

Kids at Risk Fact Sheet

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Addiction is a Family Issue: Many family members and friends watch the addicted person in the downward tailspin of the addiction and recognize how much the person needs help. What many do not realize is that they - especially kids- are also affected by the addiction.

Children of Addicted Parents: Don't talk, Don't trust, Don't feel.

As a result of the stressful conditions under which they grow and develop, children are at higher risk for:

- developing one or more addictions,
- developing eating disorders,
- entering into unhealthy relationships,
- or a host of other self-defeating behaviors.

In addition, they are subject to possible genetic inheritance of addiction.

In order to adapt within their family situation, children develop coping mechanisms (Don't talk, Don't trust, Don't feel) to survive and deny the shame, guilt, anger, and sadness they may feel inside. These mechanisms then become the basis for their behavior.

What can Teachers and Care-Givers Do?

For these kids, addiction will become a major influence on their perception of the world and on their knowledge of how to respond to events and feelings. Building in supports for them and teaching effective life skills give hope for the future by preventing the pattern of addiction before it starts. Unless they get help in developing positive living skills and some education about their confusing home life, these patterns of behavior will follow them into adulthood.

Kids at risk require lessons on positive self image and feelings, decisions making and peer pressure, coping skills, alcohol and other drug information, how to get help.

(This information was compiled using the BABES Kit of Southfield, Michigan)

Messages that Kids at Risk Need:

1. It is not your fault.
2. All feelings are ok.
3. You don't have control over your parents addiction.
4. It's ok to help yourself.
5. You are not alone.
6. You can get help.
7. Even if your parent never stops drinking or using drugs, you can feel better.
8. You are at risk of genetic inheritance of addiction.