

## How to Help a Friend who has a Drug/Alcohol Addiction

### Recognizing the Problem

People can get addicted to all sorts of substances. When we think of addiction, we usually think of alcohol or illegal drugs. But people become addicted to cigarettes, medications, even inhalants like glue! An individual crosses the line between abuse and addiction when he or she has come to depend on it. Total dependency is reached when an individual's whole life centers around the need for the drug. If you think one of your friends is addicted to drugs or alcohol, recognizing the problem is the first step in getting help. A caring conversation can help your friend learn about their destructive behaviour and seek the professional support they may need (e.g. recovery programs). However, it's important you ensure that someone else's addiction does not consume your time and energy, causing stress that will negatively impact your own health. You alone cannot fix the problem, but there are some practical things you can do to show your support and concern.

**Addiction** means a person has no control over whether he or she uses a drug or drinks. A person who's addicted has grown so used to the drug that he or she *has* to have it. Addiction can be physical, psychological, or both.

**Physical addiction** happens when a person's body actually becomes dependent on a particular substance (even smoking is physically addictive). A person builds **tolerance** to that substance, so they are continually increasing their dose of the drug to achieve the same effects. When a person who is physically addicted stops using substances like drugs, alcohol, or cigarettes, he or she may experience **withdrawal** symptoms (e.g. diarrhea, shaking, and generally feeling awful).

**Psychological addiction** happens when the cravings for a drug are psychological or emotional. People who are psychologically addicted feel overcome by the **desire** to have a drug. They may lie or steal to get it.

### Signs of Addiction<sup>(1)</sup>

Signs that you or someone you know may have a drug or alcohol addiction include:

#### **Psychological signals:**

- use of drugs or alcohol as a way to forget problems or to relax
- withdrawal or keeping secrets from family and friends
- loss of interest in activities that used to be important
- problems with schoolwork, such as slipping grades or absences
- changes in friendships, such as hanging out only with friends who use drugs
- obsessed with figuring out how to get drugs
- stealing or selling belongings to be able to afford drugs
- failed attempts to stop taking drugs or drinking
- anxiety, anger, or depression
- mood swings

## Physical signals:

- Changes in sleeping habits
- Withdrawal symptoms between fixes
- Increased amount of a drug to achieve similar affect
- Changes in eating habits, including weight loss or gain

## Ways You Can Help

### Before you talk to your friend ...

- **Educate yourself.** Read up on alcohol and/or drug addictions. Learn what resources are available in your community. Gaining knowledge and understanding drug misuse/abuse and addiction may help you figure out what you can say to your friend. Check out the websites below.
- **Prepare a list of specific problems** that have occurred because of your friend's drinking or drug use. Keep these items as specific as possible (e.g. "When you were drunk, you made fun of me and were mean to me. You hurt me.").
- **Choose a good time to talk** when your friend is sober and both of you are relaxed and you can speak privately.

### When talking to your friend, consider the following strategies.

- **Be specific** and mention your concern for your friend's health. Use concrete examples from your list.
- **Express Your Concern.** Explain that you're worried about their decisions to use drugs (e.g. "I'm worried that your drug use will cause serious harm to your health."). Are there negative consequences directly related to your friend's destructive behaviour? (e.g. "After the party I had to stay up with you all night while you threw up. The next day you were too hung over to go to basketball tryouts.") Also, explain how their behavior affects you and/or your friendship (e.g. "you don't seem to be interested in anything I am doing. All you care about now is drugs"). Finally, it is important to understand other factors in your friend's life that may be leading them to abuse drugs. For instance, often people misuse or abuse drugs to deny feelings or to avoid responsibilities. Drugs can also be taken to manage or get rid of feelings of anxiety and depression. Did something recently happen in your friend's life that may have initiated their dependency on drugs? Identifying these factors is important. They may be the root of their problem with drugs.
- **Encourage your friend to see a professional** to talk about his/her alcohol problem. Give them the resources listed below. You can offer to find out more about the resources or go with them to a counseling appointment. It will be easier for your friend to take action against their addiction if they are aware of the supports available.
- **Talk to people you trust** about your concerns (e.g. other friends, relatives, school counselor, doctor, religious leader). You can be supportive and offer suggestions to your friend, but he/she will have to recognize their self-destructive behaviour before their ready to change.

