

# Get Your Life Back

A Guide For Addicts And Their Families



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## **Get Your Life Back: A Guide For Addicts And Their Families**

No one is talking about it. It's the white elephant in the room. You can pretend that everything is fine but the problem will just get worse. Something bad has entered your life and its name is ADDICTION.

If you are currently using drugs or alcohol, you need to read this. If you love someone who is suffering from addiction to drugs or alcohol, you need to read this. Until you do, the situation will continue to deteriorate.

Addiction is a very real problem for thousands of people and their families. Any type of drug (prescription or illicit), including alcohol could be controlling your life and driving a wedge in your relationships. The only answer is treatment if you want anything to feel normal again.

### **A Day in the Life of an Addict**

You are an addict, whether you admit it or not. You're probably denying it right now. Did you know that's the number one barrier to getting help – denial? *I don't have a problem so what's everyone talking about?*

Why did you start using in the first place? Curiosity or peer pressure may have been what got involved in drug and alcohol use. You may have started using recreational drugs or alcohol to unwind with friends or just to have fun. It could have been to fit in or stand out. Or it may have been prescribed by a doctor to help relieve your pain after a surgical procedure. Whatever the reason, you are still using today. In fact, it may not even be the same substance you started out with.

Just because you take these drugs doesn't make you an addict. It's not necessarily the frequency or the amount, but when both keep increasing, there is a good chance that you have crossed over the line into addiction.

Take a look in the mirror. What do you see? Many addicts will show physical signs of wear and tear on their bodies. Notice anything different about yourself? You might notice:

- Dark circles around your eyes
- At night, you just can't seem to get to sleep or stay asleep anymore
- Shaking-like tremors all the time
- You have gained weight or you are losing weight and looking gaunt

You just can't seem to get yourself together anymore. Everything irritates you for some reason. Your family seems to always be on your back and so does your boss at work. Things are different although you can't seem to put your finger on why, right?

Take a good long look at yourself. You get up in the morning and go to work like most of the population so you feel that you can't be an addict. You tell yourself that an addict wouldn't be able to function at a job, much less care about going to one. Continue reading. You may change your mind.

### **Myth #1: Addicts have trouble holding down a job.**

Addicts may still function relatively well on a day to day basis. They can interact with family and friends and go to work. This is what fools most family members until things get as bad as they can get.

You go to work, but you are often late. Sometimes you call in sick because you have been out all night using or drinking and can't seem to get yourself together.

What you are feeling right now is that the only reason you are still functioning is because you are using your substance of choice. It could be prescription painkillers prescribed after surgery or cocaine or marijuana that you tried at a party to ease your stress. But, to keep feeling as good as you felt while you were high, you have to continue using. You might even be scared that if you stop using, you'll be in pain again, physically and/or emotionally.

**Myth#2: I can stop whenever I want to.**

So, why don't you stop right now? The truth is that you have tried to stop before. You told yourself that your family was right and that you have to stop. Maybe you desperately want and even tried a few times, but your sobriety never seems to last for long. Before you know it, you're back refilling that prescription, drinking in the basement or using drugs.

**Myth #3: Your use of substances isn't a problem for you.**

Do you even recognize yourself in the mirror these days. That sunken look to your eyes and your sleeping problems are just the tip of the iceberg. Substance abuse can lead to health issues such as liver disease, brain damage and damage to other organs. You can lose your hair and your teeth to drug use as well. Eventually you WILL DIE. All addicts do; unless they get help before it's too late.

Your judgment is impaired when you are using. Risky behaviors like sharing dirty needles or having unprotected sex are common when you are under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

You seem to always be at odds with your family nowadays. They complain about you disappearing or hanging out with people they don't approve of. It seems like they don't trust you anymore.

#### **Myth #4: Addicts are criminals and you are not a criminal.**

There's a short fall from addict to criminal. Use and abuse of controlled substances can lead to all sorts of legal issues. You may have encountered some already but family has helped you get out of them.

Have you ever driven under the influence of anything? Have you ever paid someone money to get your drugs? Have you ever taken drugs from someone else who paid for them? That's a felony crime whether you got caught or not. If you've gotten drugs from someone then they are a drug dealer even if they wear a suit and tie.

Have you ever stole money or items to pawn in order to purchase drugs? Even if you took them from family members and they never pressed charges, it is still theft. You may even have rationalized that you will pay them back when you get the money to ease your conscious. If treatment or death doesn't come first, you will eventually end up in jail.

In your current state, you most likely feel lonely. No one seems to understand what you are dealing with. All everyone says is that you have to stop but it makes you feel so good when you are using. Why can't they see that? If you had a problem you would ask for help but you don't need help, right?

The cravings are getting stronger and stronger. You think about drugs and/or alcohol almost all the time. Willpower alone can't help you kick this addiction. If you want to break free, you'll need to enlist the help of a professional.

#### **A Day in the Life of Family of an Addict**

You never saw it coming. Don't feel bad because you are not alone. Many people don't realize that their loved ones are drug addicts or alcoholics until something bad happens.

