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ALCOHOL ABUSE

[HTTPS://DRUGABUSE.COM/ALCOHOL/](https://drugabuse.com/alcohol/)

WHAT IS ALCOHOL ABUSE?

In the United States, alcohol is the most commonly used and misused substance. It can be addictive. Not everyone who consumes alcohol will become addicted, but there are certain people who may be more susceptible to addiction.

The effects alcohol has can vary between people, and there are factors that influence those effects, including age, health status, family history, and how much and how often one drinks. It should be noted that alcohol addiction and abuse are not the same. Addiction is a chronic disease that involves uncontrolled, continued substance pursuit and use despite any harmful consequences. Individuals who suffer from alcohol addiction are often diagnosed with an alcohol use disorder (AUD), and they may also have developed a dependency on alcohol.

Dependence is a state where the body requires the presence of a substance such as alcohol just to function normally. Without it, the individual will experience severe, possibly life-threatening, withdrawal symptoms. Dependence on alcohol is often experienced in tandem with addiction.

Those who abuse or misuse alcohol are not necessarily addicted to or dependent on alcohol. An individual can misuse alcohol without drinking on a consistent basis. For example, an individual who abuses alcohol may only drink once a week. However, when that individual drinks, they may put themselves in risky situations or drink enough to cause problems, such as alcohol poisoning.

COMMON METHODS OF ALCOHOL ABUSE

BINGE DRINKING AND HEAVY DRINKING

Binge drinking is excessive drinking that is defined as 5 or more drinks in 2 hours for a man and 4 or more drinks for a woman. Most people who are binge drinkers are not identified as alcohol dependent. One in 6 US adults report binge drinking approximately 4 times each month, and binge drinking occurs most commonly among adults aged 18-34. Binge drinking can lead to numerous health problems, including alcohol poisoning, car accidents, violence, sexually transmitted diseases, cancer (including breast, mouth, liver, and colon), and memory and learning problems.

PREGNANT WOMEN AND ALCOHOL

Alcohol can present various dangers during pregnancy, and there is no known level of use that is considered safe. All types of alcohol are dangerous. Drinking while pregnant is dangerous because the alcohol is passed on to the baby and can cause miscarriage; stillbirth; and numerous physical, behavioral, and intellectual development issues, including low body weight, poor coordination, hyperactive behavior, poor memory, learning disabilities, poor judgment skills, visions or hearing problems.

TEEN ALCOHOL USE

Many teenagers misuse alcohol due to the accessibility of the substance and peer pressure. In fact, alcohol

tops the list of drugs used by teenagers, per the National Institute on Drug Abuse. In fact, more than 8% of 8th graders, 18% of 10th graders, and 30% of 12th graders were current alcohol drinkers in 2018.

Teenagers who misuse alcohol may exhibit signs including low energy, having alcohol paraphernalia, concentration problems, problems with coordination, mood swings, changing social circles, declining academic performance, behavioral issues/rebelling, smelling of alcohol.

Teens who use alcohol are at an increased risk in a number of ways. Teens who drink may be sexually active and participate in unprotected sex more often than teens who do not consume alcohol. These teens are also at an increased risk of becoming a victim of rape or assault.

They may also get injured or die in car crashes involving alcohol. Not only can alcohol abuse alter how a teen acts, it can also have adverse effects on the adolescent brain. Studies show that brain development continues past the teenage years. Alcohol abuse during the brain's formative years can negatively impact how the brain develops and can also lead to learning problems and increase the risk of developing an alcohol use disorder in the future.

SIGNS AND HEALTH EFFECTS OF REGULAR ALCOHOL USE

Binge drinking and excessive use of alcohol has a wide range of consequences, from nausea and headaches from a hangover to severe liver problems from chronic drinking. In the short-term, drinking too much can be very dangerous, sometimes deadly. Effects may include:

- Nausea.
- Vomiting.
- Headaches.
- Slurred speech.
- Impaired judgment.
- Anxiety.
- Insomnia.
- Trouble concentrating.
- Memory loss.
- Problems breathing.

Risk of significant personal harm or long-term health problems are increased with chronic alcohol consumption. People who use excessive amounts of alcohol are at higher risk of:

- Mouth, esophageal, throat, liver, and breast cancer.
- Raised risk of heart problems, such as cardiomyopathy.
- Brain damage.
- Weakened immune system.
- Liver disease.
- Pancreatitis.
- Ulcers.
- Violence or self-harm.
- Accidents, such as vehicle collisions.

IDENTIFYING ALCOHOL USE DISORDERS

Abuse of alcohol has the potential to lead to an alcohol use disorder (AUD). An AUD is a chronic disease in the brain that is defined by the compulsive use of alcohol,, an inability to control how much you drink, and negative feelings when you are not drinking.¹⁷ Signs that may indicate an alcohol use disorder include the following:

- Neglecting personal/family responsibilities.
- Declining academic or professional performance.
- Depression.
- Conflicts with loved ones.
- Preoccupation with drinking and cravings.
- Inability to control drinking.
- Failing in attempts to stop drinking.
- Needing increasing amounts of alcohol to feel its effects.
- Getting drunk when it could be hazardous, such as before driving.
- Going through withdrawal when not drinking.

TREATMENT

Individuals who wish to overcome problems with alcohol use or who suspect they may have alcohol use disorder have a number of options. According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), more than 2.4 million people age 12 or older received substance use treatment in 2017 for alcohol use alone. Many of the individuals who are treated for alcoholism and alcohol abuse often seek outside help from treatment centers and therapy sessions.

Alcohol treatment centers are designed to help individuals who are addicted or who abuse alcohol in a number of ways. Some treatment centers require an individual to stay at the center for a specific amount of time while others offer outpatient treatment. Many centers offer both long- and short-term treatment options. During treatment, individuals go through detoxification. Detoxification is the set of interventions used to keep a person safe as they readjust to a lack of alcohol in the body. Medical detox is extremely important for someone dependent on alcohol because withdrawal can cause delirium and potentially life-threatening seizures, along with other very serious symptoms.

Treatment with therapy and possibly medication should follow detox. Treatment centers are designed to provide support in the form of individual therapy, as well as group therapy and educational classes on drug addiction. During therapy sessions, patients can explore their reasons behind their excess alcohol consumption, as well as what they can do to overcome their abusive behavior.

Inpatient treatment allows patients to receive care in a structured, controlled environment. With housing, medical care, and various forms of therapy, inpatient treatment can be best for those who do not have an effective home support system or are dealing with a more severe form of alcohol abuse.