## What NOT to do

- ***Don't accuse or argue.*** If your friend gets angry or defensive, don't take it personally; it's often difficult for people to come to terms with their problems.
- ***Don't lecture.*** State the facts. Listen and be nonjudgmental.
- ***Don't give up.*** If your friend seems resistant or denies that their drug use is a problem, back off and approach him/her at another time. Sometimes a person needs to hear worry and concern several times from a caring friend before they're ready to discuss it. Let them know they can trust you and you'll be there for them whenever they want to talk.

Unfortunately, overcoming addiction is not easy. Recovering from a drug or alcohol addiction can be a lifelong process. Most people overcoming addictions need professional assistance from a trained addictions counselor or therapist. Once your friend starts a treatment program, here are tips to make their road to recovery less bumpy.

## Encourage them to...<sup>(1)</sup>

***Tell their friends about their decision to stop using drugs.*** True friends will respect their decision. They may need to cut off some ties with friends who are not accepting and supportive including friends they did drugs with before.

***Ask friends or family to be available.*** They may need to talk to someone in the middle of the night if they're going through a tough time.

***Accept only invitations to events that they know won't involve drugs or alcohol.*** Plan activities that don't involve drugs such as going to the movies, bowling, swimming or taking an art class with a friend. It's probably a smart move to skip a Friday night party until they are feeling more secure and are able to resist the temptation of using drugs/alcohol.

***Have a plan of action if they find themselves in a place with drugs or alcohol.*** The temptation will be there sometimes, but if they have a plan of action on how they're going to handle it such as a ride home from a parent, or sibling should the situation arise, they'll be OK.

***Remind them that having an addiction doesn't make them a bad or weak person.*** If they relapse, advise them to talk to an adult immediately. Recognizing the problem as soon as possible is critical so all of the hard work they put into their initial recovery is not lost. Above all, offer a friend who's battling an addiction, lots of encouragement and praise. Hearing that you care is the motivation your friend needs.

## References

[http://kidshealth.org/teen/drug\\_alcohol/getting\\_help/addictions.html](http://kidshealth.org/teen/drug_alcohol/getting_help/addictions.html)

The following sources were used to gather information for this article:

<http://www.goaskalice.columbia.edu/2617.html>

<http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~wellness/addiction.html>

[http://www.brown.edu/Student\\_Services/Health\\_Services/Health\\_Education/atod/helpafriend.htm](http://www.brown.edu/Student_Services/Health_Services/Health_Education/atod/helpafriend.htm)

### **Websites with more information related to drug and alcohol abuse/addictions:**

- **The Good Drugs Guide** is a British based web site that provides information on marijuana, including the basics, dangers, debates over legalization, and links. Visit <http://www.thegooddrugsguide.com/cannabis/index.htm>
- **MEDLINEplus** Health Information will give you links to marijuana facts, prevention and screening, research, treatment and statistics. Go to <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/marijuana.html>
- **The National Children's Coalition** has information for teens about identifying drug problems as well as facts and links to other websites. Visit <http://www.child.net/drugalc.htm>
- **The National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information** provides an overview of facts and risks associated with crack and cocaine. Check it out @ <http://www.health.org/govpubs/phd640i/>
- **Bubble Monkey** is an interactive site for youth that provides accurate, anonymous information on drugs. Go to [www.bubblemonkey.com](http://www.bubblemonkey.com)
- **The Cool Spot** offers advice for **young teens on alcohol use and resisting peer pressure**. Visit <http://www.coolspot.com>
- **Check Yourself** allows older teens a chance to think about their relationship with drugs and alcohol and to consider whether their substance use risks turning into a problem. Go to <http://www.checkyourself.com>

### **Investigate Resources In Your Community:**

Talk to your community health centers and nurses about information or support for drug/alcohol addictions.

