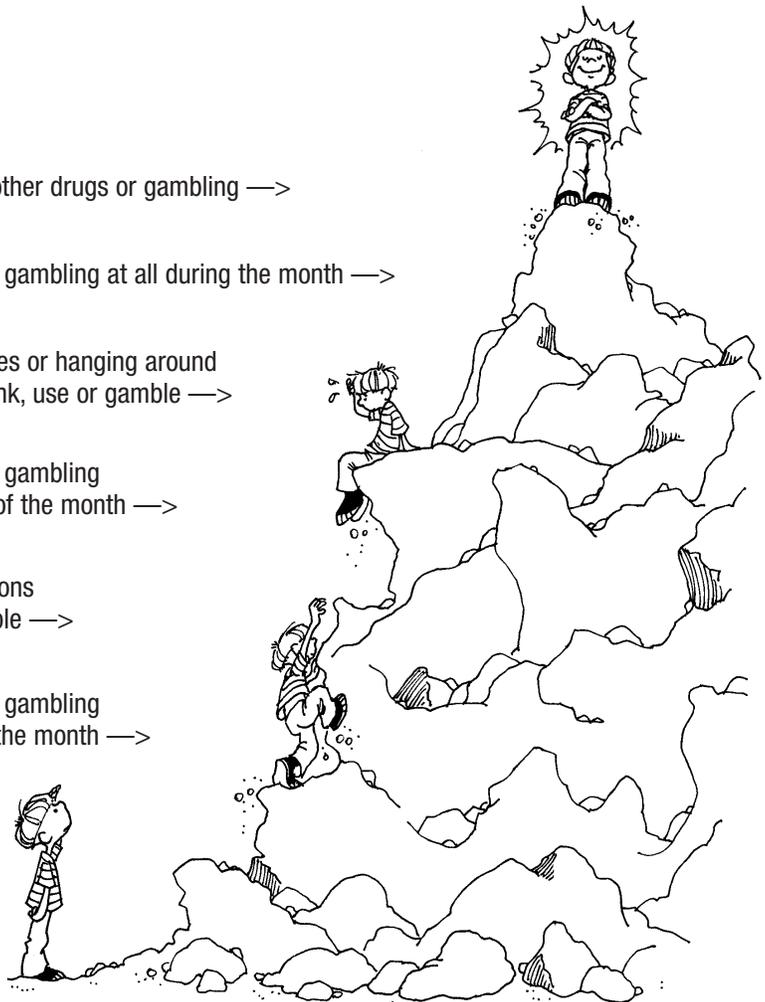
Learning new activities or hanging around people who don't drink, use or gamble —>

No drinking, using or gambling three weekends out of the month —>

Turning down invitations to drink, use or gamble —>

No drinking, using or gambling one weekend out of the month —>

Deciding to quit —>



## Some thoughts

- One of the hardest things you will do while supporting your teen in recovery is letting go and not taking responsibility for their behaviour. Try keeping track of how you are reacting and look for alternative ways of handling situations. For example, if you find yourself watching the clock waiting for your teen to get home, is there something you can do to change this pattern?
- Shifting from “Has my teen been using?” to “Is my teen meeting expectations in the home?” can help you to focus your energy on your family. For example, has your teen been coming home at the agreed-upon time? Have they been attending school and getting acceptable grades?
- Letting your teen know that you understand that they will probably experience a roller-coaster of feelings, especially in early recovery, can be helpful. Help them to find other ways of coping with these feelings rather than turning to alcohol, other drugs or gambling. Send a clear message that it’s okay to have all of these feelings, but it’s just as important to find a safe way to express them.
- Find a safe way to express your feelings. Remember, your teen takes responsibility for their behaviour, so you need to take responsibility for yours.
- Take every opportunity to let your teen know you are on their side. Ask them what would be helpful, balancing this with your responsibilities as a parent. You often have to make difficult decisions and when concerned about your teen, you may doubt those decisions later. Let your teen know that you will consider their input, along with that of other family members.
- Remember, recovery can be lonely. It is important for your teen to find other things to do that are satisfying to them, such as music, sports or reading. You can help them find alternative activities.
- Transition can be tough. Addiction counsellors can help make the transition easier by providing information services and family or individual counselling.

## Some resources

1. Check your local library for books and videos on recovery.
2. Check out some of the support groups in your area, such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Al-Anon (for family members of those experiencing problems with alcohol), Cocaine Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous, and Gam-Anon (for family members of those experiencing problems with gambling).
3. Contact your local addiction services office for further information and support.