Outpatient treatment is also an option for many alcoholics. Outpatient treatment centers are designed to provide recovering alcoholics with a place to explore their destructive behavior. Many outpatient treatment centers provide anonymous group meetings, as well as other programs to help recovering individuals overcome their issues. With outpatient treatment, individuals are not placed in a controlled environment so it is important that people who use outpatient treatment have a strong system to rely on outside of treatment.

12 Things to Remember If You Love an Alcoholic

www.addiction.com/blogs/expert-blogs/12-things-to-remember-if-you-love-an-alcoholic/

There've been plenty of times in my life where I wished I'd been born into a different family. My longing had nothing to do with not getting the brand-new car I wanted for my 16th birthday or for being the only kid I knew that hadn't been to Disney World. But it had everything to do with the unfortunate fact that my parents were alcoholics.

Growing up, I didn't have access to many sane or sober people to be able to understand and process my parents' addiction. There are many things that I wish I'd known back then, that I only have access to now as an adult. I can't help but imagine that if I'd had the support I needed, that maybe my relationship with my family wouldn't be as compromised as it is today.

Whether you were born to alcoholic parents, married an alcoholic, are a parent to or a best friend of, loving an alcoholic can be challenging and feel, at times, impossible. Here are 12 things, I wish I'd known about loving an alcoholic.

It's Not Your Fault

As a kid raised by alcoholic parents, I believed that their addictions were completely my fault. I believed that if I was smarter, prettier or quicker at memorizing the multiplication table, that they wouldn't have a reason to drink and their problems would fade away. I carried this ridiculous belief with me well into my adulthood and my self-esteem took quite a beating because of it.

It wasn't until I realized that their problems were firmly in play long before I was even born, that I was able to see that my parents were responsible for their life choices. It wasn't until I honestly believed that their addictions weren't my fault or my responsibility to fix, that my own recovery could begin.

You're Not Alone

Learning that your daughter, husband, cousin, brother or best friend is an alcoholic can leave you feeling isolated. And the newfound shame and embarrassment that you experience as a result can prevent you and your family from reaching out for the support you need.

According to NCADD, the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, "Alcohol is the most commonly used addictive substance in the United States; 17.6 million people, or one in every 12 adults, suffer from alcohol abuse or dependence." So when you consider that 17.6 million people suffer from alcohol abuse and then you think about the number of people, just like you and me, who are negatively affected by that abuse, you have to ask yourself, how alone in the world of addiction can I really be?

Education Is Key

The more you know about addiction, the more confident and empowered you will be when dealing with your loved one. Knowing the right questions to ask when considering the best course of treatment, dealing with your insurance company or taking care of your own needs can bring order and balance to a situation that feels chaotic and out-of-control. The more you know, the better.

You May Not Be Ready to Forgive and That's Okay

Addiction wreaks the most havoc on the relationships it destroys. Even though you may desperately want your loved one to get sober, sobriety doesn't guarantee that your relationship will be healed and all the bad will be forgotten.

Even if your loved one is sober, you may not be ready to forgive them for lying to you, possibly stealing and for breaking promises that at the time felt genuine and sincere. The important thing to remember is that it's okay if you're not ready to forgive. All you can do is try to remain open to the idea of forgiveness, express your disappointment, be honest with what you're feeling and in your own time, in your own way, you'll find it.

You May Be Angry and That's Okay, Too

Don't beat yourself up if you feel anger towards your newly sober (or still using/drinking) someone. It's only natural, as you work towards mending your relationship, to feel conflicted over what happened in the past and all that's waiting to be discovered in the future.

Stuffing away your anger or shaming yourself for how you feel only delays your recovery. If your anger becomes too overwhelming you can always work through it with a therapist or someone you trust. But whatever you do, don't deny it and don't wait for someone else to give you permission to feel it.

Learn the Difference Between Enabling and Detaching With Love

One of the most difficult challenges we face as loved ones of alcoholics is knowing the difference between enabling and detaching with love. When we enable the addict in our lives we become obsessed, at the cost of our sanity, with cleaning up our loved one's messes. No one wants to watch someone they love drown their potential and their future in a bottle of booze. But when we consistently step in and shield someone from the consequences of their actions, we delay their progression towards recovery. When we detach with love, though, we create boundaries that respect our own emotional and mental well-being, while allowing the alcoholic to continue to make their own choices, whatever they may be.

Boundaries Are Necessary; Get Help Creating Them

One of the best ways to keep your enabling reflexes in check is to learn how to create boundaries with your loved one. Boundaries, although challenging to enforce, will aid you in defining exactly the behaviors you are willing to tolerate as well as what you're not willing to put up with. If you're having difficulty with the idea of establishing boundaries with someone you love, reach out and get help in figuring out what yours should be and how to set them up.

Practice Getting Comfortable With the Unknown

Life with an alcoholic can be disruptive and unsettling. You just never know what kind of drama will be waiting for you on the other side of your front door or on the other end of your phone. And this constant anticipation of what may or may not happen next can leave you mentally and emotionally exhausted. That's why it's worth it to practice getting comfortable with the unknown. Accepting that you can't control or predict what might happen next will free up your mind and create time for you to sort out your own recovery.

Your Recovery Is Just as Important

With so much attention placed on the alcoholic, we can easily forget that we have our own recovery to tend to. Whether you join forces with a therapist or raid the list of self-help books on Amazon, it really doesn't matter. Just find some form of recovery that works for you. And never forget that your needs are just as important as the alcoholic's.

There Will Be People Who Just Don't Get It

Friends and family who have never been directly touched by addiction may not be able to understand or relate to what you're going through. Although some may want to offer their support, they may be hesitant to bring it up or just not know how to approach the subject with you. And then there might be an unfortunate few whose knowledge of addiction is guided entirely by stigma, myth and misconception. Unfortunately, there's little you can do for people who

aren't willing to open up their minds to new ideas about addiction. But what you can do is find people through community groups, 12-step meetings and even on social media, that do get it and lean on them for support when you need it.

Don't Let Stigma Keep You Silent

It's unfortunate, but there's no denying that addiction comes loaded with stigma. Stigma triggers shame and shame leads to silence. And silence keeps us trapped in our darkest secrets.

If you find yourself buckling under the weight of stigma or the fear of what people may think about you if they find out that your husband, daughter or mother is an alcoholic, remember that stigmas are nothing more than old, worn-out ideas about addiction. There will be people who judge you unfairly; there's no dodging it. But their judgment says more about how little they know about addiction than it does about you and your situation.

There's Always Hope

Finally, it's time to talk about your most consistent ally in the world of addiction and that ally is hope. Depending on what's unraveling in your life, you may not feel hopeful 100% of the time and that's okay. Look for inspiration from your support group, connect with people and listen to their stories. It can be very therapeutic to realize that you're not alone in what you're going through. And for the times when you really just can't shake that hopeless feeling, simply try to roll with it. The feeling will pass and when you're ready to come back to it, hope will be there waiting for you.