### **If you live in Whitehorse:**

- **Alcohol and Drug Service** offers preventative (e.g. workshops and training, educational information) and treatment services (e.g. counseling) to individuals who have drug/alcohol problems. Call 667-5777; toll free in the Yukon 1-800-661-0408. They are located at 6118 6<sup>th</sup> Ave.

## **How to Help a Friend who is in an Abusive Relationship**

Violence affects all of us, but women are usually the targets of violence that occurs in heterosexual (male-female) relationships. It is likely that you know a woman who is being abused by her partner. It could be your mom, friend, sister or neighbour. Very often, people want to help, but do not know how. If you know a woman who is being abused, and want to help, these are some things you can do:

### **Types of Abuse**

**1. Physical Abuse** involves any act of violence towards another and includes such things as: Hitting, choking, biting, kicking, punching, slapping, shoving, hair-pulling, or any other unwanted physical contact.

**2. Sexual Abuse** is any unwanted sexual contact or attention.

*It may involve ...*

- Forcing someone to have sex,
- Derogatory name calling (e.g. slut, whore)
- Withholding sex and intimacy
- Taking unwanted sexual photos
- Excessive jealousy.



**3. Emotional/Verbal/Psychological Abuse** can be more difficult to detect because it tends to be more subtle and less obvious. Often the victim does not recognize that they are being abused.

*It may involve...*

- Publicly humiliating victim
- Intimidating, shouting and threatening physical violence
- playing "mind games"
- Being overly critical and trying to destroy victim's self-esteem
- Falsely accusing victim of being unfaithful and sleeping around
- Socially isolating victim from friends and family
- Forcefully trying to control every element in victim's life

**4. Financial Abuse** involves denying victim equal access to bank account and finances (e.g. withholding, diverting, or controlling funds and preventing victim from getting or keeping a job). This type of abuse is more common in relationships where a couple lives together or are in a long-term relationship.

**5. Spiritual Abuse** includes criticizing beliefs, forcing victim to believe and follow a spiritual path they may not wish to be part of and not allowing them to practice their own beliefs.

## **What is Teen Dating Violence?**

Dating violence happens in a teen dating relationship when one person uses physical, emotional or sexual abuse to gain power and keep control over the other person. It can occur in the context of casual dating or serious long-term relationships. According to recent statistics, it is extremely likely that someone you know has experienced violence in a dating relationship. Teenage girls suffer more from relationship violence, emotionally and physically. They are much more likely than teenage boys to have serious injuries and to report being terrified.

### ***Did You Know...***

1 in 3 teens experience violence in their dating relationship.

95% of the victims are female

95% of the perpetrators are male

Dating violence occurs among all races, religions, classes, etc.

In a Canadian study conducted in 1998, 49.7% of female teenagers had been emotionally abused, 14.5% reported being physical forced into sex, and 9.1% had been physically assaulted.

**If you notice one of your friend's is in an abusive relationship, don't ignore signs of abuse. Talk to your friend. Here are some key points to remember:**

***Gather information about abuse*** so you can understand what your friend is going through. See resources listed below. There is tonnes of information out there. You can access it over the internet, at your local library, or pick up pamphlets from women advocacy groups (e.g. shelters, family violence workers).

***Tell your friend that you are concerned for her safety.*** Help her recognize the abuse and let her know that she deserves a healthy non-violent relationship!

***Listen to what she is saying and let her know that you believe her!***

***Tell her that the abuse is not her fault.*** No one deserves to be abused. Violence is a choice and only the perpetrator is responsible. Tell her love is based on trust, respect and understanding, not on violence or domination. Respect is fundamental in a love relationship.

***Normalize her experiences.*** Inform her that she's not alone in her situation. Abuse happens to all women, in all social classes, religions and racial and cultural groups.