Maybe you felt that they had changed in some way but couldn't put your finger on anything in particular. Some things you did notice:

- Loss of interest in things they used to like
- Changes in appetite
- Trouble and stress at work or school
- New friends

Drug addicts and alcoholics can keep things together pretty well. Yes, your family member is a drug addict. But you've already figured that out the hard way.

Could it be that you've noticed things missing around the house? At first you thought you were absent-minded but now you don't know. If you were one of the unlucky ones, you came home from vacation and found your house had been robbed. The odd thing was that no windows or doors were broke. It was an inside job.

Maybe it was the call from the police station at 3 o'clock in the morning. Your family member is in jail for buying drugs, arrested for a DUI or has been picked up for using drugs at a raided party.

Denial is not just a problem for addicts; it also affects their families. You don't want to believe that your spouse, son, daughter, brother or sister could do this to you. To make it easier, you ignore the obvious.

Now, you start noticing signs that something is wrong: whispered phone calls, strange behaviors, arguments and the lying. When you ask your loved one if their arrest or theft was a one-time thing and they say yes, be aware that their response is meant to pacify you. Make no mistake, they will continue using.

So now, you try and control the addict and their addiction. Arguing with them when they are high or loaded, only leads to violent confrontations and further harsh words. You

issue ultimatums that deep down you don't intend to honor. When they come crying to you and promise (for the fourth time) that they won't do it again and that they are sorry, you give in.

Other family members start to choose sides as if in a war. Your life has descended into turmoil. You want them to stop using but you don't want them to ruin their life so you cover for their mistakes and rationalize your position to other family who tell you that you are making the problem worse. You become their greatest enabler.

They won't stop using and you can't stop caring. It's time to get help.

### **It's Time to Get Help for....The Addict**

Take a hard look at your life right now. You've consistently lied to those who love and trust you. You've stolen from those who love and trust you. You've introduced dangerous drug people into your family's life. Jail won't be far behind if you haven't been there already.

Consider your health. Your body is living on borrowed time. Drugs and alcohol wreak havoc on your system. And, they affect your brain making it harder to break free the longer you keep using. Prolonged exposure to drugs and alcohol alters your brain chemistry, so quitting causes withdrawal symptoms.

The good news is that even if your brain is hooked, you can get help and find release from your internal prison. Submit to help and you will see a change that you might not have thought possible.

It won't be easy and you can't do it alone. Don't get caught up in thinking that just because treatment didn't work the first time it won't work again. There will be setbacks in the process but don't give up. There are treatment professionals that are trained and

ready to bring you back to life. Rehabilitation includes processes like detoxification, therapy, medication, exercise and other professionally supervised plans.

Be aware that it may take a while until family members come around to your side. After all you've put them through they will be reluctant to trust you again. The best way to show them that you are making a change is to stick with rehabilitation no matter how difficult it will be.

### **It's Time to Get Help for...Family of an Addict**

You are concerned about your spouse, child or sibling. The newspapers are littered with stories of drug use that don't have a happy ending. It terrifies you to think that any one of these things could happen to someone you love.

But, thinking that they could end up in the gutter dead has caused you to enable them. Enabling activities can actually be helping your loved one end up there quicker. An addict won't stop using and get help until he or she realizes that they have no other choice. You need to learn how to properly handle your loved one in order to help them.

You are now a codependent. You exert endless amounts of energy on trying to stop your loved one's addiction. In a sense, you have an addiction too. You need to stop trying to rescue your loved one because you will not be successful. You are only causing further harm to your own well-being. Consider performing an intervention. Bring in a third party professional who can say and do the things that you can't. They can help your loved one see that they have hit bottom right now and need to change their life.

The addict is not the only one who needs help overcoming this addiction. Your loved one's addiction is not your fault. They made a conscious choice. Seek out a qualified therapist to put your life back together.



You can recover by taking care of yourself. Follow the advice of your therapist so that you don't fall back into codependency. Don't worry; you can regain a healthy relationship with the addict but it will take time and lots of effort. It's okay to be angry with them for what they have done. It shows you still care what happens to them.

For continued support, attend support group meetings with other family members. Try Al-Anon or Nar-Anon meetings in your area.

### **For You Both....The Addict and their Family**

What matters now is that you are here in this situation. It will take time to regain anything that resembles normal in your lives again so don't lose hope. But, you must STOP – both of you. There is no middle ground with addiction. To break free, you have to cut it out of your lives completely.

As an experienced and competent addiction therapist, I will help you through your extremely rewarding journey of recovery. Recovery from addiction is not simply learning to abstain from the substance you have been using, it also entails working through the issues that led you down the road of addiction and help you create a healthy, happy, and fulfilling life for yourself in which you will not need to use.

If you are the family member of the addict, I will support you and guide you through this extremely difficult chapter of your life. Due to a lack of understanding of addictions, most families cause more damage to their loved one and to themselves through their well meaning intentions. You need support and guidance and I will provide that for you.

I urge you to contact me today at (647) 931-1528, or at [betwolff@gmail.com](mailto:betwolff@gmail.com). So that together, we can begin the rebuilding of the type of life that you most definitely deserve.

I look forward to speaking with you soon.

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