6 Ways to Help Someone You Love Stay Sober

[www.foundationsrecoverynetwork.com/6-ways-help-someone-love-stay-sober](http://wwwFOUNDATIONSRECOVERYNETWORK.COM/6-WAYS-HELP-SOMEONE-LOVE-STAY-SOBER)

When someone completes addiction treatment, other people may not know how to encourage recovery, but you can do so with the following six suggestions:

1. **Accept him without judgment** – Since many recovering addicts feel judged by their families and friends, you should refrain from criticism and negativity as much as possible. Instead, express love for your loved one and praise his decision to maintain sobriety.
2. **Create a substance-free environment** – One of the biggest predictors of long-term recovery is whether or not users live in drug-free environments. Loved ones can protect a recovering addict's surroundings by removing any drug paraphernalia and encouraging them to stay away from places that might tempt them to relapse.
3. **Actively listen** – Some recovering addicts need people to listen to them, so be available to listen to your loved one's victories and struggles
4. **Encourage healthy habits** – Cooking food, exercising and playing games are all positive, substance-free activities that recovering addicts can do with their loved ones
5. **Suggest joining a support group** – In support groups, recovering addicts can interact with other recovering addicts while receiving encouragement
6. **Be patient** – Recovery is a long and complicated process. People often make mistakes in recovery, so it's important for them to know that their family and friends still support them when they mess up.

What NOT to Say to a Recovering Alcoholic

www.promises.com/addiction-blog/what-not-to-say-to-a-recovering-alcoholic/

Listed below are some of the things that you should most certainly *not* say to a recovering alcoholic, if you are seriously interested in helping her find and retain permanent sobriety.

- 1. “I really feel bad for you that you have to go through something like this.”** Let the pity party begin! Or better yet, let’s not. Instead, let’s call the police and file a noise complaint against the pity party so it can be squelched before it ever gets off the ground. [Alcoholics in recovery](#) need empowerment, not sympathy. If they are inundated with pity, it could lead them to start feeling sorry for themselves and weaken their resolve at a time when they need it the most.
- 2. “I admire your willpower, it must be hard to resist the constant temptation to drink.”** The common perception that [willpower](#) is the key factor that allows alcoholics to [overcome their addiction](#) is simplistic and wrong. Recovering alcoholics face a variety of triggers that can set off a relapse, and conscious awareness of the nature of the threat is much more important than sheer willpower. Reminding them to watch out for those triggers is more productive than talking about willpower as this can actually plant seeds of doubt in their minds (*no one* can be expected to maintain her willpower seven days a week/24 hours a day).
- 3. “You know, your drinking really wasn’t all that bad.”** You might think you are doing the recovering alcoholic a favor by humoring her with this type of rhetoric, but in fact you aren’t really helping at all. No recovering alcoholic should have illusions about the true nature of her disease, and encouraging her to take her alcoholism less seriously is irresponsible to the extreme.
- 4. “How are you feeling? What have you been doing? Have you felt like taking a drink today?”** Enough with the questions. You should be intimately involved in your [loved one’s sobriety campaign](#) and on a daily basis if possible, but pestering and annoying her with incessant verbiage will leave her feeling pressured and could literally drive her back to drinking. Keeping her constantly preoccupied with her problems will not be constructive, so you should rely on her to volunteer personal information as appropriate rather than demanding to be kept informed.
- 5. “Just know that I’m here to help you beat this horrible ghastly disease, no matter what it takes.”** Recovery is serious business, but that doesn’t mean it has to be unrelentingly grim. Laughter and gaiety are tickets to happiness and a better life, and anything you can do to bring smiles of enjoyment to a person battling alcoholism will only increase the odds of ultimate victory.

How to Show Support for Someone Struggling with Alcohol Use Disorder

<https://americanaddictioncenters.org/alcoholism-treatment/support>

- Learn about alcoholism.
- Offer support for the person to make positive changes, such as choosing not to drink.
- Express love when articulating concern.
- Offer to help the person find treatment via medically supervised detox and a rehabilitation program.
- Know that the person cannot quit without help from addiction specialists.
- Know that recovery is an ongoing process.
- Set clear boundaries if the person refuses help.
- Offer support, such as driving the person to treatment, attending family therapy or individual therapy, exercising with them, etc.

How To Tell If Someone Is Using Drugs

Drug Abuse Symptoms: Physical & Behavioral

Drug abuse affects people from all walks of life and all socioeconomic statuses. Whether a person starts taking drugs recreationally or as prescribed, tolerance and dependence can sometimes develop before the user even realizes it.



Behavioral Symptoms

Drug abuse tends to significantly alter a person's behavior and habits. Some drugs can impair the brain's ability to focus and think clearly.

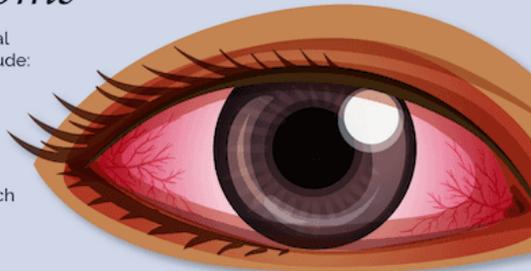


- Increased aggression or irritability
- Changes in attitude/personality
- Lethargy
- Depression
- Posting very different messages on social media
- Dramatic changes in habits and/or priorities
- Involvement in criminal activity

Physical Symptoms

Changes in appearance can be additional clues to possible drug use and may include:

- Bloodshot or glazed eyes
- Dilated or constricted pupils
- Abrupt weight changes
- Problems sleeping or sleeping too much
- Looking unkempt
- Poor physical coordination
- Unusual body odors



Created by American Addiction Centers

SOURCES

<https://drugabuse.com/symptoms-signs-drug-abuse-effects/>
<https://www.health.ny.gov/publications/1089.pdf>
<https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugs-brains-behavior-science-addiction/drugs-brain>

Advice for Parents Concerned About Teen Substance Abuse

<https://www.drugrehab.com/teens/>

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eens should know that they don't have to use alcohol or other drugs to be cool or to fit in. At times, it can seem like everyone is doing it or everyone has tried it. However, surveys and studies show that isn't true. Your child doesn't have to suffer the consequences of trying drugs or alcohol.

Be Involved in Prevention

Being involved in your teen's life is one of the best ways to prevent substance abuse. Having open and honest discussions about the dangers of drinking, drug use and peer pressure can make a huge difference. "All the time, high school students tell us that the main reason their peers don't drink or use drugs is because parents would disapprove," Emily Feinstein, director of health law and policy at the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, told DrugRehab.com. Come up with a plan to help your teen avoid risky situations, and teach your child how to avoid stressful situations involving alcohol or other drugs.