***Tell her good things about herself.*** Let her know you think she's smart, strong, and brave. Her abuser is probably destroying her self-esteem by telling her she is stupid and worthless.

***Be non-judgmental.*** Respect that it takes a lot of courage to leave an abusive relationship. Your friend may break up with and go back to her abuser many times. Do not criticize her for staying and trying to work things out even if you think she has made a bad choice. Simply remind her you will be there if she needs your support.

***Don't spread gossip.*** Respect your friend's privacy. Keep what she has told you secret.

***Don't confront your friend's partner*** unless your friend thinks it would be helpful. It could make the situation worse. Call the police if you witness physical violence or if she is in immediate danger.

***Be positive and direct her towards help that is available.*** Suggest talking to a trusted adult such as a teacher, guidance counselor or a school psychologist, and/or call a community agency for advice.

***Try to help your friend break out of the social isolation her abuser has put her in.*** Keep in contact with her on the phone, at school or by going out with her. Encourage her to build a wide support system-- go to a support group, talk to friends and family.

**Information gathered from the following:**

<http://www.hiddenhurt.co.uk/Types/faces.htm>

[http://www.infoflam.on.ca/datingviolence/why\\_dating\\_violence.htm](http://www.infoflam.on.ca/datingviolence/why_dating_violence.htm)

[http://www.co.washington.or.us/DEPTMTS/COMM\\_COR/cvs/someone.htm](http://www.co.washington.or.us/DEPTMTS/COMM_COR/cvs/someone.htm)

[http://www.ci.boulder.co.us/police/prevention/teen\\_dating.htm](http://www.ci.boulder.co.us/police/prevention/teen_dating.htm)

<http://www.angelfire.com/mn/WRAPCo/friend.html>

[http://www.womanabuseprevention.com/html/how\\_to\\_help.html](http://www.womanabuseprevention.com/html/how_to_help.html)

[http://www.break-the-cycle.org/HTML%20files/I\\_2e\\_helpfriend.htm](http://www.break-the-cycle.org/HTML%20files/I_2e_helpfriend.htm)

**Websites with more Information about Dating Violence:**

**Making Waves** is a youth driven program located in New Brunswick, Canada. It educates and involves teens in dating violence prevention activities. Go to :

<http://www.mwaves.org/main.htm>

**The National Clearinghouse on Family violence (Canada)** has resources available to teens regarding dating violence. Check out : [http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ncfv-cnivf/familyviolence/html/femdafreq\\_e.html](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ncfv-cnivf/familyviolence/html/femdafreq_e.html)

This web page provides information about dating violence and date rape. Visit

<http://crisis.vianet.on.ca/dating.htm>

**National Youth Prevention Resource Center (U.S.)** offers youth facts about violence, steps youth can take to deal with violence and links to other websites. Check it out @ <http://www.safeyouth.org/scripts/teens.asp>

**Love is Not Abuse** is a campaign dedicated to providing information and tools that anyone can use to stop relationship violence. Go to <http://www.loveisnotabuse.com/>

**See It, Stop It** is a campaign directed towards youth and deals with dating violence. It offers an excellent online toolkit that can be downloaded to help take action against violence in your community. Visit <http://www.seeitandstopit.org/>

## Investigate Resources in Your Community:

*\*All Phone numbers between Yukon communities must start with 1-867*

Community	Health Center	Social Services	First Nation	RCMP
Beaver Creek	862-4444	634-2203	862-7802	862-2677, emergency 862-5555
Burwash Landing		634-2203	841-4616	634-2677, emergency 634-5555
Carcross	821-4444	821-4301	821-3205	821-2677, emergency 821-5555
Carmacks	863-4444	863-5800	863-5576	863-2677, emergency 863-5555
Dawson City	993-4444	993-5543	993-5385	993-2677, emergency 993-5555
Destruction Bay	841-4444	634-2203		634-2677, emergency 634-5555
Faro	994-4444	994-2749		994-2677, emergency 994-5555
Haines Junction	634-4444	634-2204	634-4221	634-2677, emergency 634-5555
Mayo	996-4444	996-2283	996-2420, 996-2882, 996-2086	996-2677, emergency 996-5555
Old Crow	966-4444	966-3734	966-3213, 966-3261	966-2677, emergency 966-5555
Pelly Crossing	537-4444	537-3300	537-3331	537-2677, emergency 537-5555
Ross River	969-4444	969-2292	969-2430, 969-2826	969-2677, emergency 969-5555
Teslin	390-4444	390-2588, 390-2679	390-2532	390-2677, emergency 390-5555
Watson Lake	536-7483, 536-2344	536-2232	536-2326, 536-2131	536-2677, emergency 536-5555
Whitehorse	667-6371		668-7800	

