

COULD MY PARENT HAVE AN

ADDICTION



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WHERE?

In Print : [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

Online : [TeenMentalHealth.org](https://www.TeenMentalHealth.org)

INTRODUCTION

Having a parent with an Addiction can be frightening, frustrating, and stressful. When someone you care about has a mental illness, you can feel helpless and wonder if it's your fault. You are not to blame. There is nothing you could have done to cause your parent's Addiction. Although it may feel like everything is out of your control, try not to lose hope. Addiction is treatable and there are people who can help you and your parent recover. You are not alone.

This booklet will help you understand more about Addiction and what you can do to cope with your parent's illness.

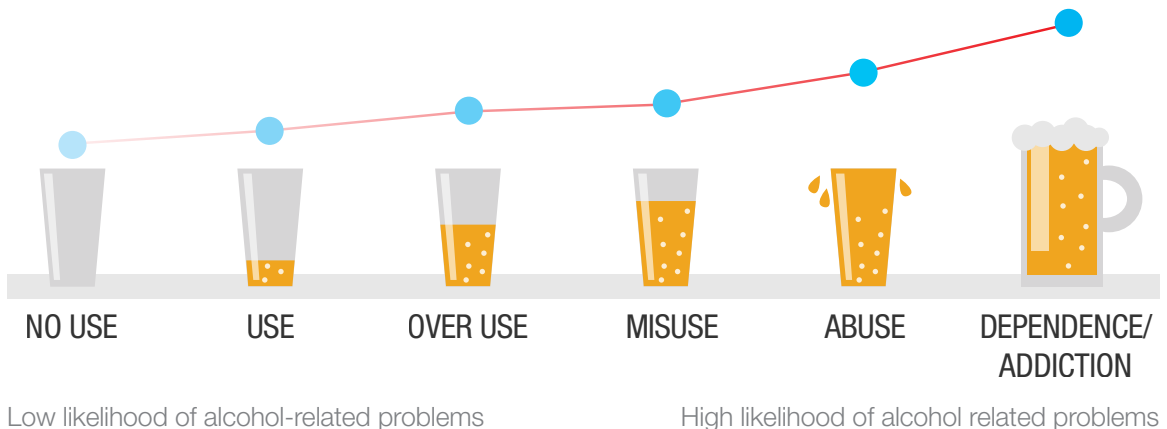


FACTS ABOUT ALCOHOL

TYPICAL VS. PROBLEMATIC DRINKING BEHAVIOUR

It's not uncommon for a parent (or any adult) to have an occasional drink. Many people's parents have a glass of wine or beer with dinner or a drink with friends in the evening. This usually isn't considered problem drinking. Problem drinking occurs when that drinking starts to interfere with other aspects of the person's life and the person starts to feel like he or she needs a drink to function.

THE SPECTRUM OF ALCOHOL USE DIAGRAM



WHY DO PEOPLE DRINK ALCOHOL?

People drink alcohol for many reasons. Some people drink to be social and spend time with friends. Some people drink because they like the taste. Some people drink to relax and unwind after a long day. Some people drink to cope with their problems. Alcohol affects the brain, causing your parent's behaviour to change. His or her inhibitions may be lowered, leading him or her to do things he or she normally would not. Your parent's perceptions and sensations may also be diminished, making your parent less aware of what is going on around him or her. This is called being intoxicated or drunk. For some people, drinking is used as a way to relax or escape from problems or stress. When under the influence of alcohol, people may be less aware of and care less about their problems and concerns. In small doses, alcohol can have pleasant and relatively safe effects for many people. Unfortunately, the larger the quantity someone drinks, the more intoxicated he or she may become. And the greater the frequency with which someone drinks, the more likely it is that he or she may develop an Addiction.

Frequently, people who have problem drinking don't believe they have a problem or will not admit that they do.

SIGNS OF ALCOHOL INTOXICATION

- ◆ slurred speech
- ◆ lack of coordination/clumsy
- ◆ difficulty walking/staggering
- ◆ attention/memory problems
- ◆ "passing out" or losing consciousness

FACTS ABOUT DRUG USE

People can become addicted to and abuse drugs including illegal drugs, such as cocaine and heroin, and legal drugs, such as prescription painkillers. If prescription medication is being used as intended and prescribed, it's not considered drug abuse (although it is possible that the person using the prescribed medication may become addicted to the medication). For prescription medication to be considered a drug of abuse, it must be taken for something other than its intended use (i.e., painkillers taken to experience euphoria, rather than to reduce pain; ADHD medication taken by someone who does not have ADHD).

WHY DO PEOPLE USE DRUGS?

The reasons for using drugs can vary greatly from person to person. Some people start using drugs due to peer pressure. Other people start using drugs as a way to escape from their problems. Some people start using drugs because they were searching for the euphoric feelings that first accompany a "high". Other people start using prescription pain medication when they are injured and become dependant on the drug and its accompanying sensations. Few people believe that they will become addicted when they start taking drugs. People may believe "it won't happen to me," or "I'm too strong for that". The truth is: drug Addiction has very little to do with will power. Drug use affects the way your parent's brain works and some drugs do this quicker than others. It's not as simple as deciding not to take the drug anymore and stopping. Your parent may have initially chosen to take the drug, but the way the drug interacted with your parent's brain may have led to his or her current use being out of his or her control.

SIGNS OF DRUG INTOXICATION

When someone is intoxicated (or "high") from a drug, the effects may vary depending on the particular drug, the amount taken, and the individual person's biology. Although there are too many possible drugs to provide a comprehensive list of all of the effects, here are some common signs of intoxication for the most frequently abused drugs. Remember, a person does not need to be addicted to a drug to abuse it or to become intoxicated when using it.

