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When Teens Choose to Use: Top 6 Reasons Teens Turn to Alcohol and Drugs

Posted September 22, 2015 in [Roundtable Discussion](#) by [Raychelle Cassada Lohmann](#)



There comes a time in a teen's life where he or she is faced with the single decision to take a drug. Oftentimes the power of that one decision is underestimated. Some teens are able to say no and others can't resist the urge and give in to temptation.

The key question is what makes one teen more resilient than another? What makes one teen say "yes" and another "no?"

Why Not Ask a Teenager?

Is the ability to withstand pressure because some teens are surer of

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Raychelle Lohmann has been a counselor since 1998. She has done extensive research in the domain of anger management and careers. She is a published author and enjoys speaking and presenting at conferences and facilitating workshops. ... [\[more\]](#)

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themselves? Are these confident teens better equipped to stand tall in the face of adversity, even if it's not the popular choice at the time? Perhaps resilient teens have healthier coping skills i.e., exercising, healthy diet, getting plenty of sleep, etc., to deal with life's problems. But what about those teens who aren't prepared to resist pressure? What makes them choose to use?

To answer these questions, all you have to do is ask a teen. Below are some common reasons teens cite for choosing to use alcohol and drugs.

Reason 1 - Appealing

Teens can be influenced by the power of persuasive marketing. The drug and alcohol industry does an incredible job of making their products appealing to potential users. Unfortunately, they are catching the eyes of youthful teens and branding their minds with their products. For example, studies on youth alcohol consumption have shown time and time again that exposure to alcohol marketing affects teen drinking behavior. There's little doubt alcohol advertisements, media images, and celebrity endorsements of alcohol play a role in youth drinking behaviors.

Likewise, drug use in the media, can powerfully change the perception and attitudes of teens. Studies have shown many teens who see drugs being used in the media begin to associate use as not being a big deal. Drug use is still widely shown on media venues and young eyes are watching. According to the John Hopkins Children's Center of the movies teens watch, 93% show alcohol use and 22% reference illicit drugs. According to the Office of National Drug Control Policy, on television, alcohol is the number one drug portrayed, appearing on 77% of TV episodes. Alcohol shows up every 14 minutes on music videos.

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-RAYCHELLE LOHMANN

So, media exposure and marketing *do have* adverse effects on a teen's choice to use and potentially abuse drugs.

Reason 2 - Short-Term Escape

The adolescent years are a time of self-exploration. These times can be complicated and confusing in a youth's life. Plus, today's teens have a lot on their plates.

Many teens have to cope with family problems, relational and financial struggles, problems with peers, problems with school, and the list goes on and on. These teens often lack healthy coping strategies to get through life's difficult times.

Drug use is a short-term solution which can become a long-term problem.

Reason 3 - Relief and Self-Medication

Too many teens today struggle with emotional problems.

Did you know?

Approximately 20% of teens will experience depression before adulthood.

Approximately 8% of teens ages 13-18 have an anxiety disorder, with symptoms commonly emerging around age 6.

Approximately 6.4 million (11%) of youth 4-17 years of age have been diagnosed with ADHD as of 2011.

Teens who struggle with emotional and mental problems are especially vulnerable to becoming susceptible to the luring power of alcohol and drugs. Sadly, these youth will do anything to find relief no matter how short-lived it is.

Unfortunately, these youth are also at an increased risk of becoming addicted.

Reason 4 - Acceptance

We all have a desire to be accepted in life and it's no different for a teen. In fact, the need to be accepted is probably most sought after in the adolescence.

The adolescent years are a pivotal time in life when teens are trying to figure out who they are and how they fit into the picture. Many desire lots of friends and popularity. This strong desire to be accepted and liked can make it extremely difficult to say "no".

Teens Lacking Confidence:

Youth who lack confidence may feel alcohol and drugs help them come out of their shell. They build their confidence on who they are under the influence, rather than believing in themselves. Sadly, these youth often feel people like them more when they are high or intoxicated.

Reason 5 - Rebellion

When teens feel trapped by parental pressures, it's not uncommon for them to rebel. Rebellion can come at a high price. When a teen rebels he/she feeds an internal rage; a rage that has no conscience. It tells them to go ahead and do what they want and not even think about the consequences.

Unfortunately, rebellious teens may gravitate toward drugs that feed their aggression.

From seeking independence, to finding a way to calm their intense feelings, teens who are rebelling have nothing to lose and everything to gain, or so they tell themselves. Their "screw you" attitude can quickly turn around and "screw

them”.

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Reason 6 - Curiosity

Sometimes the desire to try drugs is a satiated need to satisfy curiosity. When no one is home and the liquor cabinet isn't locked, what better time to explore what it feels like to get drunk? When your friends are sitting around getting high, what's the big deal if you take one or two hits?

These youth often convince themselves that one time won't hurt anything, or better yet, they tell themselves, "everybody else is doing it so why can't I?" They feed themselves lies to justify their behavior.

Unfortunately, these lies often lead to addiction.

Conclusion

No one ever said the adolescent years were easy. In fact, to many they are the most turbulent years of life.

From friendships to after high school plans, the complexities of a teen's life can become overwhelming. It can be difficult for teens to sort through some of their problems on their own. That is why it's important for you, the parent, to make every effort to genuinely "get them".

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Teens need someone who they can trust to help get them through hard times. Most importantly they need someone they can talk to without fear of judgment.

If your teen is already using drugs, don't waste another minute to get professional help. *All you have is today, because tomorrow may be too late...*

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