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TOP 5 TEEN ISSUES:

(Taken from *I Want to Talk to my Teen about ADDICTIONS*, by Megan Hutchinson)

CUTTING:

Self-injury is commonly defined as the attempt to alter one's frame of mind or mood by temporarily inflicting harm to the body to the point of breaking the skin and making it bleed.

WHO? 17% of college students; 1 in 5 girls and 1 in 7 boys. And the research indicated that the average age of first incident of self-injury was between 14 and 15 years old.

WHY? Relief The typical cutter feels dead inside. They cut themselves in a moment where they experience intense inexpressible feelings. They see the blood and once again feel alive and relief. Of course it's temporary relief, like any behavior, but nonetheless, they experience relief. Note: A common experience in cutters is a lack of nurture in a parental figure like Mom, Dad, a foster parent, etc. Simply put, they lacked someone to care and cherish them and so they don't know how to care or cherish themselves.

*Note: cutting is 99.9% NOT about suicide but about relief. However, it is always important to ask the question, "is this about ending your life?" and "have you ever thought about this before?"

HOW? Razor blades, knives, pens, anything sharp.

GOOD NEWS! Sociologist and therapist have researched this and have found that cutter do NOT want to die – but rather they want to LIVE!

ADDICTIONS:

An addiction is a compulsive need for a habit-forming substance characterized by tolerance and physiological symptoms upon withdrawal (Merriam-Webster's dictionary). Simply, addictions are out of control obsessive behavior regardless of the negative emotional, spiritual and mental outcome.

WHO? Anyone is vulnerable, but if there is instability in the family structure, a teenager is much more vulnerable to potentially addictive behaviors than those with secure family environments.

WHY? To escape reality

HOW? Smoke, inhale, drink, intravenous, repeated viewing of something (i.e., porn)

GOOD NEWS! Support groups will inevitably help you help those addicted through deeper questions, and a support system!



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PORNOGRAPHY:

Films, magazines, writings, photographs, or other materials that are sexually explicit and intended to cause sexual arousal are considered pornography.

WHO? There are many reasons why sexual addiction through pornography typically starts, but generally speaking it starts in childhood or adolescence. There are a few varying factors which comprise the typical backdrop of those sexually addicted:

- A child who grew up in a chaotic or non-nurturing home
- A child who grew up in a legalistic or ridged home where sex was often “taboo”
- A child or teen who was physically violated such as molestation, abuse, rape, or incest
- A child or teen who gives into sexual peer pressure and finds themselves unable to stop

WHY? These typical sex addict portraits will find themselves needing to escape their world. Psychologist and researcher, Patrick Carnes, Ph.D. said, "Contrary to enjoying sex...the sex addict has learned to rely on sex [and/or oral sex and masturbation] for comfort from pain, for nurturing or relief from stress." These actions become so psychologically ingrained in the mind of the addicted, that it becomes their number one way to cope. Thus, a teen's ability to say “no” feels next to impossible.

HOW? Access is gained primarily through the internet via computers, cell phones, etc.

GOOD NEWS! While the research on sexual addiction is comparatively new, (especially when compared to alcohol and other drug addictions), there are some things we as Christians know the God that gives us hope. Even for those who are not, there is help in finding support in others.

FAMILY DYSFUNCTION:

Family dysfunction occurs when family life is a mess resulting in an adolescent's inability to function normally.

WHO? Any adolescent who lives with stressful and/or under traumatic circumstances resulting in a feeling of inadequacy, insecurity and devalue.

WHY? Separation, Divorce, Abuse, Neglect, Favoritism, Pressure to perform/uphold image, incest, etc. One of the biggest issues with family dysfunction is adults. Parents are too busy, their lives are too full and as a result, they have lost that connection with their own son/daughter. In other words, they have abandoned them (emotionally and often physically).

HOW? An adolescent learns skills in order to survive family stress. Eventually the pain underneath has to surface and will in the form of anger. Anger is typically the first emotion expressed but always secondary to the core issue.

GOOD NEWS! God is in the business of healing!



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SUICIDE:

Suicide is the act of deliberately killing yourself.

WHO? Anyone who wants to end their life

WHY? Life is unbearable. Last year in America alone, over 30,000 people committed suicide to shut off their depression over 24,000 people committed murder to shut off their anger. Obviously, way too many people don't have healthy instructions for their negative feelings.

HOW? There are a variety of ways. Pill overdose, hanging and shooting are among the most common.

THE GOOD NEWS? The typical suicidal episode lasts about 30 days and does not occur again. So, if you can walk a victim through this acute time frame, then you will likely help save their life forever