SIGNS OF OPIOID (E.G., HEROIN; OXYCODONE) INTOXICATION

- ◆ restless movement or slowed movement
- ◆ impaired judgment
- ◆ small pupils in the eyes
- ◆ drowsiness
- ◆ slurred speech
- ◆ attention or memory problems
- ◆ clammy skin
- ◆ dizziness or confusion
- ◆ difficulty breathing



SIGNS OF CANNABIS (E.G., MARIJUANA) INTOXICATION

- ◆ lack of coordination
- ◆ anxiety
- ◆ impaired judgment
- ◆ social withdrawal
- ◆ dry mouth
- ◆ racing heart
- ◆ bloodshot eyes

SIGNS OF STIMULANT (E.G., COCAINE; AMPHETAMINES; CRYSTAL METH) INTOXICATION

- ◆ paranoia
- ◆ anxiety or anger
- ◆ impaired judgment
- ◆ heart rate that is too slow or too fast
- ◆ enlarged pupils in the eyes
- ◆ blood pressure that is lower or higher than normal
- ◆ sweating or chills
- ◆ nausea or vomiting
- ◆ restless movement or slowed movement
- ◆ chest pain
- ◆ difficulty breathing
- ◆ confusion
- ◆ seizures



CRAVING, TOLERANCE & WITHDRAWAL

Addiction refers to the physical and psychological need for the substance (alcohol or drug). The most defining feature of Addiction is craving for the drug. This craving drives the person to focus his or her behaviours on obtaining the drug. Craving can happen anytime but is often increased when the person is reminded of people, places, or things that are associated with using drugs/alcohol (e.g., driving by a liquor store or watching people use drugs on a TV show). Another feature of Addiction is called tolerance. When people use a substance frequently, their bodies may become used to the substance and develop a tolerance. That means that it will take more and more of the substance for them to feel the same effect. People who are addicted often experience tolerance but many people who develop tolerance to a medication are not addicted to the medicine. When someone is addicted, he or she can experience withdrawal without the substance. Withdrawal is a painful and sometimes violent reaction to the body trying to function without that drug or alcohol present. Symptoms of withdrawal can include sweating, shaking, heart racing, insomnia, nausea or vomiting, hallucinations (i.e., seeing/hearing/touching something that isn't actually there), anxiety, and seizures. Withdrawal makes it very difficult for people to quit drinking or using drugs once they've become addicted. But, tolerance and withdrawal can happen without Addiction and you can have Addiction without having symptoms of tolerance and withdrawal. It's a bit confusing but a very important point.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT ADDICTION?

Over the period of a year, among Canadians 15 years of age and older [Canadian Alcohol and Drug Use Monitoring Survey (2009). Health Canada.]:

- ◆ Most people report drinking alcohol
- ◆ About 5% report frequent heavy drinking
- ◆ 6.5% of Canadians report that they have harmed themselves by drinking
- ◆ 10.6% used cannabis (i.e., marijuana)
- ◆ 1.2% used cocaine or crack
- ◆ 0.2% used crystal meth
- ◆ 2.3% of people who used prescription psychoactive drugs (e.g., oxycodone) report that they abused the drug

In adults, Addiction to alcohol and most drugs is more common in men than women. [DSM-V (2013). American Psychiatric Association.]

HOW DO YOU KNOW IF SOMEONE IS ADDICTED TO A SUBSTANCE OR IS ABUSING A SUBSTANCE?

Addiction and abuse (also called a Substance Use Disorder) are diagnosed by a health or mental health professional (e.g., a doctor, psychologist, or clinical nurse practitioner with training in mental health) when someone:

- ◆ Uses substance in larger amounts or for a longer period of time than medically intended or for purposes other than medical treatment
- ◆ Is unable to cut down on the amount of substance used
- ◆ Spends a great deal of time trying to obtain, using, or recovering from a substance
- ◆ Craves a substance
- ◆ Is unable to meet responsibilities at work, home, or school due to substance use
- ◆ Gives up important social, occupational, or recreational activities to use substance
- ◆ Continues to use substance even though it causes him or her occupation, personal, social, and physical problems
- ◆ Uses substance when it is physically dangerous
- ◆ Develops a tolerance for the substance (i.e., needs more and more of the substance to achieve the same effect)
- ◆ Experiences withdrawal when the substance is not used
- ◆ Experiences clinically significant impairment or distress

Not all people with Substance Use Disorders will experience all of these symptoms.

CONSEQUENCES OF ADDICTION

Addiction can cause family problems, social problems, financial problems, and health problems, including:

- ◆ Neglecting, hurting, and losing family and friends because the person spends so much time using or trying to obtain the substance.
- ◆ Engaging in moody, unstable, or violent behaviour, often accompanied by anger management problems.
- ◆ Behaving in dangerous or risky ways. People with Addictions can go to great lengths to get the substance and may put themselves or others in danger.
- ◆ Trouble keeping a job because he or she shows up late, is hung over, or even uses the substance at work.
- ◆ Spending a lot of money on the substance and sometimes failing to pay necessary bills and expenses (e.g., electricity, groceries).
- ◆ Incurring a number of health problems, including problems with the stomach, heart, liver, and central nervous system.

SIGNS OF DRUG OVERDOSE & ALCOHOL POISONING

SIGNS OF DRUG OVERDOSE

- ◆ Loss of consciousness
 - ◆ Chest pain
 - ◆ Heavy sweating
 - ◆ Delusions/hallucinations
 - ◆ Faster breathing
 - ◆ Seizures or uncontrollable twitching
 - ◆ Fever
 - ◆ Racing or irregular heartbeat
 - ◆ Cold or pale skin
-

SIGNS OF ALCOHOL POISONING

- ◆ Loss of consciousness
 - ◆ Slow or irregular heart beat
 - ◆ Vomiting
 - ◆ Seizure
 - ◆ Low body temperature
 - ◆ Pale or bluish skin
-

CALL 911 IMMEDIATELY

Someone with alcohol poisoning or a drug overdose may get brain damage or die. It is essential that you call for help immediately if you notice any of the signs listed above.