Teach Your Teen How to Say No to Friends

Friends are important. Teens trust their friends, and they seek their approval. However, children need to know how to resist peer pressure and make their own decisions. If a friend offers alcohol or drugs, your child must understand the power of saying no. Teens should not be afraid of a negative reaction. Talk to your child about peer pressure and implore him or her to walk away from people who offer drugs or alcohol.

Share some effective ways to say no:

- Change the topic.
- Switch locations.
- Suggest alternative things to do.
- Pretend you're getting a call or text.
- Pretend you have to be home soon.
- Tell them, "Not now."
- Tell them, "Maybe another time."
- Tell them, "I don't want to."
- Tell them, "I don't feel like it."
- Tell them, "I can't."

When surrounded by friends who avoid drugs and alcohol, saying no becomes easier. Encourage your teen to hang out with friends who choose not to use alcohol and other drugs. Your child can even lead by example by committing to live drug-free. Forge a strong bond with your child. Teens who have healthy relationships with their parents may be more likely to discuss their encounters with drugs.

Learn About the Effects of Drugs and Alcohol

Parents who understand the dangers of alcohol and other drugs should encourage their children to avoid using them. It's important to know how drug and alcohol use can affect your child physically, mentally and socially. You may need help to teach your teen about the risks of substance abuse. Learn about drugs from the experts. Ask counselors, teachers, law enforcement or other qualified people about the dangers of drugs. Seek school or community-based prevention organizations for reliable information.

Teach Your Teen to Enjoy Life Without Drugs

Teens don't need to rely on substances to enjoy life. They can engage in fun, healthy activities, including sports, music or arts. Teens who have too much time on their hands can find a part-time job, allowing them to make and save money.

Spending quality time with your teen can help prevent substance abuse or a relapse after treatment. Go to the movies, sit down for regular family meals or spend time strolling through a nearby park together. These simple activities can help improve your relationship with your child, which may make him or her more comfortable to discuss difficult topics such as drugs or alcohol with you. Help your teen plan ways to have fun. You can find clubs he or she can join or help your child apply for a job before summer break begins. Other options include participating in community-based drug prevention programs or leading a student group at school. Even when planning ahead and finding ways to have fun without drugs, teens might still find themselves in tricky situations. Remember that you're not alone. Help is available for teens who fear they'll be pressured to try drugs. If your child has already tried drugs and needs help stopping, treatment can help them achieve sobriety and return to a healthy lifestyle.

"All the time, high school students tell us that the main reason their peers don't drink or use drugs is because parents would disapprove."— EMILY FEINSTEIN, DIRECTOR OF HEALTH LAW AND POLICY AT THE NATIONAL CENTER ON ADDICTION AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Five Rules of Recovery

www.addictionsandrecovery.org/five-rules-of-recovery.htm

RULE 1: Change Your Life So that it's Easier to Not Use

You don't recover from an addiction by simply stopping using. You recover by creating a new life where it is easier to not use. If you don't create a new life, then all the factors that brought you to your addiction will eventually catch up with you again.

You don't have to change everything in your life. But there are a few unhealthy behaviors or negative thinking patterns that have been getting you into trouble, and they will continue to get you into trouble until you let them go. The more you try to hold onto your old life, the less well you will do in recovery.

Here are some common things that people need to change in recovery.

Avoid High-Risk Situations

People, Places, Things

- People. (People who you used with, or people who encouraged you to use are common triggers for relapse.)
- Places. (Places where you used, or places where you went to get drugs or alcohol are common triggers.)
- Things. (Things that you used with, such as drug or alcohol paraphernalia are powerful triggers.)
- Avoid your drinking friends, your favorite bar, and having alcohol in the house. Avoid people who you used with, driving by your dealer's neighborhood, and remove all paraphernalia from your house. Don't keep something around, "just in case."

Of course, you can't avoid all high-risk situations. But if you're aware of them, you won't get caught off guard, and you will have a chance to prepare yourself. If you're not prepared, small triggers can quickly turn into strong cravings. The more you can avoid high-risk situations, and the more you can anticipate them and prepare for them, the greater your chance of success.

HALT

The acronym, HALT contains some important and common high-risk situations:

- Hungry
- Angry
- Lonely
- Tired

Your strongest cravings usually occur at the end of the day. How do you feel at the end of the day? You're probably hungry because you haven't eaten well. You're probably angry because you've had a tough day at work or a tough commute. You may feel lonely because you're isolated. And, you're tired. That's why your strongest cravings usually occur at the end of the day.

Recovery isn't about one big change. It's about a few little changes that can change the path of your life.

Make a list of your high-risk situations. Addiction is sneaky. Sometimes you won't see a high-risk situation until you're right in the middle of it. That's why it's important to make a list of them and go over it with someone in recovery. Make the list and keep it with you. Some day that list may save your life.

Change Negative Thinking

Negative thinking is a risk factor both for developing an addiction and for relapse. Common types of negative thinking are negative self-labelling and all-or-nothing thinking.

- If people knew the real me they wouldn't like me.
- I don't think I'm likeable.
- Life is hard, and I can't handle it without using sometimes.
- Life won't be fun without using, and I won't be fun.
- Recovery is more work than it's worth.
- My cravings will be overwhelming, and I won't be able to resist. So why bother.
- If I stop using, I'll only start up again; I have never finished anything.
- I worry that I am too damaged to recover or be happy.

Negative thinking leads to anxiety, depression, and addiction. If you think you are not likeable, you will be anxious because you're worried that you will be found out. If you think you will fail therefore why bother trying, you will feel trapped by life, which leads to depression. If you feel anxious or depressed, you may turn to drugs or alcohol to escape.

A common fear of recovery is that you are not capable of recovery. The fear is that recovery requires some special strength or willpower that you don't possess. But people just like you, with strengths and weaknesses, with determination and self-doubt, have recovered from addiction.

Cognitive behavioral therapy has been proven to change negative thinking and treat anxiety, depression, and addiction. The basic idea of cognitive therapy is that negative thinking is learned thinking and therefore it can be unlearned and replaced with healthier thinking. If you can change your thinking, you will improve your life.

RULE 2: Ask for Help and Develop a Recovery Circle

Most people start recovery by trying to do it on their own. They want to prove that they have control over their addiction, and that they are not as unhealthy as people think. But trying to do recovery on your own is the hardest way to go. It is what you have already tried - unsuccessfully.

Addiction is isolating. Your world gets smaller as you give up more of your life to make more room for your addiction. Recovery involves learning to reach out and ask for help.

Show common sense when asking for help. Not everybody is your best friend. Some people might not be understanding that you have an addiction, and some people might not be supportive that you want to recover. Don't let that stop you. There are many people who do want to help.

