

CONCERN/EAP

**A Program of River Valley Counseling Center, Inc.
Located At Holyoke Medical Center**

Quarterly Newsletter

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For Confidential Assistance or an Appointment Call: 534-2625

Visit our website: www.rvcc-inc.org for Helpful Information

What You Need to Know About Addiction

Are you wondering why your loved one seems to be choosing alcohol or drugs over family? Or are you asking yourself why you are drinking again, when you promised yourself yesterday that you would cut down?

Addiction is a complex disease. Physiological, genetic, psychosocial, nutritional and environmental factors are often thought to lead to the development of this disease, and need to be addressed in recovery. Addiction causes a person to act in a pattern of unhealthy, compulsive behaviors which they carry out uncontrollably around the chronic use of a substance or activity such as alcohol, drugs, sex, gambling or cigarettes.

Addiction is NOT:

- A moral issue
- A simple character defect, such as being weak, or selfish, or irresponsible
- A lack of will power

What are some of the red flags of substance abuse or addiction? You have a problem with drugs or alcohol if you continue to use them even when they cause problems with your health, finances, work or school, or relationships. You may have a problem if you have developed a tolerance and need to use more of the substance to get the same effect. If loved ones are expressing concerns about your alcohol or drug use, this is another red flag.

In general, an addict:

- has a persistent need to use
- fails at every effort to cut down, or stop using on his own
- keeps using despite negative experiences and dangerous situations
- uses to cope with everyday life
- needs to use to feel "normal"
- is often preoccupied with obtaining and using the drug(s) of choice

If you suspect that some of this may apply to you, you can explore this further by taking one of many

self-assessment quizzes that are available on the Internet. One such assessment tool, developed by the World Health Organization, is the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test or AUDIT. This is a quick self-test that can be accessed on the Internet at <http://www.integration.samhsa.gov>. Whether the drug you're abusing is alcohol, street drugs, or prescription drugs, this quiz will help you to assess your behavior and take a first step toward making a positive change in your life.

An addict will initially spend a significant amount of time denying that their alcohol or drug use is harmful; and will often justify why they've earned the right to relax or escape for a few hours. It takes tremendous courage to admit that you have a substance abuse problem.

Addiction is a challenging disease and there is no cure. While abstaining from alcohol or drugs is a very important first step, it is only the beginning of the recovery process. Without support, relapse is very likely. Treatment will help you to develop new coping skills to manage feelings, situations, and triggers for relapse.

- A good place to reach out for support is a peer support group like Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) or Narcotics Anonymous (NA). Al-anon is also available to support the loved ones of an addict. Meetings can be located on the Internet.
- A therapist who is trained in the treatment of addictions can be an excellent resource for support and addiction treatment.
- Some drugs create withdrawal symptoms that require medical intervention. Your primary care doctor can be a good starting reference. You may also call your local detox recovery center.
- Intensive Outpatient Programs are relapse prevention treatment programs that can often be scheduled around work or school.

If you would like more information or support regarding addiction, contact *CONCERN/EAP* at 534.2625 to schedule a confidential appointment.