WHY DO SOME PEOPLE DEVELOP AN ADDICTION AND OTHERS DO NOT?

Whether or not someone develops an Addiction to alcohol or drugs depends on a number of factors, not all of which we understand. The amount of the substance consumed, how it is

consumed, and how often the substance is consumed contribute to the likelihood of developing an Addiction. When an addictive substance is frequently ingested, the brain starts to work differently, which then makes it difficult for some people to function without the drug or alcohol. But the point at which the substance becomes addictive is different for everyone. Some of this depends on physical attributes, like weight and gender; some of it depends on the drug taken (e.g., heroin becomes addictive much faster than some other drugs). Some people may be more genetically at risk for Addiction than others. We do know that people who have another mental illness, such as Depression or an Anxiety Disorder, may be at higher risk for developing an Addiction, as are people who have family members with Addictions. If someone in your immediate family, like your mother or father, has an Addiction, you are at higher risk for developing substance problems as well.

WHY WON'T MY PARENT STOP DRINKING/USING DRUGS?

Unfortunately, it's not as simple as just deciding to quit. The decision to stop drinking or using drugs is an important part of getting better but it's not the only part. Drinking or using drugs changes the way your parent's brain works, which can make it really hard for him or her to stop. Here are some other reasons why your parent might still be drinking or using drugs:

Your parent may not understand that he or she has a problem or the impact his or her Addiction has on you and your family.

If your parent understands that he or she has a problem, he or she may not be ready to admit it or ask for help because of:

- ◆ **Fear of failure.** Your parent may be afraid that he or she will not be able to succeed in treatment.
 - ◆ **Fear of real life.** If your parent stops drinking or using drugs, he or she will have to face the problems that his or her Addiction has caused, as well as face whatever issues he or she may have initially tried to escape by using alcohol or drugs.
 - ◆ **Fear of stigma.** Your parent may be afraid of the stigma associated with Addiction. He or she may be concerned that your family will be treated differently if people find out he or she is in treatment for Addiction.
 - ◆ **Cost of Treatment.** In some places, treatment can be quite expensive. Even if the treatment itself is free, your parent may need to take time off work to attend treatment, which can impact your family's finances.
 - ◆ **Embarrassment.** Admitting that you have lost control over your own behaviour can be very difficult for people to admit. He or she may not be ready to accept responsibility for his or her behaviour while intoxicated or he or she may feel weak for becoming addicted in the first place.
-

CO-OCCURRING DISORDERS

It's not uncommon for someone with an Addiction to also have other mental health problems or mental disorders. Often, people with mental illness use alcohol or drugs to cope with their symptoms. Alcohol or drug use (including smoking cigarettes) may help the person to relax and mask his or her symptoms but there are several serious problems with using this coping strategy. First, it's only a short-term solution; when the effects of the substance wear off, the symptoms remain (and may be worse). Second, consistently using drugs and alcohol to cope may lead to Addiction in some people. With continued use of a substance, the person may need more and more of the alcohol or drugs to get the same relief, putting him or her at increased risk for Addiction and increasing his or her chance of overdose or other kinds of harm.

TREATING ADDICTION

Addictions are treatable but it takes time and hard work. Your parent won't get better overnight. There is no set time for how long treatment will last, but most treatments take at least 12 weeks to see noticeable improvements, so it's important to be patient and supportive. Your parent may need to be in treatment for a long time to prevent relapse, although he or she may not need to go to treatment as often. A relapse is when an illness comes back after it has been effectively treated. Some people with Addictions go through a number of periods of treatment success followed by relapse until they experience lasting success.

Well-established treatments for Addiction include some types of behavioural therapies, as well as some kinds of medicines. Often a combination of these treatments will be recommended. In order for treatment to work, it must target your parent's whole life (e.g., relationships with family and friends, work responsibilities, his or her thoughts and emotions) and not just his or her drinking or drug use. Drinking and drug use is often related to many issues in your parent's life, and thus, focusing on all aspects of his or her life may be necessary for treatment.

TYPE OF TREATMENT

1 Medication

Medications can sometimes help lessen withdrawal symptoms and decrease cravings by helping your parent's brain function without alcohol/drugs. These medications are most effective when they are used in combination with other treatments and may take 4-6 weeks to start working.

There are several different medications that your parent's doctor might choose to prescribe for alcohol treatment, including disulfiram (i.e., antabuse), which works best if your parent has a secure social network and is motivated to change, and naltrexone, which can help reduce alcohol craving when used in conjunction with other treatments.

For people addicted to opiates (e.g., morphine, heroin), methadone, suboxone, and naltrexone can help reduce opiate use, criminal activity, and HIV/Hepatitis C transmission. When these medications are combined with other therapies, they can contribute towards improved productivity and improved social and physical functioning.

2 Behaviour Therapies

Behaviour Therapies are a type of talk therapy that can be done one-on-one (just your parent and the therapist) or in a group (with other adults who also have Addictions). They also work to help your parent's brain function without alcohol/drugs. Some treatments used in behaviour therapy include:

- ◆ **Cognitive Behavioural Therapy** helps your parent learn how thoughts, feelings and behaviours can interact and influence drug and alcohol use.
- ◆ **Motivational Enhancement Therapy** helps your parent increase their desire to change (i.e., decrease or stop) their substance use behaviours and teaches valuable relapse prevention strategies.



