

# Self-Help Guide Understanding ADDICTIONS



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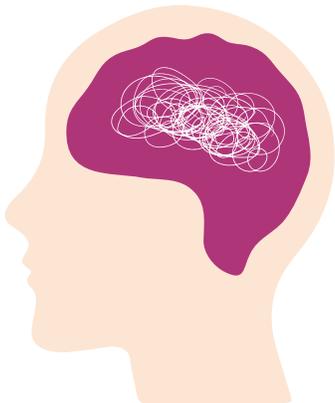
# What is Addiction?

Addiction is a chronic, relapsing disorder characterized by **compulsive drug seeking and use despite adverse consequences**. It is considered a brain disorder, because it involves functional changes to brain circuits involved in reward, stress, and self-control.



! An individual can be addicted to many different behaviours, such as **substance use, gambling, pornography, video gaming, shopping, and technology use**.

## WHAT HAPPENS IN THE BRAIN WHEN SOMEONE IS ADDICTED?



Instead of a simple, pleasurable surge of dopamine, many drugs of abuse—such as opioids, cocaine, or nicotine—cause dopamine to flood the reward pathway, 10 times more than normal. The brain remembers this surge and associates it with the addictive substance.

People will often make comparisons between how much they use compared to others, when deciding whether they are addicted to the substance or behaviour. This is not the best way to understand whether someone has an addiction. It is best to sit down and look at the negative consequences the addiction is having in an individual's life and their urge to continue engaging in the use or behaviour despite the consequences.



A Decisional Balance is a great tool that can be used to explore these elements.

This is also a great tool to use when you are in the early stages of addressing your addiction. **Here is how you complete one:**

✓ We start at the box **labelled 'A' where you will list all the advantages or benefits of your current substance use or problem behaviour.** Think about how it currently helps make life a little easier. This part can be challenging because we often only focus on the disadvantages of someone's substance use or problem behaviours. However, it is necessary to look at the advantages because it highlights what is missing in your life that your addiction is helping you with. For example, ability to get temporary relief from stressful thoughts.

✓ **In box 'B' you will list all the disadvantages of your current substance use or problem behaviour.** Think about the reasons why you are considering making changes to your addiction. For example, job loss or interference with work performance.

✓ Next is box 'C' where you list all the disadvantages of making changes to your substance use or problem behaviours. This list can be challenging to come up with. It may help to look at what you have listed in box 'A' as these are some of the things that may change if you stop or change your substance use or problem behaviour. For example, it is difficult.

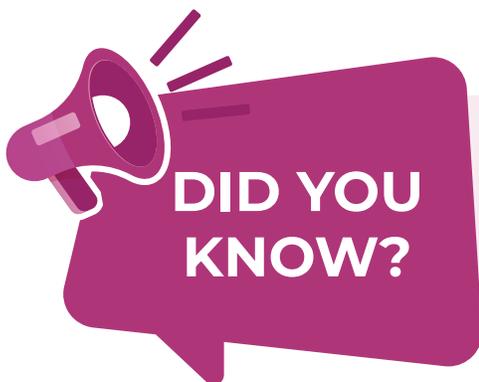


✓ Finally, you will complete box 'D' by listing all the advantages of making changes to your substance use or problem behaviour. You can look at box 'B' for an idea of some things that may change if you make changes to your substance use or problem behaviour. For example, improved relationships with loved ones.

✓ An extra step in this process that you can choose to complete, go through the lists in each of the boxes and identify whether the impact of the things listed will last long-term or short-term. For example, job loss can be something that impacts someone long-term.



	Advantages	Disadvantages
Changing Behaviour	D	C
Not Changing Behaviour	A	B



An extra step in this process that you can choose to complete, go through the lists in each of the boxes and identify whether the impact of the things listed will last long-term or short-term. For example, job loss can be something that impacts someone long-term.



