

## Section C: Family Relations



Even though teenagers are very quick to point out the fact that they are not a child any longer, group members' families have much impact on their attitudes, feelings, and behaviors. Many young people in trouble with chemicals come from homes where a parent is chemically dependent. Chemical dependence is often called the family disease because it affects everyone in the family. Honest communication is blocked, emotional and sometimes even physical needs aren't met consistently, while the dynamics of denial force everyone to play the "there's nothing wrong here" game. Statistics clearly show that children of these chemically dependent parents are at a higher risk for developing the same disease.

Many other young people come from divorced and single-parent homes. Lack of same-sex role models and a single parent who's always at work make it easy for a young person to stray. Many children from divorced homes tearfully state they would much rather their parents stayed together rather than to "lose" Mom or Dad.

This isn't to say that it's always the parents' fault. Indeed, some chemically dependent young people are like tornadoes in an otherwise-healthy family. Regardless, it's important for the group leaders and group members to gain an understanding of what's going on at home. The activities in this section will help group members understand their own family dynamics better, and help them decide whether there is a problem with chemical dependence in their family.