

Tip Sheet: Understanding Addiction

You always thought that you were in control. You never realized that it would affect your job or your family. The legal and financial stresses have become overwhelming. When you find yourself dealing with any sort of addiction, you may find yourself feeling buried by stressors that you certainly do not need. Like most people, you never sought to become addicted. But over time, the addiction gradually took over your life, becoming the most important thing in it.

Millions of people every year find themselves addicted to something. Many people become addicted to substances – like alcohol, marijuana, heroin, cocaine, or nicotine. However, people also become addicted to certain behaviors, like gambling, shopping, using the internet or sex, that can get in the way of their work and other relationships.

Sometime it can be very difficult to recognize you have an addiction. When you find yourself relying on drugs, alcohol or patterns of behavior that are potentially harmful to your health, relationships and quality of life, you may be facing an addiction. Overcoming an addiction involves having to give up something that you have come to think you need, and is not something that is easy for most people. Fortunately, contrary to popular belief, you do not have to hit “rock bottom” to begin to make positive changes in your life.

Recognizing an Addiction

Knowing when you or a family member has an addiction to drugs, alcohol or certain behavior can sometimes be difficult. We often find ourselves in denial that there is a problem, and when we are confronted, we may make excuses or blame others. Family members of someone with an addiction sometimes enable those behaviors by ignoring the problem or by trying to rescue the person each time their addiction gets them into trouble.

To deal with an addiction, you first have to recognize that there is a problem. Here are some questions to consider. If you wonder if you’re in denial, check with your family and friends to see how they would answer these questions for you.

- Do you feel that you need to use drugs or alcohol, or engage in behaviors such as gambling, regularly or multiple times per day?
- Have you been absent from work repeatedly to engage in the addictive behaviors?
- Have you tried to stop or cut back and been unsuccessful?
- Do you find yourself using drugs or alcohol, or engaging in the behaviors when you are feeling stressed instead of dealing with your problems head-on?
- Has your use of the alcohol, drugs or your behavior increased over time?
- Do you find yourself thinking about using or engaging in the behavior so much that you are unable to concentrate on other things?

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- Has your performance at work deteriorated as a result of this problem?
- If you are using drugs or alcohol, do find yourself having to drink or use drugs to avoid withdrawal symptoms such as hangover, shaking, nausea, or vomiting?
- Have your friends or family expressed concerns to you about your drug/alcohol use or other behaviors?
- Do find yourself going out of your way to get the drugs and alcohol, or to engage in the behavior, such as driving long distances, or avoiding places where you can't use drugs, alcohol or engage in the behavior?

If you find yourself answering “yes” to some or all of these questions, then it may be time to consider getting help. Dealing with an addiction can be difficult, but it is not something anyone must do alone. Fortunately, help is available for anyone dealing with addiction.

Where to Start

Your EAP can be a great place to start. At some point in our lives, each of us faces a problem or situation that is difficult to resolve. SupportLinc is a confidential resource that helps you deal with life's challenges, including addiction. SupportLinc provides comprehensive assessments, professional counseling and referrals to resources to help you address and resolve your problem. Services are available 24/7/365, and offered at no cost to you and your eligible family members. For more information, call SupportLinc at 888-881-LINC (5462) or visit our website at www.supportlinc.com.

Additional Resources

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

SAMHSA's National Helpline
1-800-662-HELP (4357)
TTY: 1-800-487-4889
Website: www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline

Also known as, the Treatment Referral Routing Service, this Helpline provides 24-hour free and confidential treatment referral and information about mental and/or substance use disorders, prevention, and recovery in English and Spanish.