- ◆ **Community Reinforcement** focuses on your parent's social functioning, with the goal of changing your parent's environment so that not drinking/using drugs becomes more rewarding than drinking/using drugs. It is effective for people with severe alcohol problems, especially if they don't have much social support. This approach is also being used with people with drug Addictions, but it's not yet clear how effective it is for drug use.
- ◆ **Marital Therapy** works on improving your parents' communication and problem-solving skills and help to make their relationship more positive.
- ◆ **Social Skills Training** teaches your parent how to develop positive and satisfying relationships with other people, which may decrease your parent's motivation to drink or use drugs.
- ◆ **Stress Management** helps your parent learn how to relax and decrease stress, which may be especially helpful for people who drink or use drugs to reduce stress. Stress Management is usually used as a component of a larger comprehensive treatment plan.

Other Treatment Approaches

- ◆ **Residential Treatment** is when your parent moves into a facility or hospital where he or she can receive 24 hour treatment and monitoring. Often, residential treatment will involve a comprehensive treatment plan that includes components of the behavioural therapies and medications listed above.
- ◆ **Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)** is a community resource that includes a treatment component. Your parent has the option of attending meetings whenever he or she chooses (although many people advocate for regular meetings) and being as involved in the meetings as he or she wishes to be.
- ◆ **Narcotics Anonymous (NA)** is another community resource that includes a treatment component, specifically for people with drug Addiction.

For important information on how to get the best treatment, check out:
teenmentalhealth.org/for-families-and-teens/evidence-based-medicine
teenmentalhealth.org/images/resources/communicating_with_healthcare_providers_person_version.pdf

WHAT YOU CAN DO?

Start by putting yourself first. Do things that you enjoy and that help you cope with stress. When you look after yourself, it makes it easier to deal with the challenges of your parent's Addiction. Don't forget that you're the kid in this relationship - it's not your responsibility to look after your parent. Putting yourself first does not mean that you're abandoning your parent or that you don't love him or her. Here are some ways that you can help your parent, without making his or her Addiction your responsibility:

1 Educate yourself about the illness.

Understanding what Addiction is and how it affects your parent will help you feel less frustrated and more supportive. The library is a good resource for books on Addiction, as are the trusted websites that are listed on page 30.

2 Be prepared for emergencies.

It's tempting to pretend that everything is fine but it's so important for you to be prepared in case something goes wrong. Have a plan about what to do and where to go, as well as a list of emergency contacts, just in case. Use the tear out pages at the back of this book to write down your emergency contacts.

3 Talk to someone.

Talking to other family members about your parent's Addiction can be a relief because they often understand what you're going through. Just remember that not all people will have the same experience as you and not everyone is comfortable talking about Addiction or mental illness. If you can't find support within your family, it's okay to talk to a trusted friend. Try to respect your parent's privacy but remember that you have nothing to be ashamed of. Some people may be judgmental or unkind. This is usually because they don't understand Addiction or what it's like to have a family member who has an Addiction. Your parent's illness is not a reflection of you and does not make your family less than any other family. You can choose to react negatively to these people; you can choose to ignore the things they say; or you can choose to stand up to them and increase their awareness of Addiction and mental illness. It's up to you. As important as it is to try to increase people's understanding of Addiction and mental illness, not everyone is willing to listen. Pick and choose your battles and try to confide only in people you trust. There's no shame in just ignoring someone's negative comments if it doesn't seem worth your energy.

4 Learn how to communicate.

Try to avoid arguments and accusations when you get frustrated. Page 16 has some tips for communicating with your parents.

5 Let your parent know you care.

It can be really frustrating and upsetting when your parent has an Addiction. It's easy to focus only on the negative, especially when your parent is feeling negative. Remember that having an Addiction skews the way your parent sees the world and can make things seem worse than they really are. Remind your parent that you care about him or her, even when he or she is being really negative. Try not to let his or her negative thoughts and comments affect your own thoughts and behaviours.

6 Be patient and don't take it personally.

Addiction affects the way your parent sees the world. He or she may not want to do the things he or she used to like to do or be able to participate in your school events or games the way you would like. Although it's difficult, try not to take it personally. Be patient with your parent when you can and recognize that Addiction takes over a person's life. How your parent is acting is not a reflection of you or of how he or she feels about you.

7 Keep in mind quality, not quantity.

Sometimes it's better to spend shorter periods of time with your parent doing something enjoyable when he or she is sober and feeling good, rather than giving up lots of your time trying to care for him or her. It's okay to set boundaries; it doesn't make you a bad kid.

8 Understand your feelings.

Become familiar with how your parent's Addiction affects you. Do you worry too much or do you feel neglected? Talking to a counsellor, or a trusted friend or family member can help you sort through your thoughts. Keeping a journal of your feelings can also help you put things in perspective and understand yourself better.

9 Accept what you can't control.

You can't control your parent's behaviour or the fact that he or she has an Addiction. People can only control their own thoughts, feelings, and actions. Trying to change your parent is frustrating and futile. Focus on the things you can control (like your reactions to your parent's behaviour) and try to let the other things go.

10 Appreciate the fun times.

Remember that your parent's symptoms may worsen and improve. Take advantage of the good times and have fun with your parent when he or she is sober. Try not to hold a grudge because of how your parent acted when he or she was drinking or using drugs. It's important to have fun together when you can, because having good times to remember will help get you through the difficult times.

11 Do what you love.

Doing things you love to do can take your mind off problems with your family and remind you of the good things in your life.



TALKING TO YOUR PARENT

When your parent has an Addiction, it can feel like you're walking on eggshells around him or her. It can be hard to find the right thing to say or to figure out how to tell your parent what's on your mind. Here are a few tips to help you out:

- 1 Be respectful and polite.** This can be a challenge if your parent has been drinking or using drugs or has missed out on something that he or she promised you they would do. Try taking a deep breath and remember that the Addiction is making him or her act this way and you don't have to join the negativity.