## UNDERSTANDING HOW ENVIRONMENT, GENETICS, TRAUMA AND MENTAL HEALTH PLAY PIVOTAL ROLES IN ADDICTION SUSCEPTIBILITY



Addictions can often develop as a result of trauma, impacting various aspects of our lives, including our environment, mental health, and overall well-being. Traumatic experiences can leave individuals feeling overwhelmed, disconnected, and seeking ways to cope with their pain. Here's how addictions develop from trauma and their effects:



### ADDICTIONS AND TRAUMA



Traumatic events, such as abuse, neglect, or witnessing violence, can significantly impact an individual's emotional, psychological, and physical well-being. These experiences can create a profound sense of distress, leading some individuals to turn to substances or behaviors as a way to escape or numb their pain. This can mark the beginning of an addiction.

### EFFECTS ON THE ENVIRONMENT



Addictions resulting from trauma can have far-reaching effects on an individual's environment. Relationships with family, friends, and colleagues may become strained or broken as the addiction takes hold. Financial difficulties may arise due to excessive spending on substances or behaviours. The overall atmosphere within the home or workplace can become tense, unpredictable, and unsafe, affecting not only the individual but also those around them.

## IMPACT ON MENTAL HEALTH



Trauma-related addictions can exacerbate existing mental health issues or contribute to the development of new ones. Conditions like depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and complex trauma can coexist with addiction, creating a complex cycle of distress. Substance abuse can provide temporary relief but ultimately worsen mental health symptoms, leading to a vicious cycle that is challenging to break.

## PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH CONSEQUENCES



Addictions resulting from trauma can have far-reaching effects on an individual's environment. Relationships with family, friends, and colleagues may become strained or broken as the addiction takes hold. Financial difficulties may arise due to excessive spending on substances or behaviours. The overall atmosphere within the home or workplace can become tense, unpredictable, and unsafe, affecting not only the individual but also those around them.

## TREATMENT AND RECOVERY



Recognizing the connection between trauma and addiction is crucial for effective treatment and recovery. Combining trauma-informed care with addiction treatment can address underlying issues, provide healthier coping mechanisms, and foster healing. Therapy modalities such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing), and support groups can be beneficial in addressing both trauma and addiction.

It's essential to understand the underlying trauma and provide appropriate support and treatment to help individuals break free from the cycle of addiction and work towards healing and recovery.



# Why do people become Addicted?



There isn't just one thing that causes an individual to develop an addiction. People develop addictions due to a combination of many different factors. The biopsychosocial-spiritual model of understanding addiction is the most utilized model in modern-day health care settings. This model looks at the **biological, psychological, social, and spiritual factors** that contribute to the development of an addiction. Additionally, these factors also need to be considered when supporting someone who has an addiction because by understanding these factors, it gives us a place to start when it comes to recovery from an addiction.

## Biological

- Genetic vulnerability passed down from family members
- Withdrawal symptoms
- Developing tolerance over time
- Sleep disturbance
- Experiencing cravings
- Physical health concerns/chronic pain
- Changes in the brain

## Psychological

- Diagnosed or undiagnosed mental health concerns such as anxiety or depression
- Seeking escapism
- Experience of pleasure and relief when using
- Chronic stress
- Past traumatic experiences
- Irrational or unhealthy thoughts
- Difficulty regulating emotions

## Addiction

## Social

- Family/peer/societal attitudes about substance use or problem behaviour
- Access to substance or problem behaviour
- Disturbance in education/job loss
- Social class (poverty, inequality, minimal access to resources)
- Sense of safety and acceptance
- Marital problems/ family breakdown

## Spiritual

- Lack of sense of purpose in life
- Lack of connection and increased isolation
- Chronic feelings of guilt and shame
- Distanced from religious/spiritual practices