Develop a recovery circle. The stronger your circle, the stronger your recovery. A recovery circle should include, at least the following:

- Close family members
- Close friends
- Health professionals
- Counselors
- Self-help recovery groups

Everyone finds asking for help difficult. This is one of the reasons that self-help groups are important. They make it easy to find help because they provide a non-judgmental and understanding environment.

Self-Help Groups

Joining a self-help group has been shown to significantly increase your chances of recovery. The combination of a substance abuse program and self-help group is the most effective strategy.

There are many self-help groups to choose from. Twelve-step groups include Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Narcotics Anonymous (NA), Marijuana Anonymous (MA), Cocaine Anonymous (CA), Gamblers Anonymous (GA), and Adult Children Anonymous (ACA). There are also self-help groups that are not based on the twelve steps, including Women for Sobriety, Secular Organizations for Sobriety, and Smart Recovery.

Benefits of Belonging to a Self-Help Group

- You feel that you're not alone.
- You learn what addiction and denial sound like by hearing them in others.
- You learn what strategies have been successful in recovery.
- You have a safe place to go where you will not be judged.

Guilt and shame are common emotions in addiction.[6] This is one benefit of self-help groups that deserves special attention. Guilt and shame are obstacles to recovery, because they make you feel like you have been damaged and that you don't deserve recovery or happiness. Self-help groups help you overcome guilt and shame, by seeing that you are not alone. You feel that recovery is within your reach.

How to get the most out of a self-help group. It has been shown that the way to get the most out of a twelve-step group is to attend meetings regularly, have a sponsor, read twelve-step materials, and have the conscious goal of abstinence.

Reasons for Not Joining a Self-Help Group

These are some of the reasons people give for not joining self-help groups.

- If I join a group, I will be admitting that I am an addict or an alcoholic.
- I want to do it on my own.
- I don't like groups. I'm not a joiner.
- I don't like speaking in front of people.
- I don't want to quit one addiction and become addicted to AA.
- I'm afraid someone will recognize me.
- I'm not comfortable with the idea of a higher power.

I can assure you that most people who have joined a self-help recovery group have had the same objections. You may discover that these objections are really just your addiction talking, and that there are solutions to all of them. Before deciding if self-help groups are for you, give them a try and ask the people there how they overcome their objections.

RULE 3: Be Completely Honest with Yourself and Everyone in Your Recovery Circle

An addiction requires lying. You have to lie about getting your drug, using it, hiding its consequences, and planning your next relapse. An addiction is full of lying. By the time you've developed an addiction, lying comes easily to you. After a while, you are so good at lying that you end up lying to yourself. That's why addicts often feel that they don't know who they are.

The result of all that lying is that you don't like yourself. You can't look yourself in the mirror. Lying creates a vicious cycle. The more you lie, the less you like yourself, which makes you want to escape your feelings, which leads to more using and more lying.

Nothing changes, if nothing changes. Ask yourself, will more lying, more isolating, and more of the same make you feel better? The expression in AA is – nothing changes if nothing changes. If you don't change your life, then why would this time be any different? You need to create a new life where it's easier to not use. Recovery requires complete honesty. You must be one-hundred percent honest with the people in your recovery circle. If you can't be completely honest with them, you won't do well in recovery.

When you're completely honest you don't give your addiction room to hide. When you lie you leave the door open to relapse. One mistake people make in the early stages of recovery is they think that honesty means being honest about other people. They think they should share what's "wrong" with other people. But recovery isn't about fixing other people. It's about fixing yourself. Stick with your own recovery. Focusing on what you don't like about others is easy because it deflects attention from yourself.

Honesty won't come naturally in the beginning. You've spent so much time learning how to lie that telling the truth, no matter how good it is for you, won't feel natural. You'll have to practice telling the truth a few hundred times before it becomes a little easier. In the beginning, you'll have to stop yourself as you're telling a story, and say, "now that I think of it, it was more like this..."

RULE 4 Practice Self-Care

There are only a few reasons why people use drugs and alcohol. They use to escape, relax, and reward themselves. In other words, people use drugs and alcohol as a form of self-care and self-medication.

Recovery doesn't mean denying yourself ways to escape, relax, or reward yourself. It means finding better ways to do those things. If you don't find better ways to take care of yourself, you will eventually feel irritable, exhausted, and discontent. If you have those feelings for too long, you will begin to think about using just to escape.

Self-care may sound selfish. After all who has time to escape, relax, and reward themselves. But that is exactly what people do when they turn to their addiction.

Self-care is essential for mental well-being. If you don't consciously make time for self-care, you will unconsciously make time for it by using. Self-care doesn't have to be fancy trips or frivolous shopping. It begins with healthy eating and sleeping habits. Develop better sleep habits so that you're less tired. Eat a healthier lunch so you're not as hungry at the end of the day. Learn how to relax so that you're not filled with fears and resentments. These are some of the components of HALT, mentioned earlier.

Mind-Body Relaxation

When you're tense you tend to do what's familiar and wrong instead of what's new and right. When you're tense, you're not open to change. The evidence is overwhelming that various forms of mind-body relaxation (yoga, mindfulness, meditation) are effective in reducing the use of drugs and alcohol.[9, 10] Mind-body relaxation has also been shown to prevent relapse.

The first rule of recovery is that you must change your life. But what do you need to change? If people use drugs and alcohol to relieve tension, then learning to relax is one of the most important skills if you want to change your life.

If you manage to stop using, but don't learn how to relax, your tension will build and build until you'll have to relapse just to escape. Tension is the most common cause of relapse. There is only one reason why people don't relax – because they think they're too busy to relax. It goes something like this, "I know, it makes sense, but I've got so many other things I have to do."

Ask yourself how much time did you spend on your addiction? If you add up all the time it took to get your drug, use it, deal with its consequences, and plan your next relapse, you'll realize that relaxing for twenty to forty minutes a day is a bargain.

Relaxation is not an optional part of recovery. It's essential to recovery. There are many ways to relax. They range from simple techniques like going for a walk to more structured techniques like mindfulness and meditation.

RULE 5: Don't Bend the Rules or Try to Negotiate Your Recovery

Your addiction has given you the opportunity to change your life. Changing your life is what makes recovery both difficult and rewarding.

Recovery is difficult because you have to change your life, and all change is difficult, even good change. Recovery is rewarding because you get the chance to change your life. Most people sleepwalk through life. They don't think about who they are or what they want to be, and then one day they wake up and wonder why they aren't happy.

Your addiction has given you an opportunity, and if you use this opportunity correctly, you'll look back on your addiction as one of the best things that ever happened to you. People in recovery often describe themselves as grateful addicts. Why would someone be grateful to have an addiction? Because their addiction helped them find an inner peace and tranquility that most people crave. Recovery can help you change your life.