2 Think of your parent as a person and talk to them the way you would want someone to talk to you. It's easy to think of our parents only as parents or only as someone with an Addiction. They're more than either of those roles and treating them as such goes a long way.

3 Avoid blaming. Even if your parent was at fault, blaming them for whatever has happened will only make them defensive and less likely to listen. Use "I" statements whenever you can. They communicate your message without causing the other person to feel as defensive. For example, instead of saying "You didn't come to my soccer game again," say "I was hurt when I realized that you weren't at my soccer game." This puts the emphasis on how it made you feel, instead of what your parent did wrong.

4 Express your feelings. Even though your parent has an Addiction, he or she is still your parent. Your feelings matter just as much as his or her feelings. If you're comfortable, tell your parent when you're upset, stressed out, scared, and even happy. Expressing those feelings can help improve your mood and it's important that your parent is aware of how you're feeling.

5 Choose a suitable time and place to talk to your parent if the topic is sensitive. If you have something important to discuss, make sure that you have some privacy. The middle of the grocery store is probably not a great spot for an intimate or emotional conversation. Try to approach your parent at times when they are generally calm, relaxed, and sober. It will make it easier for both of you. Avoid having a serious conversation with your parent if he or she is feeling sick or using alcohol/drugs.

6 Speak with a trusted adult first. If you have to discuss something important with your parent, whether it's about you or about their Addiction, it can help to speak with a trusted adult first. This can mean another family member, a family friend, or a counsellor. You can run things by the trusted adult as a trial run and they can even accompany you to talk to your parent, if you feel that's appropriate and helpful.

7 Be prepared for denial and negativity. Your parent may not be ready or willing to admit that he or she has a problem. This denial could be because he or she is trying to protect you or it could be that your parent doesn't want to believe that his or her alcohol or drug use is that serious. Try to stay calm and rational. If the conversation starts to get out of control or violent, do what you can to leave the situation. If your parent says something negative, try not to take it personally.

8 If you are not comfortable speaking to your parent face-to-face, writing a letter can be a good alternative. A letter allows you to express how you feel without your emotions confusing you. It also gives your parent the opportunity to read it on his or her own time. Giving your parent some time to process what you needed to say allows him or her to be less defensive than he or she may be if confronted in person. A good idea when writing a letter is to put it away for a day when you've finished, and then read it again to make sure you've said what you really want to say.

It is not your job to take care of your parent. This information is meant to help you better understand your parent's illness so you can know what to expect and be better prepared to cope. Your job is to take care of you and do your part in trying to have a good relationship with your parent.

QUESTION & ANSWER



Q Did i cause my parent's Addiction?

A No, absolutely not. Nothing you could do would cause your parent's Addiction.

Q Am i betraying my parent if i talk about them?

A No, it's important for you to talk about how your parent's Addiction is affecting you. Just make sure that the person you talk to is someone that you trust (and if possible, someone that your parent also trusts). Remember that you have nothing to be ashamed of.

Q Does my parent even like me?

A Sometimes people with Addictions or mental illness don't have the ability to put themselves in another person's shoes and realize how their words and actions affect other people. Addiction can make it difficult for your parent to see beyond his or her own perspective. Remember that even though your parent has an Addiction, it is not okay for him or her to say rude or hurtful things to you. Although it can be really tough, try not to take what your parent says personally. If conversations become very negative, do what you can to remove yourself from the situation.

Q Will I develop an Addiction too?

A You get your genes from your biological parents, and although your genes contribute to Addiction, that does not mean that you will develop an Addiction. Therefore, although it's possible that you will develop an Addiction, there's also a possibility that you won't. It does mean, however, that you are at higher risk for developing Addiction. There are many things you can do to stay healthy and even decrease your risk of developing an Addiction. The best way to prevent Addiction is to not drink alcohol or use drugs. You can't become addicted to something you don't use. Regardless of whether you choose to abstain from alcohol or drugs, make sure you look after yourself, eat healthy, get plenty of sleep, and learn to use positive coping skills (see page 22). Practicing healthy behaviours and coping positively with stress is essential.



DEALING WITH YOUR EMOTIONS

GUILT

When someone you love has an Addiction, it's not unusual to experience guilt about feeling:

- ◆ Happy
- ◆ Carefree
- ◆ Angry with your parent
- ◆ Like you don't want to spend time with your parent
- ◆ Like you can't make your parent better

Although it's totally normal to feel guilty, remember that your parent's illness is not your fault. You haven't done anything to cause his or her Addiction and you have every right to feel and express happiness, anger, sadness, fear, or any other emotion. Try to remind yourself that you can't control or change your parent's behaviour. He or she has to do that on his or her own. Be caring and thoughtful, but put yourself first. Just because Addiction is trying to control your parent's life, doesn't mean you have to let it control yours.

ANGER

Anger is an important emotion. It's totally okay to feel angry at times. Rather than feeling guilty about your anger, try to focus on learning ways that you can better manage your anger and understand what it means to you. Effective anger management takes practice. Here are some tips that may help:

1 Burn off some steam.

Exercise is a great way to manage your anger. Go for a run, try yoga, take a kickboxing class – whatever works best for you. Working out helps your body “release” emotions, plus you get the benefits of exercise.

2 Breathe deeply.

Take a minute and try the box breathing exercise on page 23. Taking deep breaths slows your heart rate and helps you calm down.

3 Learn to problem solve.

Figuring out what exactly is making you angry can make a huge difference in how you feel. Often, what we think we're angry about and what we're actually angry about are not the same thing. Later on, when you have some distance from the situation, think about the point when you got angry, what happened, and what thoughts were going through your head. Understanding the problem goes a long way towards finding a good solution.

4 Give yourself a break.

If you feel yourself getting angry, walk away from the situation for a little while, if you can. This works in a similar way as counting to ten, giving you time to calm down and think rationally about how to deal with the situation that is making you angry.

