

Recovering from Addiction

Addiction is a disease that knows no limits. Anyone can become addicted, and the source of the addiction can vary. A person can become addicted to alcohol, nicotine, drugs, gambling, or even food. Yet, of all possible addictions, none is more serious—or has more devastating consequences—than a dependence on alcohol or another drug.

HEALTH TERMS

intervention

recovery

detoxification

relapse

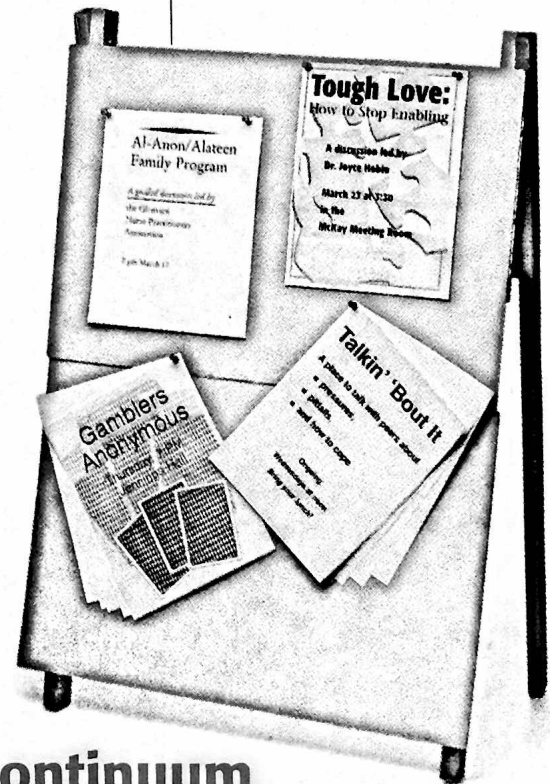
inpatient treatment

outpatient treatment

halfway house

HEALTH CONCEPTS

- A number of clear warning signs indicate that a substance abuse problem exists.
- You can help someone you care about recover from drug addiction by seeking help on the person's behalf.
- Recovery from addiction occurs gradually in a series of steps.



The Addiction Continuum

Addiction is a process—a series of gradual changes that happen over time. This process happens more quickly to some than to others. Some people get hooked on a drug from the first time they take a drink, a pill, or an injection. For other people, an addiction develops more slowly, perhaps over a period of many years. Others do not become addicted at all. For this reason, it is difficult to predict exactly when the use of an addictive substance—or how much of it—might lead to a problem.

This much is clear, however. Once an addiction to alcohol or some other drug sets in, the person needs help if he or she is to have any hope of returning to a normal, drug-free life.

Addiction: Recognizing the Problem

The first step in getting help with an addiction is to recognize that a problem exists. Sometimes it is the people close to the addict or alcoholic who first recognize and point to the problem. Sometimes, it is the addict himself or herself. In either case, there are clear-cut warning signs of possible addiction. These include:

- continual concern about where the next “fix”—drink or pill, for example—will come from.
- choosing friends who can supply the addictive substance.
- changes in appearance or personal habits.
- irritability, nervousness, personality changes, or mood swings.

update

► *Looking at the Issues*

Teen Gambling: Addiction, Compulsion, or Bad Habit?

Teen gambling is now a major problem in the United States, with an estimated 90 percent of teens under 18 having gambled at one time or another. Whether flipping quarters or betting on football games, teens bet an estimated \$500 million to \$1 billion a year. Are these teens addicted? Opinions on the subject are divided.

ANALYZING DIFFERENT VIEWPOINTS

► Viewpoint One

Studies sponsored by the National Institutes of Health, using positron emission tomography (PET) scans, are attempting to establish a link between brain chemistry and compulsive gambling. Those who support the claim that gambling is an addictive disease note that gamblers experience an adrenaline rush and a “high” much as drug addicts do when their craving is temporarily satisfied by a drug.

► Viewpoint Two

Some experts now make a distinction between problem gamblers and compulsive gamblers just as they do

between problem drinkers and alcoholics. The *problem gambler* is someone whose gambling is no longer just recreation. He or she might have difficulty controlling the money spent or the time gambling. The *compulsive gambler's* life is completely taken over by the need to gamble.