Relapse is rare after 5 years of abstinence. A study followed young adolescent men with and alcohol addiction who were in recovery. Some were Harvard University undergraduates, and some were non-delinquent inner-city adolescents. The men were followed, every two years by questionnaire, and every 5 years by physical examination until the age of 60. The study concluded that after 5 years of abstinence relapse is rare. Recovery is possible.

Use this opportunity. Don't resent your addiction. Don't try to negotiate your recovery. Embrace your recovery, and you will be happier in life.

Find Your Relapse Prevention Score – 25 Questions

This is a 25-question checklist based on the five rules of recovery that will show you how well you are doing in recovery and what areas you might need to strengthen.

Answers:

Always or yes = 4

More than half the time = 3

Less than half the time = 1

Never or no = 0

Change your life so that it's easier to not use.

1. How often are you able to set healthy boundaries and say "no" to unreasonable requests?
2. How often are you able to resolve uncomfortable feelings instead of bottling them up?
3. How often do you challenge your negative thinking and look for healthier ways of thinking?
4. How often do you avoid high-risk situations, such as HALT (hungry, angry, lonely, tired) and high-risk people, places, and things?

5. How often do you “play the tape through” when you have cravings?
6. How often do you do something to distract yourself when you have cravings?
7. Have you gotten rid of all the people and things that you used to use with? (yes/ no)
8. Do you have at least 3 strategies for dealing with social settings where drinking or using is involved? (yes/ no)

Ask for help and develop a recovery circle of close family, friends, health professionals, and recovery groups.

1. In the last month, how many weeks have you gone to a recovery group at least twice?
2. How many days a week do you communicate with a recovery sponsor?
3. When a situation arises that can affect your recovery, how often do you ask for advice before you take action?
4. When you have cravings, how often do you reach out and communicate with someone in your recovery circle?
5. How many weeks in the last month have you done recovery homework, such as, step work?
6. Have you made any new recovery friends? (yes/ no)

Be completely honest with yourself and everyone in your recovery circle.

1. How often are you completely honest and don't omit any important facts with people in your recovery circle?
2. During the last month, when you were sharing, were you ever so honest that you felt a little uncomfortable? (yes/ no)

Practice self-care.

1. How often do you practice healthy eating and sleeping habits?
2. How many days a week do you practice some form of mind-body relaxation?
3. How often do you celebrate your small victories?
4. How many weeks in the last month have you had some fun in a clean and sober environment?
5. How many days a week do you write a gratitude list of your recovery, your life, and the people in it?
6. How often do you feel that you are a good person and that you like yourself?

Don't bend the rules or try to negotiate your recovery.

1. How much of the time do you accept that if you start using alcohol or drugs, you won't always be able to control your use?
2. How many days a week are you free of “using daydreams”?
3. Have you completely let go of all secret relapse fantasies, and have you shared the details of those secret plans with someone in your recovery circle? (yes/ no)

Your Score (0 – 100)

- If your RAPID score > 70, you are at low risk of currently relapsing. Continue to be mindful of recovery because addiction is cunning and can sneak up on you.
- If your RAPID score 50 – 70, this is a normal score in early recovery. Don't be hard on yourself. Recovery is a series of improvements. Everybody who has a successful recovery has had to go through this stage.
- If your RAPID score < 50, you are at higher risk of relapse. Think about why you want to recover and how you can improve your recovery strategy.

8 Signs You're Addicted to Gambling and 5 Tips to Stop

www.moneytalksnews.com/8-signs-youre-addicted-to-gambling-and-5-tips-to-stop

Millions of Americans have a gambling problem. Whether it's \$2 lottery tickets or \$200,000 stock market bets, here's how to take control of the problem before it takes control of you.

For most, gambling is about a few hours of fun at the slots, a weekly card game with friends, or the occasional flyer in the stock market. But for some, there's a dark side: addiction that leads to personal and financial ruin.

The National Council on Problem Gambling reports about 1 percent of the U.S. adult population, or 2 million people, meet the criteria for pathological gambling: "increasing preoccupation with gambling, a need to bet more money more frequently, restlessness or irritability when attempting to stop, 'chasing' losses, and loss of control manifested by continuation of the gambling behavior in spite of mounting, serious, negative consequences."

Another four to six million Americans are "problem gamblers" who display some of the symptoms pathological gamblers do.

Potential problems from gambling go beyond financial. Untreated, addiction can lead to legal problems, family and relationship issues, job loss, and an increased risk of suicide.

Eight signs you've got a gambling problem

1. You can't stop

Just as an experienced poker player knows when to "hold 'em or fold 'em," those who gamble for fun limit themselves and their bets. Compulsive gamblers struggle with both the time and money they're spending. Betting takes over their life, and they find themselves constantly wagering. They try to quit, but can't.

2. You gamble with money you can't afford to lose

Problem gamblers don't stop with "fun money" set aside for betting. They use money budgeted for bills, savings, or their kids' education. Sometimes they squander not just their last penny, but borrowed money as well.

3. Your bets go beyond entertainment

Recreational gamblers play for fun and spend a few dollars to have a good time. Gambling addicts place bets for reasons other than entertainment, often trying to escape anxiety or other problems. Whatever issues you face, gambling isn't the solution.

4. You attempt to recover losses by gambling more

Have you repeatedly tried to get back money you've lost gambling by betting more? Problem gamblers may see more betting as the solution to financial losses rather than what it is – throwing good money after bad.

5. You gamble with more and more money

Like many addictions, pathological gambling can start small. But problem gamblers won't be content keeping the stakes low or setting limits. They need to bet more and more to experience the rush.

6. You go to extremes to find money to gamble

Pathological gamblers don't stop gambling when their bank account runs dry. Instead they go to extremes to find more money. While this may stop with borrowing, some problem gamblers resort to theft, forgery, or other crimes to feed their habit.

7. You put gambling before more important things

Problem gamblers allow their habit to take priority over other parts of their lives. A gambling addict might skip watching her child's soccer game or miss time at work to hit the casino. Careers are put on the back burner and relationships deteriorate at the expense their habit.

8. Gambling negatively affects your emotions

While gambling can be an exhilarating experience, addicts might experience emotions signaling a problem, including:

- Frustration or irritation when you've tried to quit and failed
- Feelings of remorse
- A decrease in ambition
- An urge to celebrate an unrelated event by gambling

In addition to these warning signs, test if you're addicted to gambling on the Gamblers Anonymous website. If you believe you're addicted, there are steps to help you quit. Taking early action is the key to salvaging your job, relationships, and bank account.