5 Count to ten.

It sounds cliché but it can help. Taking a pause before you respond helps your body and your mind calm down and you can then think more rationally about how to react.

6 Express your feelings.

Sometimes, telling someone why you are angry can help you feel better. Instead of being aggressive, try to calmly and assertively express your feelings. When you're calm, it's easier for people to listen to what you are actually saying, instead of only reacting to your anger.

If you've tried all of these tips and are still having a hard time managing your anger, it is a good idea to talk to a counsellor. For information on how and where to find support, see page 29.

DEALING WITH YOUR STRESS

Having a parent with an Addiction can be really stressful and that stress can show itself in many ways:

1 Physical symptoms.

Headache; neck ache; indigestion; stomach ache; sweaty palms; racing heart; irregular sleeping patterns.

2 Emotional symptoms.

Crying; anger; loneliness; forgetfulness; diminished sense of humour; irritability; hopelessness; unhappiness; indecisiveness; sensitivity; anxiety.

3 Behavioural symptoms.

Drinking, smoking or using drugs; needing to be in control; withdrawal or avoidance; acting aggressively; feeling restless; grinding teeth; eating poorly; having nightmares.

Although a little bit of stress is healthy, the stress of having a parent with an Addiction can sometimes feel overwhelming. The coping strategies below can help you stay calm and prevent the stress from taking over your life. If after a little practice, these strategies don't seem to be helping, it's a good idea to talk to a counsellor. See page 30 for information on how to find support.

COPING STRATEGIES

1 Exercise.

Daily physical activity improves your health and mood, and helps you get rid of stress. Even something as simple as going for a walk can help.

2 Eat healthy.

Eating a balanced diet gives your body the fuel it needs to help combat stress. Try not to skip meals, eat plenty of fruits and vegetables, and go easy on the junk food.

3 Sleep.

Getting 8-9 hours of sleep each night will help you feel better the next day. If you have trouble sleeping, try the Sleep tips on next page.

4 Daily relaxation time.

Take time each day to relax. Read a book, watch a movie, play a game, listen to music – whatever helps you relax. Also learn and use the Box Breathing exercise on next the page.

5 Limit caffeine.
Caffeine can make your heart race, which can make you feel worse.

6 Acknowledge your feelings.
It's okay to feel angry or upset once in a while. You don't have to bottle up your feelings. Try talking to the people in your support network. Sharing your feelings with someone else can feel like a weight is lifted off your chest.

7 Be realistic.
Addiction can make your parent interpret things differently than they actually are. Remind yourself that Addiction skews your parent's perspective and things may not be exactly what your parent believes them to be.

8 Manage your time.
Learn how to schedule and prioritize your projects and other responsibilities — it will help you feel more in control, more productive, and less overwhelmed. Use a timetable organizer and check it out every morning to help you plan your day.

9 Build healthy relationships.
It's important to have a good support network of people you trust.

10 Stay away from alcohol and drugs.
Although you may feel better in the short-term, alcohol and drugs will not resolve your stress. They'll only give you a false sense of confidence and may make your problems worse in the long run. This includes cigarettes!

11 Go outside.
Staying inside all the time can be really draining. Getting outside and enjoying the sun and fresh air can improve your mood. Try to link this with exercise if you can; even a brisk walk outdoors may help.

12 Accept what you can't change.
Not being able to change your parent's behaviour can be really frustrating. It's important to remember that the only thing you can control is your own behaviour. Try not to dwell on the things you can't change and focus on the things you can (e.g., how you react to your parent's behaviour).

A tool you might find helpful 'Taking Charge of Your Health' is available as a free download at: teenmentalhealth.org/resources/entries/taking-charge-of-your-health

BOX BREATHING

If possible, sit and close your eyes. If not, just focus on your breathing.

- ◆ Inhale your breath (preferably through your nose) for 4 seconds.
- ◆ Hold your breath for 4 more seconds. You're not trying to deprive yourself of air; you're just giving the air a few seconds to fill your lungs.
- ◆ Exhale slowly through your mouth for 4 seconds.
- ◆ Pause for 4 seconds (without speaking) before breathing in again.


Repeat this process as many times as necessary. Even 30 seconds of deep breathing will help you feel calmer and more in control.

SLEEP TIPS

- ◆ Go to sleep and wake up within 30 minutes of the same time every day.
- ◆ Follow a regular nightly routine before you go to bed. A series of steps that you follow every night cues your body that it's time to fall asleep.
- ◆ Don't read, do homework, or text your friends from your bed. This teaches your body that when you're in bed, you should be sleeping.
- ◆ Avoid electronic screens (TV, computer, phone, tablet, etc.) for at least one hour before bed, and try not to bring them into your bedroom.

For more information about sleep, check out: teenmentalhealth.org/understanding-mental-health/sleep





FAMILY RULES

You might have unspoken “rules” in your family. It’s important to be aware of these hidden “rules” because sometimes they may be unhealthy. Here are some rules that are worth breaking:

1 Don’t trust. When you’re frequently disappointed by broken promises, eventually you learn not to trust what people say to you. Sometimes you don’t trust other people at all.

Break it! We make our assumptions about the world based on our experiences – that can make it easy to not trust anyone else when you come from a family that constantly breaks your trust. Not everyone will disappoint you. There are lots of honest and trustworthy people in the world. Give someone a chance to be there for you when you need it.

2 Don’t feel. When you’re constantly disappointed and hurt by someone you love, you learn to shut off your emotions so that other people can’t hurt you the same way.

Break it! Although it’s tempting to sometimes not feel at all, emotions are an essential part of living a fulfilling and rewarding life. Don’t let your parent’s illness stop you from living the full life you deserve.