## WHAT ARE WARNING SIGNS THAT SOMEONE MAY HAVE AN ADDICTION?

- ◆ Changes in physical appearance (e.g. significant weight gain/loss)
- ◆ Signs that they are not taking care of themselves (e.g. lack of personal hygiene)
- ◆ Prioritizing substance use or problem behaviour over survival needs such as eating or sleeping
- ◆ Not able to keep up with their responsibilities at school/work/home
- ◆ Loss of interest in activities they enjoyed in the past
- ◆ Socially withdrawing and isolating
- ◆ Easily irritable and frequent mood swings
- ◆ Unable to keep track of time
- ◆ Unexplained expenditures
- ◆ Substance use paraphernalia



## HOW DO I APPROACH A LOVED ONE WHO MAY HAVE AN ADDICTION?

It is scary to see a loved one struggle with an addiction. The relationship may have taken a few hits due to your loved one's substance use or problem behaviours, which may have weakened **the foundation of the relationship**. You may want to help your loved one with an addiction by trying to control aspects of their addiction such as access to the substance. Strategies that focus on controlling the addiction may cause further tension in the relationship especially if your loved one is not agreeable to this approach. It is best to ask a loved one directly how you can support them in their recovery if they have confided in you about their challenges with addiction. This helps reduce misunderstandings in the relationship.



You may want to be more involved than what your loved one is comfortable with, however it is best to let your loved one take the lead in their own recovery from addiction.

If your loved one has not confided in you about their addiction, then the best way to approach a loved one's addiction is by first asking yourself how their addiction has impacted your relationship with them. Identify specific behaviours your loved one has engaged in that are a result of their addiction. For example, your loved one may have stopped engaging in a responsibility assigned to them in the home and this has led to arguments between you and them.

Second, you will then address these behavioural concerns with your loved one using an assertive communication style. An assertive communication style typically involves using 'I' statements. **I statements are usually framed as:**

 <p><b>I Feel:</b> " _____ " (Insert emotion only)</p>	 <p><b>When:</b> " _____ " (Insert brief description of a specific behaviour your loved one has done)</p>
 <p><b>Because:</b> " _____ " (insert how the action affected you)</p>	 <p><b>Next time please:</b> " _____ " (insert specific new behavior you would like to see)</p>

An example of an 'I' statement is **"I feel anxious when you do not respond to my messages while you are out late at night because I do not know if you are safe and I cannot sleep. Next time please send me a message letting me know when you will be home."**

As a loved one of someone who has an addiction, it is important for you to connect for your own mental health support. Interacting with or supporting someone with an addiction can take a toll on your own mental health. **Self-care is essential in maintaining your well-being during this challenging time.**

## PRACTICE



# Gratitude for Mental Wellness

- For the next 7 days every morning you wake up journal five things you are grateful for. Once you hit the 7 day mark examine how you feel and write a reflection.
- The bucket you wake up with is a metaphor. If you were to wake up feeling like your bucket is 20% full, what are some things you could do or people you speak with to ultimately get you at 100%.
- How did loss make you more grateful?
- Sit with a loved one and ask them this one question: ***If today was the last time I saw you, what is something you would not want me to forget?***



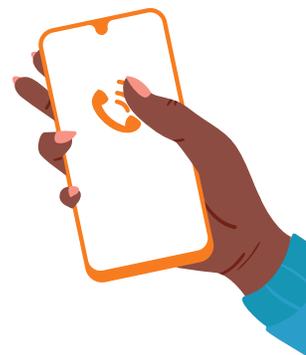
# WHERE CAN I GET SUPPORT FOR MY OWN ADDICTION OR A LOVED ONE'S ADDICTION?