How to treat a gambling addiction

1. Admit you have a problem

Gambling is like any addiction: The first step is to admit you have a problem. Experts say treatment won't be effective if the addict can't take this important first step. Admitting to the problem means you're ready to make an effort to stop.

2. Get support

Gambling addictions are hard to fight alone. Family and friends can be a good source of support, and Gamblers Anonymous can help recovering addicts share their experiences and find encouragement.

3. Avoid temptation

Addicts have to avoid environments that lead to gambling. Stay away from casinos, race tracks, poker games, or anything else that might remind or tempt you. Cut bad influences out of your life.

Take away sources for financing your habit by giving your spouse or someone else control of your money. If you're using credit cards to fund your habit, cut them up and close the accounts.

4. Replace gambling with something positive

Find a replacement activity or hobby. Whether it's jogging, rock climbing, or fly fishing, find something to take the place of gambling.

5. Seek professional help

The intensity of treatment for gambling addiction varies case-by-case. Up to 70 percent of those with gambling addictions may have other psychiatric conditions, making additional treatment necessary.

Psychotherapy may be a part of treatment, and medications are sometimes prescribed that help reduce the urge to wager.

Gambling Counseling is available through the National Counsel on Problem Gambling www.ncpgambling.org – something often recommended in addition to Gamblers Anonymous and family support.

Bottom line? Gambling comes in many forms, from a \$2 lottery ticket to a \$200,000 stock market bet. While there's nothing wrong with the occasional wager, when it starts negatively impacting your life, take control of the problem before it takes control of you.

Behavioral vs. Substance Addiction

Behavioral Addiction

Substance Addiction

Behavioral addiction is increasingly being recognized as a valid type of addiction.

An estimated **21.5 MILLION** Americans had a substance abuse issue in 2014.³

This addiction occurs when a certain action or behavior stimulates the reward center in a person's brain.

This addiction occurs when a person consumes a particular substance that stimulates the brain to release dopamine.

This behavior can become a compulsive need that has to be undertaken for a person to feel good about themselves.²

The brain becomes accustomed to needing the dopamine release and a person needs more of the substance to feel 'normal'.

There are many types of behavioral addictions including sex, gambling, extreme sports, shopping, internet / gaming and food addiction.

In 2017 - **72,287** people died of overdose, **49,000** due to opioids (Fentanyl, Heroin).⁴



Behavioral addictions can lead to substance addiction

People with substance addiction issues often have co-occurring mental issues.

Many people with a behavioral addiction also have a substance abuse issue.

HOW TO TELL IF YOU HAVE A BEHAVIORAL ADDICTION

<https://sbtreatment.com/behavioral-addictions/>

Examples of behaviors that can become addictions:

- Gaming
- Internet
- Gambling
- Shopping
- Eating
- Sex
- Risky behavior

Though most people engage in the above behaviors, they're not classified as addictions until the following criteria are met:

- The person starts struggling with mental health or physical health issues as a consequence of the behavior and/or the inability to stop.
- The person develops issues with significant relationships at home and/or at work because the behavior is so all-consuming.
- The person experiences various negative effects that have been caused specifically by continued, elevated or chronic engagement in the behavior.
- The person is unable to quit despite how negatively their life may be impacted.

Overall symptoms include:

- The inability to resist impulses
- Loss of interest in anything else
- Withdrawal in forms of irritability when addiction can't be engaged in.
- Guilt
- Denial
- Lying

Unfortunately, there's rarely one single cause that is responsible for a process addiction; oftentimes, they're born from a combination of elements that include:

- Genetic Predisposition
- A Permissive Environment
- A severe trauma
- Acute stress

As with substance abuse, treatment may necessitate a highly structured environment to help the person interrupt acting on urges.

S ~ for many people sobriety is a SECOND Chance. A second chance to fulfill a covenant between a God who loves unconditionally and a human child who comes to understand that truth in a deeper way.

O ~ for the OPPORTUNITIES to be of genuine service to other people who are also in need of understanding and compassion.

B ~ for the ability to understand what BALANCE means in the daily living of one's life. It includes leisure and prayer.

R ~ for the desire to be in RIGHT RELATIONSHIP with oneself, others and the God of my understanding. This may necessitate learning skills that will enhance communication.

I ~ for the effort to become a person of INTEGRITY. Does the inside match the outside when I am alone and when I am with others? Who gives me feedback about myself?

E ~ for the EFFORT that is foundational in order to do the daily work of remaining sober.

T ~ for the TRUST that is needed to sustain a program of recovery.

Y ~ for the YES to believe in the possibility of continuing sobriety and to accept it as gift.

Mary Ellen Merrick

<https://guesthouse.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/SPIRITUALITY-AND-RECOVERY-FINAL-FOR-PRINT-SMALL-LOW-RES-1.pdf>

Pornography Statistics

www.webroot.com/us/en/resources/tips-articles/internet-pornography-by-the-numbers

How Much Porn is Accessible Online?

The amount of pornographic material available on the web is staggering. As introductory economics, search engines, and other online data repositories tell us, the market for such material is just as large.

Every Second:

- 28,258 users are watching pornography on the internet.
- \$3,075.64 is being spent on pornography on the internet.
- 372 people are typing the word "adult" into a search engine.

Every Day:

- 37 pornographic videos are created in the United States.
- 2.5 billion emails containing porn are sent or received.
- 68 million search queries related to pornography- 25% of total searches- are generated.
- 116,000 queries related to child pornography are received.

A Barna Study found:

- Teens & young adults view “not recycling” as more immoral than viewing porn. (survey responses: 88% Stealing; 56% Not recycling, 32% Viewing Porn.)
- Most pastors (57%) and youth pastors (64%) admit they have struggled with porn, either currently or in the past.
- 41% of Males (Practicing Christians) and 13% of Females (Practicing Christians) *ages 13-24 are actively seeking porn at least once or twice a month*
- 21% of Christian men and 2% of Christian women say they think they might be “addicted” to pornography or aren’t sure if they are (compared to 10% of non-Christian men and 4% of non-Christian women). 2014 Pornography Survey and Statistics. Proven Men Ministries. <http://www.provenmen.org/2014pornsurvey/> (accessed Dec. 29, 2015).
- 28% of Christian men and 11% of Christian women say they were first exposed to pornography before the age of 12 (compared to 23% of non-Christian men and 24% of non-Christian women). 2014 Pornography Survey and Statistics. Proven Men Ministries. <http://www.provenmen.org/2014pornsurvey/> (accessed Dec. 29, 2015).

How Online Pornography Affects Americans

- About 200,000 Americans are classified as “porn addicts.”
- 40 million American people regularly visit porn sites.
- 35% of all internet downloads are related to pornography.
- 34% of internet users have experienced unwanted exposure to pornographic content through ads, pop up ads, misdirected links or emails.
- One-third of porn viewers are women.