3 Don’t talk. When a lot of negative things happen in a family, you can learn not to talk about your problems because it’s uncomfortable.

Break it! It may be uncomfortable at first, but it’s so important to talk about what’s going on in your family. Chances are – someone else feels the way you do. Sharing your feelings with each other can help to release stress and starts you on the path toward resolving family issues. You can’t solve a problem if no one will admit it exists.

SUICIDE

Although your parent has an Addiction, he or she is not necessarily suicidal. Many people with Addiction problems do not have suicidal thoughts and never attempt suicide. However, having an Addiction does increase the risk for suicide, especially if your parent has other mental health problems, so you should be aware of the warning signs that your parent may be considering suicide, just in case:

- ◆ Intense hopelessness or sadness
 - ◆ Preoccupation with death
 - ◆ Loss of interest in regular activities
 - ◆ Withdrawal from family and friends
 - ◆ Talking about what it will be like when they're gone
 - ◆ Giving away valued possessions
-

WHAT CAN I DO?

It's okay to ask your parent if they are suicidal and tell them that you are concerned. Asking about suicide will not put the idea in his or her head. If you suspect your parent is suicidal, the best thing you can do is tell a trusted adult. If there is no one you trust, call 911. Suicide risk is serious and you cannot handle this on your own.

Knowing your parent is suicidal may cause you to feel extremely anxious, sad, angry, or guilty. Talking to a counselor about what you are going through can be really helpful. See next page for help getting support.

WHY WOULD SOMEONE WANT TO DIE BY SUICIDE?

There are many reasons why someone might attempt suicide, including:

- ◆ To escape from problems that may seem overwhelming
- ◆ To end painful feelings of sadness, rejection, or loss
- ◆ To avoid disappointing others
- ◆ To stop feelings of shame and guilt
- ◆ Because they feel that life isn't worth living
- ◆ Because they feel worthless and hopeless about the future
- ◆ Because alcohol or drugs have altered their thinking and mood
- ◆ Because they believe that others would be better off without them

People who die by suicide usually believe that it is the only way out. Their thinking is clouded and they are not able to realize how their actions will affect the people who care about them. Treating Addiction and other co-occurring mental health problems decreases risk for suicide.



GETTING SUPPORT

Surrounding yourself with a good support system of friends, relatives, neighbours, and other people you trust is really helpful. A good support system will:

- ◆ Understand the challenges that having a parent with a mental disorder creates for you
- ◆ Listen to you when you need someone to talk to
- ◆ Notice when you're not acting/feeling like yourself
- ◆ Give you honest and helpful advice when you need it
- ◆ Encourage you
- ◆ Help you cope when you're having a rough time
- ◆ Be there for you when you need them
- ◆ Remind you that you're not alone
- ◆ Hang out with you.

1 Join a support group for families.

Many communities have support groups for family members of people with Addictions where you can talk openly about what you are going through. If there are no local groups, online groups are also available.

3 Talk to a counselor.

If you have a school counsellor, it may be helpful to talk to them. They can often provide information on Addiction or tell you about other local resources or support groups for families.

2 Find a safe environment.

If you feel unsafe at home - it's okay to go to a friend's house. Just make sure that a trusted adult knows where you are. Don't run away and put yourself in danger.

4 Know emergency contacts.

If your parent gets abusive or out of control, it's important to know the phone numbers of trusted people you can call for help.

EMERGENCY CONTACT

NAME: _____

PHONE NUMBER: _____

VIOLENCE:

If your parent becomes violent or if you are unsure about your safety or the safety of others, you need to act. Call 911. If violence is occurring, it is important that you get help from a counselor, police officer, or doctor. **DO NOT WAIT!** The sooner the issue is addressed, the better the outcome.

MAKE A ULYSSES AGREEMENT

A Ulysses agreement is like a safety plan for your family. The purpose of this agreement is to make sure that you and your siblings will be taken care of if your parent's illness gets to the point that your parent is not able to take healthy control of his/her life. It's a good idea to sit down with your entire family and come up with a list of warning signs that your parent's illness may be worsening and what you should do if that happens. The agreement should also include who you should contact and a safe place you could go if your parent is unwell. It would also be a good idea for your family to include trusted relatives or close family friends when creating this agreement, so that they know what could happen and how to provide support if necessary. There is a sample Ulysses agreement in the back of this book for you to use.



INFO

These are places you can find more information about Addiction/mental health/mental disorders and get help:

1 **Family Doctor.**

Talk to your family doctor about your concerns. Your doctor can answer questions you may have and may be able to connect you with a good psychologist, counselor, and/or support group.

2 **Emergency.**

If you or your parent are feeling suicidal or are in crisis, go to your local hospital's emergency room immediately.

3 **School Counselor or Nurse.**

Your school counselor or nurse may have helpful resources for you, including books, pamphlets, and contacts in the community.

4 **Internet.**

The internet has loads of information about Addiction and mental illness; just know that not all of it is accurate. In fact, the information on some websites is more wrong than right. The next page has a list of helpful websites that can be trusted.

5 **Health Boards.**

Many communities have a health board with information on different support groups and other resources. They are often located in community centres, malls, and grocery stores.

6 **Phonebook.**

The yellow pages have lists of local support groups, counselors, and youth health centres, some of which may be helpful for you.

7 **Library.**

Check your local community or school library for books to help you understand more about Addiction.

