



CHILDREN MATTER...GET INVOLVED!



Substance Abuse and Families

CHILDREN LIVING IN CHAOS

ONE MOM'S TRUE STORY

"In my active addiction, my children suffered. They did not get to enjoy childhood like other children do. They had to raise one another because I was incapable of doing so. They grew up without love and security in their home. They went to bed scared every night, not knowing who would come in and out of the bedrooms, while they cried themselves to sleep. There were no rules or discipline for them to learn. There were no consequences reinforced or praise given.

My children were put in life-and-death situations. They just went with the flow, never knowing what to expect next. Between my lying and all my broken promises, my children developed major trust issues.

I am in recovery, and my life is completely different today. I have a good relationship with my children. They are proud of me, and that is so very important to me. My daughter is a recovering heroin addict and is sober today. My son graduated from high school, and I got to be a part of that. I am employed at the facility where I received treatment. I am giving back what was given to me: HOPE! Being a good example is a gift to me. Life is good."



hope

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE OR TO FIND HELP, GO TO:

Changing Lives Foundation

www.drug-addiction-help-now.org

Helpguide

www.helpguide.org

help

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

www.samhsa.gov

Illinois Department of Human Services

www.dhs.state.il.us

Prevent Child Abuse Illinois

www.preventchildabuseillinois.org

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**Prevent Child Abuse
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Alcohol or drug addiction in the family is messy and hurts everyone.



It is estimated that 6 million children in this country live with at least one parent who abuses alcohol or other drugs.

(Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2003)

UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM

Substance abuse is a growing problem, and it hurts everyone in the family, especially children. Some people think substance abuse is “drug abuse” and means only illegal drugs like cocaine, heroin, crack, methamphetamine and others. Actually, substance abuse includes alcohol, marijuana, prescription drugs **and** illegal drugs.

Many people who abuse alcohol, marijuana and prescription drugs separate themselves from the “harder” drug users and think their addiction is not a problem or is not hurting their family. The truth is, it doesn’t matter if a substance is legal or illegal. What matters is how the substance affects the person using or abusing it.

Someone with a substance abuse problem may have trouble keeping a job. They may have trouble controlling their temper or their emotions. They may be physically sick from their addiction or have legal issues, such as drug charges or DUI offenses. **It doesn’t really matter how often or how much someone uses alcohol or other drugs. What matters is how it affects them and the problems it creates.**

FAMILY LIFE

Alcohol or drug addiction in the family is messy and hurts everyone. Often, families don’t want to admit that there is a problem. They may try to hide it or lie about it. Some adults who are addicted may be able to keep a job and look like they are doing okay. Others may not. Every person and family is different.

ADDICTION HURTS CHILDREN

Children living with an addicted or substance-abusing parent or other adult are more likely to become drug-addicted themselves. Alcohol and other drug addiction can cross generations, and this cycle can be hard to break.

Some children may not talk about what is happening in their family. When living with an adult who is abusing alcohol or other drugs, the child may:

- Be mean to others.
- Be quiet or keep to themselves.
- Act like a parent and try to take care of everyone.
- Get in trouble at school or have falling grades.
- Have nightmares or other sleeping problems.
- Not be able to focus or finish tasks.
- Miss many days of school or daycare.
- Believe the problems in the family are their fault.
- Worry about what will happen next.



- Hurt themselves or others.
- Feel helpless.
- Feel scared.
- Be sad, angry or cry a lot.
- Feel bad about themselves.

Oftentimes, children are abused or not taken care of when adults in the home are abusing substances. Living in this situation, the child may:

- Witness a lot of fighting in the home.
- Get hurt by being hit, slapped, punched, kicked, etc.
- Be abused sexually.
- Be hungry, dirty, left home alone or unsupervised by an adult.
- Witness or participate in illegal activities.
- Be confused about what they feel and how to act.



HOPE FOR FAMILIES

There are many excellent and successful substance abuse treatment programs available. Some adults who need treatment think that it will be easy. They may believe that, after their treatment is over, everything will be fine. Recovery can be hard, and in many ways, it will involve the entire family. It takes effort and causes changes in the whole family.

Recovery from alcohol and other drug abuse is possible. The adult in recovery needs support from family, friends and the community. Recovery can be a lifelong process, but there is hope that those in recovery can stay sober and enjoy a happy, healthy life.

heal