



shoulder to shoulder
Raising Teens Together



www.shouldertoshoulderminnesota.org

WATCH FOR WARNING SIGNS

The teen years can be tough for both parent and child. Teens face numerous pressures: be popular, do well in school, get along with the family and make important life decisions. On top of this, teens are experiencing physical, sexual, social and emotional changes. (*This explains all the “freaking out...”*) Many of these pressures are unavoidable for teens, and worrying about them, as parents, is natural.

Most kids get through the teen years with success. Other teens may face obstacles that weaken their physical and emotional well being, discourage their motivation and ability to succeed in school, and damage personal relationships. With all this going on, teens can engage in risky behaviors – harming their physical and mental health and chances for future success.

SOME WARNING SIGNS ARE SUBTLE, WHILE OTHERS ARE VERY CLEAR.

If a teen is in trouble, there are warning signs to watch for that signal help is needed. You might notice a change in your teen's behavior. You may learn that your teen has experimented with a risky behavior for the first time. It may simply be that you “sense” that something isn't quite right. Take these signs seriously.

TALK TO YOUR TEEN ABOUT YOUR CONCERNS.

Pay attention to what your teen is doing and how they are feeling. Talk to them about it – and not just when you notice something different. Talk to them on a regular basis. By doing so, you help your teen avoid more difficult problems down the road. For support, talk to parents whose advice you trust.

LEARN ABOUT ISSUES.

Take the time to read about issues by visiting www.shouldertoshoulderminnesota.org or other sources of factual information related to teens and risky behaviors. Find information at your library, school counselor's office, medical clinic or faith-based organization.

GET HELP FROM PROFESSIONALS WHEN YOU NEED IT.

Professionals can help you get the right support you need, and determine whether your teen is in crisis. Discuss your concerns with your teen's teacher, school counselor, doctor or other people you trust. They can refer you to more information or provide professional care to keep your teen safe.

KNOW THE WARNING SIGNS.

- **Defiance.** *Not just occasionally – this is normal. We're talking about continued disregard for your authority and rules.*
- **Suspected substance use or abuse.**
- **Aggression** – fighting with and hurting others.
- **Extreme withdrawal** – teens spending an inordinate amount of time in their room.
- **Loss of interest** in activities your teen normally likes to do.
- **Change in appearance** – neat kids become unkempt, rapid weight loss or gain, etc.
- **Continued talk about death, depression and suicide.**

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