By focusing on the data behind the creation and consumption of pornographic content, the dangers facing people can be easily overlooked. The sheer magnitude of available online pornography is merely one aspect of a larger issue that plagues society.

How Internet Pornography Usage Hurts Teens

One area of study considered important among development experts is the effect of pornography on teens and young adults.

- It increases the odds of teenage pregnancy.

Teenagers with frequent exposure to sexual content on TV have a substantially greater likelihood of teenage pregnancy, and the likelihood of teen pregnancy was twice as high doubles when the quantity of sexual content exposure within the viewing episodes was high.

- It hinders sexual development.

Pornography viewing by teens disorients them during the developmental phase when they have to learn how to handle their sexuality and when they are most vulnerable to uncertainty about their sexual beliefs and moral values. Blocking internet-connected devices from accessing adult material is a good start in keeping pornography out of reach for teens.

- It raises the risk of depression.

A significant relationship also exists among teens between frequent pornography use and feelings of loneliness, including major depression.

- It creates distorted expectations which hinder healthy sexual development.

Adolescents exposed to high levels of pornography have lower levels of sexual self-esteem. Keeping the conversation going with your child about the effects of pornography is essential to heading off issues like depression and low self-esteem.

Family/Marital Pornography Stats

The negative effects of pornography do not end after development. They can be just as harmful to families and marriages.

According to National Coalition for the Protection of Children & Families:

- 47% of families in the United States reported that pornography is a problem in their home.
- Pornography use increases the marital infidelity rate by more than 300%.
- 40 percent of people identified as “sex addicts” lose their spouses, 58 percent suffer considerable financial losses, and about 33% lose their jobs.
- 68% of divorce cases involve one party meeting a new paramour over the internet while 56% involve one party having an “obsessive interest” in pornographic websites.

For more information: <https://enough.org>



8 Characteristics of Porn Addiction

www.covenanteyes.com/2015/11/17/8-characteristics-of-porn-addiction/

To truly understand pornography addiction, we must first define it and realize it is actually a type of sex addiction. Although there are many definitions for sex addiction, the one I like best was developed by Dr. Mark Laaser:

Sexual addiction is “any persistent and escalating unhealthy pattern of sexual behavior. It is compulsive in nature, and used to avoid or change feelings despite destructive consequences to self and others.”

According to Dr. Laaser, there are eight characteristics or warning signs of sexual addiction, which can also be applied to pornography addiction.

If you or someone you know uses pornography, these porn addiction signs can help reveal if the porn use has become an addiction.

1. It is unmanageable.

In 12-step groups, such as Alcoholics Anonymous, the first step to recovery is admitting one has a problem and is powerless over it—that the addict’s life has become unmanageable. Many addicts will confess they feel like their addiction has taken over their minds, bodies, and free will. When they feel the “itch to use,” they believe they cannot help themselves, but to “scratch the itch.” This leads to a life that is totally out of control and unmanageable.

This is also symptomatic of a lack of trust in God. Whether they realize it or not, addicts struggle to place their trust in God, especially when times are tough. Instead of turning to God for help, they choose to self-medicate. This constant self-medicating leads to addiction and a life that is totally out of control—unmanageable.

2. It creates a neurochemical tolerance.

Viewing pornography triggers several neurochemical reactions in the brain. This produces a high feeling, which is intensified with an orgasm. This neurochemical high is also experienced when using drugs, such as cocaine or heroin. As with any other drug, a tolerance soon develops. More is needed to get the same effect. Thus, a man will spend increasing amounts of time online viewing pornography, and the type of pornography will become more extreme.

3. It is degenerative and progressive.

Over time the addiction gets worse. As tolerance and dependence grow, the need for pornography grows. Instead of viewing soft porn, such as the *Sports Illustrated Swim Suit Issue* or the *Victoria’s Secret Catalog*, the man now needs to view more deviant, hardcore pornography that is often violent and can even be illegal. Instead of spending a few minutes a week viewing pornography, he may now be viewing it for several hours every day. Ultimately the pursuit and use of pornography consumes the man’s life.

4. It has negative, destructive consequences.

The consequences of pornography extend to the physical, emotional, financial and spiritual realms. Physical consequences can include genital injury, loss of sleep, stress, fatigue, and even physical injury if the man engages in sexual acts that are sadomasochistic. If he is acting it out with other people, he runs the risk of contracting a sexually transmitted disease or creating an unplanned pregnancy.

The emotional consequences of pornography addiction include isolation, loneliness, fear, guilt, shame, anger, depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem. Many addicts experience the loss of their marriage, family, friends, and careers.

The financial consequences can also be great, as huge amounts of debt can be amassed from purchasing porn and any related sexual activity.

The most dangerous consequence of pornography addiction is the impact on one's relationship with God. Most pornography users know what they are doing is wrong and harmful to their relationship with God, yet they choose to use it anyway. This can lead to a deeper loneliness even pornography cannot ease.

5. It is used to escape negative feelings.

Here is where we most often use the term "self-medicating." Addicts often use pornography as a coping strategy to deal with deep emotional pain. Often they don't even realize the pain is there. All they know is pornography makes them feel really good and they must go back to it over and over again. The fact that they cannot feel good without pornography indicates a deep emotional wound that they are using pornography to anesthetize.

6. It is justified by the concept of "entitlement."

Many people who use pornography do so out of a sense of entitlement, which often stems from narcissism or anger. Narcissism is a great problem in our society today. People often focus on their own wants and needs with little regard to how their actions affect others. Thus, the man who had a rough day at work might come home and feel entitled to view porn as a way to relax despite how it may hurt his wife.

Addicts may also feel entitled to use pornography out of anger. Whether he is angry with his wife, boss, friends or God, the addict may feel entitled to view porn to "cool off."

7. It is used as a reward.

Pornography addicts can also justify their pornography use by viewing it as a reward. Whether they have been working hard in their career or around the house, they justify their pornography use as a reward for "a job well done."

8. It provides a feeling of power.

Like all addicts, pornography addicts often feel they have little control in life. Their deep needs to be heard, loved, affirmed and blessed are not being met, resulting in a feeling of powerlessness. Using pornography, and the people in porn, gives them a sense of power. However, this false sense of power is short-lived. They don't realize that to feel a sense of control in their lives, they need to acknowledge their powerlessness and turn to God as the one true source of power.

If any of these characteristics of porn addiction apply to your porn use, you might be addicted. However, don't be discouraged. Freedom from pornography is possible. A trained counselor can help you develop a comprehensive recovery program that can help you finally break free from your addiction. God will also be with you every step of the way giving you the strength and grace needed to succeed!