### Shelters/ Safe Houses/ Transition Homes:

*Safe places for women to go that provide shelter from an abusive relationship. Confidential counseling and support is available.*

- Carmacks Safe House: 863-5918. 863-5576
- Dawson City Women's Shelter: 993-5086
- Ross River (Magedi Safe House): 969-2017
- Watson Lake Women's Transition Home: 536-7223
- Whitehorse: 668-5733 (Kaushee's Place – women's transition home), 667-2693 (Victoria Faulkner Women's Center)

### Victim Services and Family Violence Prevention Unit:

*Provides a variety of programs such as counseling and support to victims of abuse.*

- Dawson: 993-5831
- Watson Lake: 536-2541
- Whitehorse: 667-3581/667-8500
- Toll-Free in the Yukon: 1-800-661-0408, ext. 3581 or 8500

### Yukon Family Services Association:

*Provides counseling, street outreach program for youth (15-25) and many other services.*

- Dawson City: 993-6455
- Haines Junction: 634-2111
- Watson Lake: 536-2330
- Whitehorse: 667-2970

### Other Places that can Help:

- **Kids Help Phone** is Canada's only toll-free, national telephone counselling service for children and youth. Call 1-800-668-6868.
- **Victim Link** has a toll-free number you can call if you or someone you know has been a victim of violence. Call 1-800-563-0808.

- **Sexual Assault Family Violence** has a toll free number you can call if you or someone you know has been a victim of family violence. Call 1-800-661-0511. Whitehorse residents call 667-3581.

## **How to Help a Friend with Depression**

### **What is Depression?**

Depression is more than being in a sad mood and normal everyday up and downs. An individual suffering from depression has to be in a “down” mood for more than two weeks experiencing a major disruption to their daily functioning. Depression can change behavior, physical health and appearance, academic performance, social activity and the ability to handle everyday decisions and pressures. This change in mood can be genetic, or brought on by difficult life experiences (e.g. financial troubles, death of a loved one); whatever the reason, professional help is an important step to feeling better again! You can help a friend by recognizing the signs of depression and directing them to the help they need.

### **Know the Symptoms**

It is helpful to recognize which behaviors indicate that your friend might be depressed. People who are depressed often have a hard time thinking clearly or recognizing their own symptoms. They may need your help.

### **Signs of depression Include:**

- Irritability and restlessness.
- Inability to concentrate and make decisions.
- Difficulty remembering important dates, commitments and promises.
- Trouble falling asleep, staying asleep, or getting up.
- Lost interest or pleasure in ordinary activities (e.g. hobbies, sports).
- Less concern about personal hygiene.
- Sudden weight loss or gain.
- Wanting to be alone all the time. Avoiding friends, activities, school and social events.
- Feelings of sadness, hopelessness or crying spells.
- Always feeling tired.
- Addiction to drugs and alcohol.
- Complaints of constant headaches, and sore muscles.
- Low-self-esteem.
- Thoughts about committing suicide.

### *Support You Can Offer To Friends*

What you can do to help someone suffering from depression.

- ***Learn all you can about depression.***
- ***Reach out- let them know you care.*** Gently express your concern and tell them you are there for them if they would like to talk. Stick with them.
- ***Encourage them to discuss their feelings.***
- ***Don't be judgmental.*** Instead be understanding, patient and listen carefully.
- Help them to realize that although what they are going through is very painful, they are not alone.

