



When a Loved One Has a Problem

Turn to page 2 for do's and don'ts if you suspect a loved one has a problem.

Addiction Awareness

Understanding addiction, addictive substances, and the addiction cycle.

Welcome!

This quarter's theme is understanding addiction. We welcome your feedback at ask@lifesolutionsforyou.com.

DidUKnow?

- ◆ 1 of every 8 Americans has a significant problem with alcohol or drugs*
- ◆ Approximately 27 million Americans either use illicit drugs regularly or are "heavy drinkers"*
- ◆ By age 18, almost 12 percent of all young people are illicit drug users*
- ◆ Approximately 70 percent of illegal drug users are employed and contribute significantly to workplace absenteeism, accidents and injuries, decreased productivity, increased insurance expenses, employee turnover costs, and on-the-job violence*
- ◆ Estimated annual direct costs to society resulting from substance abuse is more than \$250 billion*
- ◆ Compulsive gambling affects 2 to 5 percent of Americans**

*Source: SAMHSA (U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration)

**Source: Gambling Addiction (Compulsive or Pathological Gambling). MedicineNet.com

Understanding Addiction

An **addiction** (the need to use a substance or perform a behavior repeatedly) usually develops over time. So it's easy not to notice an addiction at first. But as the problem grows, your chances of losing everything important to you multiply. No one plans to be addicted and no one plans to lose his or her family, friends, job, health, and self-respect — but it can happen.

Addictive substances include:

- ◆ Illegal drugs such as cocaine
- ◆ Legal drugs such as cigarettes, alcohol, and prescription medications
- ◆ Activities of daily life such as working, eating, and having sex
- ◆ Leisure activities such as gambling, watching television, and playing computer games

The Addiction Cycle

You try it

When you first try an addictive substance or behavior, it's often just for fun or by chance. Your first reaction may be that you feel good, more relaxed, and perhaps more popular.

You try it again

The next time you try an addictive substance or behavior, it may seem more familiar this time — like a friend who makes you feel more relaxed, comfortable, and liked.

You plan to do it

Soon you start making plans to use the substance or do the behavior. You think about it even when it's not around. And you may become attracted to people who want to do it too.

You do it more and more

Now you have become addicted. You take the substance or do the behavior more and more — often secretly and alone. Now it consumes your time and energy — and interferes with your life.

The impact on your life

An addiction can affect your relationships, work, and health. In other words, your entire life.

Your relationships with family and friends change as your habit becomes your priority. You may seek out people who share your addiction. Or you may grow distrustful of people, preferring the "company" of your addiction over that of people you know. This behavior hurts you and everyone around you.

Your job and relationships with co-workers are threatened when you become addicted. You may become unreliable and careless, increasing the odds of work-related accidents. Your health is likely to decline as your problem grows. You may become increasingly confused or tired. Your self-esteem may be threatened. And, over time, your addiction could lead to a serious, even fatal, illness.

If you are worried about your own, a friend's, or family member's addiction, it is important to know that help is available. Learning about the nature of addiction will give you a better understanding of the problem and how best to deal with it.

Source: Krames Staywell

FAQs About Gambling and Addiction

Is there a link between problem gambling and chemical dependency?

Yes. In several studies approximately 50 percent of problem gamblers were found to also have drug or alcohol problems, while studies of people in treatment for substance abuse have found between 10 and 30 percent also have gambling problems. People may have both addictions simultaneously, or they may switch from one addiction to another.

Are problem gamblers usually addicted to other things too?

It is generally accepted that people with one addiction are more at risk to develop another. Some problem gamblers also find they have a problem with alcohol or drugs. This does not, however, mean that if you have a gambling problem, you are guaranteed to become addicted to other things. Some problem gamblers never experience any other addiction because no other substance or activity gives them the same feeling as gambling does. There also appears to be evidence of family patterns regarding dependency as many problem gamblers report one or both parents had a drinking and/or gambling problem.

National Council on Problem Gambling

What are the similarities and differences between a substance abuser and a problem gambler?

Here are a few similarities and differences:

- ◆ Immediate gratification sought
- ◆ Preoccupied with thoughts about gambling or using
- ◆ Unable to stop
- ◆ Both deny any problem
- ◆ Pathological gambling more easily hidden
- ◆ Gambling often not considered a problem
- ◆ Less help for problem gamblers
- ◆ Cannot drug test for gambling

California Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs – Office of Problem Gambling

To use our WorkLife Resource Center,
email or call us for your company code:
ask@lifesolutionsforyou.com

1.800.647.3327
www.lifesolutionsforyou.com

LifeSolutions is a confidential workplace benefit available at no cost to you and members of your household.

When a Loved One Has a Problem

If you suspect that a friend or family member has a drug problem, below are a few things you can do.

Speak up. Talk to the person about your concerns, and offer your help and support, without being judgmental. The earlier addiction is treated, the better. Don't wait for your loved one to hit bottom! Be prepared for excuses and denial by listing specific examples of your loved one's behavior that has you worried.

Take care of yourself. Don't get so caught up in someone else's drug problem that you neglect your own needs. Make sure you have people you can talk to and lean on for support. And stay safe. Don't put yourself in dangerous situations.

Avoid self-blame. You can support a person with a substance abuse problem and encourage treatment, but you can't force an addict to change. You can't control your loved one's decisions. Letting the person accept responsibility for his or her actions is an essential step along the way to recovery for drug addiction.

But don't:

- ◆ Attempt to punish, threaten, bribe, or preach.
- ◆ Try to be a martyr. Avoid emotional appeals that may only increase feelings of guilt and the compulsion to use drugs.
- ◆ Cover up or make excuses for the drug abuser, or shield him or her from the negative consequences of the behavior.
- ◆ Take over their responsibilities, leaving them with no sense of importance or dignity.
- ◆ Hide or throw out drugs.
- ◆ Argue with the person when he or she is high.
- ◆ Take drugs with the drug abuser.
- ◆ Feel guilty or responsible for another person's behavior.

Remember you do not have to go through this alone. Seek out support from friends, family, and community resources.

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