

# Life on the Street

**A**t 14 I got into raves, and gave up good friends because I thought they were too immature for me. I got into drug use more heavily, and started using crystal meth. This led to being on the streets. That was not fun. I didn't care about anything, like my new "friends" - friends because they want your money or your drugs.

*One day I had no pulse, I wasn't breathing. That was my wake up call. If I have no pulse and I'm not breathing, there's something wrong. I went to my parents and asked for help. I have come out of it with tools and skills that a normal person would never have. I'll be able to pass them on to my children.*

Your addicted child may end up on the street at some point. Some parents feel that they need to apply "tough love" – that they cannot allow their child to live at home if he or she is lying, stealing, and otherwise making life hellish for the family. The street may be the choice made by some young people on their own, attracted by of the freedom from rules, the camaraderie, a new "family," and the excitement of living from meal to meal and hit to hit.

If your child is living on the street, try to maintain contact, and make safety a priority. Offer to buy a coffee or a meal, or just spend time together. But resist demands for money. Cash often triggers the urge to buy drugs.

For many parents, a child's return home will depend on at least honest attempts to deal with drug dependency. Only you can decide what conditions you will be comfortable with. Just make sure you are clear at the time of return what your boundaries are, and then stick to them.

If your child does come home, be prepared to listen, and try not to judge. Your child may have broken the law in a variety of ways to get money for food or drugs. What you hear may be deeply disturbing, but try to focus on the positive. Your child is off the streets now. This may be an opportunity for a fresh start. Emphasize the continuing need for safe practices and new habits. Remember, you can be open and forgiving and still maintain your boundaries.

"I know

I shouldn't be  
supporting

him, but if I  
kick him out

and he's on  
the street, then

what?"