

DO YOU THINK ALCOHOL CAN'T HURT?

Written by Loree Taylor Jordan

How do you know if you have a problem with alcohol? The simple answer is if you think you have a problem with alcohol, you probably do.

When you think of an alcoholic, you probably think of a homeless man sitting on a park bench with a bottle tucked in a paper bag. You think of celebrities that are publicly humiliated with multiple drunk driving arrests and a blatant inability to get their lives together. You're not that bad, are you?

On the other hand, in the back of your mind, you may be saying to yourself that there is something different about the way you drink compared to other people.

That little voice is your first hint.

The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) has identified four symptoms of alcoholism:

- Craving: a strong need or urge to drink
- Loss of control: An inability to stop drinking once you start
- Physical symptoms: If you suddenly try to stop drinking, you experience dramatic symptoms such as shaking, nausea or extreme anxiety
- Tolerance: More and more alcohol is needed to get the same result

Problems with alcohol for many high school students often start at a very young age. The average age when boys first try alcohol is 11, for girls it is 13. The average age at which Americans begin drinking regularly is 15.9.

Consider the following statistics:

- 40% of those who started drinking at age 13 or younger eventually developed alcohol dependence
- Teens that drink are fifty times more likely to abuse cocaine than those who don't
- Alcohol kills more than 6 ½ times more teens than all other drugs combined.
- Almost 11% of eighth graders, 22% of tenth graders and 27% of twelfth graders report binge drinking (five drinks in a row in the last two weeks)
- According to one survey, almost 20% of eighth graders and 41% of tenth graders have been drunk at least once.
- Nearly one in five teenagers has experienced a blackout, where they could not remember what happened the previous evening.
- The average 18-year-old has seen 100,000 commercials encouraging him to have a drink.

Drinking alcohol is very acceptable socially. Many teens come from homes where daily drinking is practiced and tolerated, and alcohol use may be expected and tolerated by peers. This creates the illusion that alcohol is not dangerous. If you think that is true, think again. It has been estimated that over 3 million teens are alcoholics. The three leading causes of death for ages 15-24 are automobile crashes, homicides and suicides, and alcohol is the leading factor in all three.

Alcoholism is known as the only disease that tries to make you think you don't have it. The urge to drink in spite of negative consequences is a signpost that you may have a problem with alcohol. Some other questions you can ask yourself are:

- Have you been criticized by others because of your drinking?
- Have you ever worried that you drink too much, but sense that you may have lost the power of choice?
- Have you done things you are ashamed of under the influence of alcohol that you would not have done if you had not been drinking?
- Have you ever needed to have a drink in the morning to stop shaking?
- Have you ever tried to quit drinking and found out that you were compelled to continue?

These are some of the ways you can tell that you might have a problem with alcohol. Recognizing you have a problem is the first step toward seeking a solution.

If you think you need help, talk to a school counselor, or a parent, or look up Alcoholics Anonymous in the phone book. You are not alone. There is a solution.

For more information, visit Alcoholics Anonymous at <http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org/?Media=PlayFlash>

About Loree Taylor Jordan



A recovering food addict herself, Loree's mission is clear: to help others recognize, understand and heal from unhealthy addictions as she has in her own life. Loree, was personally sought out by famed self-help guru Tony Robbins to be a guest speaker at his international Life Mastery Program.

She is the author of several books and her new book is entitled *I Never Thought Addiction Could Happen to Me-The 3 Secret Addictions that are Shattering the Lives of College Students-and What to Do About It!*