**The Progression of Addiction**

**This document contains ideas about the progression of addiction in terms of exhibited behaviors that indicate the development of internal and external problems. The numbers of stages vary according to the perspective of the writers.**

This table illustrates the impact developing substance use disorders can have in families/social groups.

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| --- | --- |
| **IN THE USER** | **IN THE FAMILY** |
| Increased tolerance; using more to get same effect | Increased tolerance to user’s behaviors |
| Blackouts | Suppression; family blocks out their perceptions |
| Euphoric recall is focus; recalls highs not painful consequences | Minimizing. “Things aren’t that bad.” |
| Sneaks substance; hides evidence | Plays detective; searches for evidence of substances |
| Preoccupied with using | Preoccupied with the user |
| Gulps drinks | Urgency of situation increases – prods for promise to stop using |
| Denies there’s a problem | Family tries to hide problem from those outside the family |
| Develops alibi system | May confront or nag user while at same time makes excuses for the user |
| Alternates between aggression when using and remorse afterwards | Alternates between blaming, shaming and lashing out and feeling guilty |
| Tries to control or stop using without help | Tries to control or stop the user from drinking without help |
| Feels shame for not being able to stop | Feels shame they can’t stop the user |
| Loses friends | Family becomes isolated |
| Experiences severe physical symptoms – digestive, sleep, etc | Experiences severe physical symptoms – ulcers, headaches, nervous breakdowns, etc |
| Seeks help OR deteriorates physically and emotionally | Seeks help OR deteriorates physically and emotionally |

Table courtesy of Memorial Herman Prevention & Recovery Center.

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**Adolescent** **Chemical Dependency** **Progression**

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| Stage I   * Uses in social setting or alone * Occasional to infrequent use * Shows curiosity about chemical effects * Excitement about not getting caught, adult identification |
| Stage II   * Party weekend use * Uses to socialize, not to have fun * Controlled use, avoids getting wasted or drunk |
| Stage III   * Changes peer group, new friends * Experiences memory loss from use * Parents become suspicious of abuse * Increasing tolerance -- Quantity and frequency up! * Mood changes from abuse -- Anger issues * Consequences from abuse -- School, home and legal issues * Change in interests -- Partying more important than school, health, family, etc. * Increased problems in school -- Truancy, poor school attendance, flunking classes * Monday "blues" |
| Stage IV   * School suspensions, expulsion or drops out * Demonstrates lying patterns; value system changes * Apathy -- "I don't care" attitude * Loss of certain friends * Loss of interest in school, family and formerly enjoyed activities * Poor nutrition, preoccupation with chemicals * Family conflicts; excessive arguing * Sleeping problems * Blackouts -- Increased memory loss * Increased use -- Weekdays and weekends * Money problems * Defensiveness concerning use * Rationalizes behavior to hide drug use * Denies feelings |

Table courtesy of Teens With Problems: <http://www.teenswithproblems.com/depend.html>. **Copyright © 2003, 2004 Teens with Problems**