8 **Kids Help Phone.**

The Kids Help Phone has counselors who answer phone calls and online questions from young people 24/7. You can reach them at 1-800-668-6868 or at kidshelpphone.ca

TALK TO A COUNSELOR OR FAMILY DOCTOR

Sometimes you may need to talk to someone who is experienced in helping teens, like a counselor, psychologist, or doctor. Don't be afraid to ask for this if you need it. Realizing you need more help and looking for it is a sign of strength, not weakness. A counselor or doctor can help you:

- ◆ Understand more about your parent's Addiction
- ◆ Understand and express your emotions in a positive way
- ◆ Learn to cope in healthy ways
- ◆ Make positive changes in your own life
- ◆ Build healthy relationships
- ◆ Set limits and protect yourself

Sometimes it helps to make a list of questions before visiting a counselor or doctor. Remember, what you say will remain confidential unless you are in a situation where harm can happen to you. Discuss with your doctor or counselor how they will keep your discussions in confidence.



HELPFUL WEBSITES

Teen Mental Health: www.teenmentalhealth.org

Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre: www.keltymentalhealth.ca

National Institute of Mental Health: www.nimh.nih.gov

Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse: www.ccsa.ca

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health: www.camh.net

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism: www.niaaa.nih.gov

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: www.samhsa.gov

Alcoholics Anonymous Family Groups: www.al-anon.alateen.org

WRITE ABOUT YOU

Writing in a journal can be a really good way to express your feelings. Reading over what you've written later may help you make sense of your feelings and you might even feel better. Feel free to use the questions below if you're having trouble getting started.

I still have questions about _____

I'm concerned my parent will _____

I'm worried I will _____

I'm going to share my feelings with _____

My friends will help me _____

I'm going to take care of myself by _____

Things that make me feel better include _____

When I am scared, I will _____

I can trust _____

Things I like about myself include _____

I will stay connected to my family by _____

What I love about my family is _____

I get frustrated when _____



EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

My parent's doctor's name: _____

My parent's doctor's phone number: _____

Trusted adult/relative #1: _____

Trusted adult/relative's phone number: _____

Trusted adult/relative #2: _____

Trusted adult/relative's phone number: _____

Police phone number: _____

Crisis hotline: _____

Closest hospital phone number: _____

If I need to leave and go to a safe environment, I will go: _____

Phone number: _____

Medication my parent is on: _____

**IF YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT YOUR SAFETY OR THE
SAFETY OF SOMEONE ELSE, CALL 911!**



ULYSSES

AGREEMENT

NAMES OF PEOPLE AWARE OF THIS AGREEMENT:

Name			
Signature			
Contact Info			

PARENT'S MEDICAL CONDITION:

Diagnosis			
Symptoms			
Medications (name, dose)			



IF PARENT IS UNWELL, CHILDREN WILL BE TEMPORARILY TAKEN CARE OF BY:

Name			
Relation			
Contact Info			

SPECIFIC NEEDS OF CHILDREN (dates of births, health card number, medical issues):

SPECIFIC CARE CONTACTS FOR CHILDREN INCLUDE:

	Name	Contact Info
Family Doctor		
Dentist		
School		
Friend		

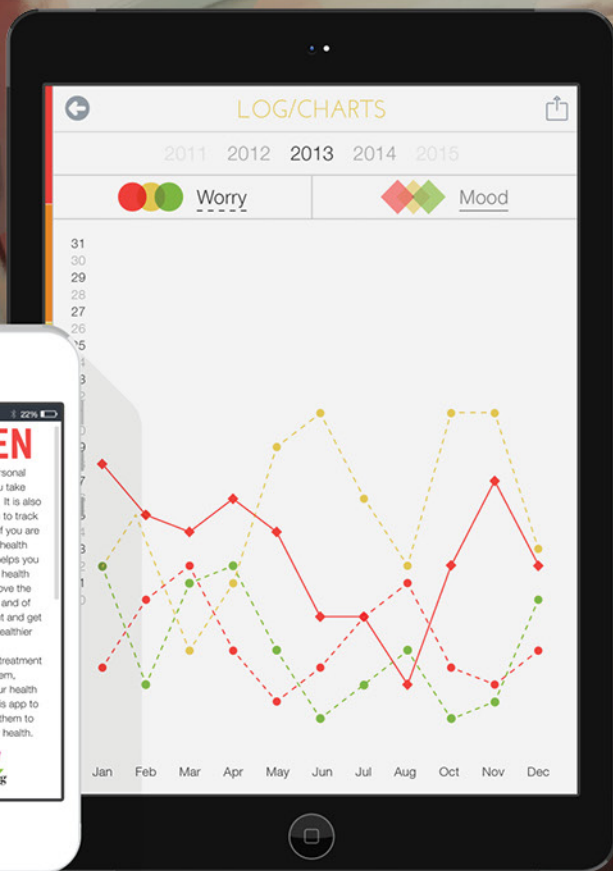
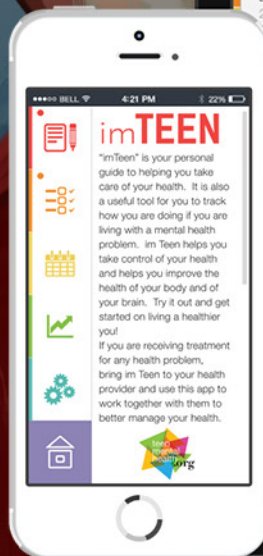


imTEEN

Taking charge of your health



- ASSESSMENT
- CHECKLIST
- CALENDAR
- VISUAL REPORTS



TRANSITIONS



amazon.com

Available on the
App Store

Available on the
iBookstore

Available on Amazon.com and the Apple iBookStore. The App is free for download at the Apple App Store & online: teenmentalhealth.org/resources/entries/transitions



FAMILY PACK

better mental health for you & your family

Support yourself and your family members in better understanding mental disorders and how to deal with them. If you have a mental disorder, are supporting a family member with one or are interested in how you can support a friend and their family, the Family Pack can help.



ANXIETY DISORDER
DEPRESSION
EATING DISORDER
SCHIZOPHRENIA
DRUG & ALCOHOL ADDICTION
BIPOLAR DISORDER

