

# high school



**TOPIC**  
**ADDICTION**

**Faith at**  
**home**

# **Addiction**

## **What is addiction?**

- Addiction is when a student becomes dependent on a substance, behavior, or experience as the foundation of their identity.
- This dependence often starts subtly – not as a dramatic moment but as a coping mechanism or an experimental activity. After a while, it begins to affect their daily lives, relationships, and decision-making hindering them from living a normal complementary lifestyle.
- A complementary lifestyle includes healthy involvement with family and friends at home, church, school, and other activities.

## **High school students deal with several different types of addiction:**

- Technology (social media, gaming, phones, TV, etc.)
- Substances (vaping, alcohol, marijuana, prescription drugs, etc.)
- Sex (pornography, sexual activity, etc.)
- Behavior (self-harm, risk-taking, over/restrictive eating, seclusion, etc.)
- Performance & Achievement (academic, sports, over-involvement, etc.)
- And many others

## **Signs to look for when interacting with your student:**

- Change in behavior – mood swings, increased irritability, withdrawn, avoiding people
- Change in performance – missing assignments, skipping class, tired, headaches, etc.
- Change in appearance – glazed eyes, weight, personal hygiene, clothing, new smells (trying to cover up strange smells), etc.
- Change in friendships – new friends you have never met, cutting off longtime friends, hanging out with people who are known for bad behavior, avoid sharing details of who they are with and what they are doing.
- Change in priorities – no longer interested in church, school, family time, avoiding responsibility or commitments, etc.
- One sign on its own does not mean addiction – teenagers change, grow, and struggle. But paying

attention to patterns of behavior is important.

### **How you can and should respond as a parent:**

- Stay calm and available – they need reassurance of your love for them as much as they need truth, wisdom, and correction.
- Help them discover “why” - whatever it is that they are dependent on is usually a surface level response to stress, anxiety, peer pressure, or a general lack of healthy coping skills.
- Provide opportunities for honest conversations – share your life experiences to close the gap. Some students never think through the reality that you were once their age and had very similar struggles.
- Set appropriate boundaries – you are the parent; they are the child. If you know something is harming them, it is your responsibility to help them and communicate why. They can handle it, even if they don’t want to.
- Seek support – *there is no shame in asking for help.* We are here for you!
- Lastly, and more importantly, pray with them and for them. Prioritize God’s Word, prayer, and worship individually and as a family. Jesus is the answer.

Everyone has an addiction. The Bible calls them idols: things we have convinced ourselves we can’t live without, and we have elevated them to the place of “God” in our lives.

Here are some helpful passages to read and pray through as you step into conversations with your students:

- Galatians 5:1 – Addiction is a form of slavery and Jesus died to set us free.
- Psalm 34:17-18 – God is close to those who don’t think they can break free.
- Romans 6:12-14 – for those who are in Christ, sin isn’t in charge anymore.

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