## ADDICTION COUNSELLING OR TREATMENT

- ◆ **Connex Ontario directory of OHIP** covered mental health and addiction resources in Ontario. This includes outpatient programs and in-patient programs: <https://www.connexontario.ca/en-ca/> , Call 1-866-531-2600
- ◆ **Wellness Together Canada:** <https://www.wellnesstogether.ca/en-ca/>
- ◆ **Drug Rehab Services:** <https://www.drugrehab.ca/> , 1-877-254-3348
- ◆ **Breaking Free self-led online recovery program:** <https://www.breakingfreeonline.ca/>
- ◆ **Punjabi Community Health Services:** <https://pchs4u.com/> , 905-677-0889
- ◆ **Centre for Addiction and Mental Health:** <https://www.camh.ca/en/your-care/access-camh> , 416-535-8501, Select option 2.
- ◆ **Rapid Access Addiction Medicine clinics located all throughout Ontario.** Search through Connex Ontario: <https://www.connexontario.ca/search> .
- ◆ **Smoking Cessation Programs search through Connex Ontario:** <https://www.connexontario.ca/search>

## WITHDRAWAL MANAGEMENT/DETOX FACILITIES

- ◆ Toronto East Health Network Men's Withdrawal Management Services- 866-366-9513
- ◆ Toronto Women's Withdrawal Management Services- 1-855-505-5045
- ◆ Co-ed Withdrawal Management Centre William Osler- 905-456-3500



## FAMILY AND FRIENDS SUPPORT

- ◆ **Families for Addiction Recovery.** <https://www.farcanada.org/> .  
1-855-377-6677
- ◆ **Family Member Support through Halton ADAPT.** <https://haltonadapt.org/> .  
1-905-639-6537 ext. 0
- ◆ **Family Member Support through William Osler Health System.**  
<https://www.williamoslerhs.ca/en/areas-of-care/addictions-services-for-adults.aspx#Youth-addiction-counselling-services>

## PEER SUPPORT

- ◆ **Nisa Helpline:** Call 1-888-315-6472 (Women Only)
- ◆ **CAPSA Peer Support Program.** <https://capsa.ca/peer-support/>
- ◆ **SMART Recovery.** <https://www.smartrecovery.org/>

## HARM REDUCTION

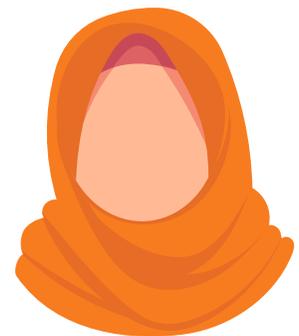
- ◆ **National Overdose Response Service (NORS).** <https://www.nors.ca/about>,  
1-888-688-6677
- ◆ **My Play Break for self-exclusion from physical and online casinos in Ontario.**  
[https://www.olg.ca/en/my-play-break.html?gclid=Cj0KCQjw7JOpBhCfARIsAL3bobcllzJYEfOGqXDGaC-1Js8FYFFFO8PKmol85kKhRnkyeaWWWh5-O06asaAn1XEALw\\_wcB&gclsrc=aw.ds](https://www.olg.ca/en/my-play-break.html?gclid=Cj0KCQjw7JOpBhCfARIsAL3bobcllzJYEfOGqXDGaC-1Js8FYFFFO8PKmol85kKhRnkyeaWWWh5-O06asaAn1XEALw_wcB&gclsrc=aw.ds)
- ◆ **Supervised Consumption Sites in Toronto.**  
<https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/health-wellness-care/health-programs-advice/supervised-injection-services/>

## 12-STEP PROGRAMS

- ◆ **Alcoholics Anonymous.** <https://www.aa.org/>
- ◆ **Toronto Narcotics Anonymous.** <https://www.torontona.org/> . 1-888-811-3887
- ◆ **Gamblers Anonymous.** <https://gamblersanonymous.org/ga/> .  
1-855-222-5542
- ◆ **Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous Ontario.** <https://slaa-ontario.org/>

## RESOURCES SPECIFIC TO MUSLIMS

- ◆ **Khalil Center.** <https://khalilcenter.com/ca>
- ◆ **Muslim Social Services Kitchner Waterloo.**  
<https://www.muslimsocialserviceskw.org/>
- ◆ **South Asian Community Health Services.** <http://www.sachservices.net/>
- ◆ **Generation Hope.** Instagram @generationhopemn



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