EXPLORING YOUR VIEWS

1. Do you believe that gambling for some can be an addiction, just like being hooked on other substances? Why or why not?
2. Do you gamble or know other teens who do? If you gamble, has it caused any trouble in your life? If you know teens who gamble, has it caused trouble in their lives? What kinds of additional trouble might it cause down the road?



Telltale Signs of Trouble

According to the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information, the following signs may indicate that a person has a serious problem with alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, or other illicit or illegal drugs:

- Getting high on drugs or getting drunk regularly
- Lying about the amount of alcohol or drugs being used
- Avoiding people to get high or drunk
- Giving up regular activities like after-school sports, homework, or socializing with teens who don't abuse substances

- violent behavior.
- black-outs.
- needing increasing amounts of a substance to feel "normal."

Intervention

In the past, it was believed that the alcoholic or addict had to "reach bottom" before he or she would be willing to accept help. Recently, that thinking has changed, and nowadays many families—recognizing that a problem exists—stop the downward slide through a process called **intervention**. This is *interruption of the addiction continuum before the addict or alcoholic hits bottom*. Intervention begins with meetings between family members or other significant people involved in the life of the chemically dependent person and a certified drug or alcohol counselor. These meetings take place without the addicted person's knowledge. At the meetings, family members learn about addiction and the ways in which they have become affected by it. They make a list of all the episodes they can remember involving the person's drinking and drug use and how it made them feel.

The next step in the process is a surprise meeting with the addict that forces the person to face the seriousness of his or her addiction and how unmanageable his or her life has become because of it. The group then presents the addict with a plan for immediate treatment.

connections Math

The High Costs of Addiction

The costs of addiction are staggering. For example, illicit drug and alcohol use in the workplace in this country costs businesses an estimated \$140 billion a year in lost productivity, accidents, and medical claims. Sadly, that is just a fraction of the overall cost in the lives of the addicted, in the lives of their families, and in society at large.

- 1.** With classmates or in small groups, brainstorm some of the costs of addiction to individuals and society. List these costs in two columns, one under *Cost in Dollars*, the other under *Other Kinds of Costs*.
- 2.** Using print or on-line resources, gather statistics relating to some of the costs in dollars. Reputable sources of such information include the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, the NIH National Institute on Drug Abuse, and SAMSA National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information.
- 3.** Use the statistics you gather to create a bar graph showing the costs of alcohol and drug use to society. Share and compare your graph with those of other groups.

If the person refuses to get this needed help, the family, boss, or others taking part in the intervention process tell the person what steps they plan to take in response to the refusal. For example, a wife might say, "If you won't get help, I'll move out." Such ultimatums let the chemically dependent person know that he or she must now face the consequences of his or her addiction. It is only when the person has decided to do so that recovery is possible. **Recovery** means *learning to live an alcohol-free or drug-free life*.

The Recovery Continuum

Like addiction, recovery is a process that happens over time. In fact, a recovering person never says, "I am cured," but rather, "I am recovering." This is because recovery is an ongoing, lifelong process. This process happens at different rates and in different ways for different people. Yet, there are certain characteristics common to most recovery stories.

The first step in the recovery process is **detoxification**, *the removal of all drugs from the body*. This process should take place under medical supervision. In addition to the addict's regaining physical health, recovery also involves restoring one's mental health by learning to build healthy relationships and by taking responsibility for one's own life. It is generally recognized that people can begin the recovery process at any point on the downward slide into addiction—even before they suffer major losses.

Most experts in the field of addiction recommend total **abstinence** from any mood-altering drugs, including alcohol, for the recovering alcoholic or addict. Long-term studies show that attempts at controlled drinking and drug use usually fail. Even small amounts of alcohol or other drugs can send an addict back into addiction.

Many people in recovery manage to stay drug-free for the rest of their lives. Others may have **relapses**, *slips from recovery, or periodic returns to drinking and drug use*. Yet, despite how far down the addiction continuum a person goes or how many times that person relapses, the choice of and chance for recovery are always there.

