



Hope. Heal. Recover.

# WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU EXPECT YOUR CHILD OF SUBSTANCE USE?

## 5 INITIAL STEPS TO HELPING YOUR CHILD

- 1. Lay down rules and consequences.** Your teen should understand that using drugs comes with specific consequences. Don't make hollow threats or set rules that you cannot enforce. Make sure your spouse agrees with the rules and is prepared to enforce them.
- 2. Monitor your child's activity.** Know where your teen goes and who he or she hangs out with. It's also important to routinely check potential hiding places for drugs—in backpacks, between books on a shelf, in DVD cases or make-up cases. Explain to your teen that this lack of privacy is a consequence of him or her having been caught using drugs.
- 3. Encourage other interests and social activities.** Expose your teen to healthy hobbies and activities, such as team sports and after school clubs.
- 4. Talk to your child about underlying issues.** Drug use can be the result of other problems. Is your child having trouble fitting in? Has there been a recent major change, like a move or divorce causing stress?
- 5. Get help.** Teenagers often rebel against their parents but if they hear the same information from a different authority figure, they may be more inclined to listen. Try a sports coach, family doctor, therapist, or drug counselor.

## WHAT COMES FIRST: SUBSTANCE USE OR MENTAL HEALTH?

Addiction is common in people with mental health problems. But although substance abuse and mental health disorders like depression and anxiety are closely linked, one does not directly cause the other.

**Alcohol or drugs are often used to self-medicate the symptoms of depression or anxiety.** Unfortunately, substance abuse causes side effects and in the long run worsens the very symptoms they initially numbed or relieved.

**Alcohol and drug abuse can increase underlying risk for mental disorders.** Mental disorders are caused by a complex interplay of genetics, the environment, and other outside factors. If you are at risk for a mental disorder, drug or alcohol abuse may push you over the edge.

**Alcohol and drug abuse can make symptoms of a mental health problem worse.** Substance abuse may sharply increase symptoms of mental illness or trigger new symptoms. Alcohol and drug abuse also interact with medications such as antidepressants, anti-anxiety pills, and mood stabilizers, making them less effective.