- **Remind your friend of his or her skills and abilities and how much he or she means to you and others.** Depressed people often feel worthless. They tend to be negative and judge themselves harshly.
- **Do something fun together.** Invite the depressed person for walks, outings, to the movies, and other activities that they enjoy. Gently urge them if they refuse, but do not be forceful.
- **Help them explore options to get them the help they need.** Offer to go along with them to talk with a trusted adult, counselor or spiritual leader.

#### References

<http://www.cnn.com/HEALTH/library/MH/00016.html>

Information was gathered from the following resources:

<http://www.have-a-heart.com/help-a-friend.html>

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/friend.cfm>

<http://www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/youthdevelopment/DA2787.html>

<http://www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/youthdevelopment/DA2787.html>

### Learn More about Depression ....WEBSITE RESOURCES

- **Healthy Place** is an organization that offers great information on the causes, symptoms of depression and the support available. Go to <http://www.healthyplace.com/communities/depression/related/support.asp>
- **Psychology Info** offers great information about depression and other mental illnesses. Visit <http://www.psychologyinfo.com/depression/teens.htm>
- **PBS Kids** discusses different mood and emotions and offers tips on helping a friend who may be depressed. Check it out @ <http://pbskids.org/itsmylife/emotions/depression/article8.html>
- **Young Minds** is a United Kingdom Organization that recognizes the importance of young people's mental health. It has great links and excellent readings and resources about depression. Visit <http://www.youngminds.org.uk/depression/y3.php>

### Investigate the Resources in your Community.

- Talk to your school counselor, community health nurse, doctor, mental or health professional. These people can help you! You can talk to them confidentially.
- Services in Whitehorse:
  - Mental Health Services: 667-8346. Located at #4 Hospital Rd, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor.
  - Second Opinion Society: 667-2037. Located at 708 Black St.

○ **Depression**

**<http://www.goaskalice.columbia.edu/0305.html>**

Dear A friend on-the-line,

Everyone feels "blue" at certain times during his or her life. In fact, transitory feelings of sadness or discouragement are perfectly normal, especially during particularly difficult times. But, a person who cannot "snap out of it," or get over these feelings within two weeks, may have depression. Depression comes in many kinds and degrees. Demoralization is usually part of depression, but it's not the whole story.

*Some Symptoms of Depression*

feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and irritability that seem to have no cause  
loss of interest or pleasure in usual activities, including sex  
poor appetite and weight loss, or increased appetite and weight gain  
sleep problems (i.e., insomnia, oversleeping)  
feelings of worthlessness, guilt, and helplessness  
restlessness  
decreased energy, fatigue, and feeling slowed down (lethargy)  
difficulty concentrating or making decisions  
excessive crying  
chronic physical aches and pains that don't respond to treatment  
thoughts of death and suicide  
alcohol or other drug abuse

Not all of these features are present in every depressive episode.

Gently and directly talk with your friend about your concerns. Let him know concretely what you observe about his behavior, that you think he needs and deserves someone's full attention to his feelings and concerns, and that there are many people out there trained and willing to give him just that. At Columbia, there's [Counseling and Psychological Services \(CPS\)](#) at x4-2878. Outside of Columbia, you can call the [Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance](#) at **1.800.826.3632**. In New York City, you or your friend can call The Samaritans Hotline, a 24-hour support service, at **212.673.3000**. To find a support hotline near you, visit [Befrienders International](#).

It is normal for you, yourself, to become frustrated with your friend. You have already offered advice, suggestions, support, and comfort, and it seems as though your efforts

have been to no avail. Remember that persistence sometimes pays off. And, you can call either of the hotline numbers *yourself* to relieve some of your own anxiety, or to get more ideas for helping your friend.

For more information on low-cost counseling, read [Need referral information on free or low-cost counseling \[Classic Alice!\]](#) in Alice's Emotional Health archive.