Treatment Options

Where can a person with an addiction problem turn for help? As with any problem, a good starting point is to talk with someone the person trusts and who can point him or her in the direction of professional help. For a teen, this might be a parent, teacher, school counselor, or peer counselor. He or she might also directly contact a drug and alcohol treatment center. Such facilities specialize in drug and alcohol counseling. Depending at which point the person is along the addiction continuum and his or her previous experience with addictive problems, the person may be directed to a **support group** or an alcohol and drug treatment center.



▲ **Teens with addiction in the family often suffer in silence.**

ACTIVITY Give three reasons why it is very important that children of alcoholics or other addicts get help for themselves.

hot link

abstinence For more information on abstinence and strategies for abstaining from harmful behaviors, see Chapter 21, page 484.

hot link

support group For more information on the benefits of a support group, see Chapter 9, page 227.

Support Groups

A support group is a group of people who share a common problem and work together to help one another and themselves cope with and recover from that problem. Regular attendance at such support groups is the most popular form of ongoing treatment for addictions. Support groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) have played a major role in helping people to become and stay alcohol- and drug-free. At meetings, which are held frequently all over the world, members provide support and help one another stay sober or otherwise drug-free. Such meetings are confidential—members can remain anonymous because no one has to give his or her last name—and also free of charge. Each AA office can direct people to local AA meetings or to other support groups such as Narcotics Anonymous or Cocaine Anonymous.

▼ **Recovery from addiction can mean new hope and happiness for every member of the family.**

ACTIVITY List some of the short-term and long-term effects of recovery on the family.

Alcohol and Drug Treatment Centers

Alcohol and drug treatment centers offer a wide range of services to addicts who want to recover. Many centers specialize in treating teens with addictions or have special units solely for adolescents.

Some treatment centers are privately owned, but there are also state and community alcoholism and mental health clinics that offer professional care at little or no cost. Since drug and alcohol dependence are considered diseases, some health insurance plans may cover at least some of the costs.

DETOX UNITS

In some hospitals or treatment centers, there are medical detox units for alcoholics and addicts undergoing the detoxification process. During this process, the person is under a doctor's care and may be given some medication to ease the symptoms of withdrawal. Some people go directly from detox to ongoing involvement in a support group.

INPATIENT OR RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT CENTERS

Inpatient treatment is *medical and psychological care during which a person stays at a medical or rehabilitation facility*. Inpatient centers offer peaceful time and attractive surroundings away from the person's usual environment so that full concentration on recovery can take place. The first



few days are spent in detox. After that, people spend a month or more taking part in drug and alcohol education, individual and group counseling, and support group meetings.

OUTPATIENT TREATMENT CENTERS

Outpatient treatment is *on-site medical and psychological care for a person trying to become alcohol-free and drug-free*. Outpatient programs often allow the recovering person to go to work or school and to live at home during the treatment process. It is less expensive than inpatient treatment, but it takes place over a longer period of time.

CONTINUING PROGRAMS

Many rehabilitation centers have long-term programs of counseling and support for people in recovery who have gone through their standard short-term treatment programs. These programs usually involve follow-up sessions, individual and group counseling, and counseling that involves the entire family in the recovery process.

HALFWAY HOUSES

Halfway houses are *continuing care facilities that offer people housing, counseling, and support meetings as they are recovering from a severe addiction*. People are generally admitted to halfway houses only after having completed at least a 28-day program of recovery at a treatment center. They stay for six months to a year as they learn coping and living skills they will need when they return to society. Residents are also sometimes channeled into vocational rehabilitation or job training programs.

Did You Know?

- ▶ People in recovery sometimes develop transfer addictions. That means they go from being addicted to one substance to being addicted to another substance or behavior. For example, recovering alcoholics sometimes develop eating disorders or become compulsive gamblers.
- ▶ People in recovery do not concentrate on the fact that they will have to live a lifetime without drugs. Instead, they talk about staying sober or clean one day at a time.