



# Substance Abuse

Client Handbook Series  
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Developed by Carleton University, Criminal Justice Decision Making Laboratory  
& Ontario Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services  
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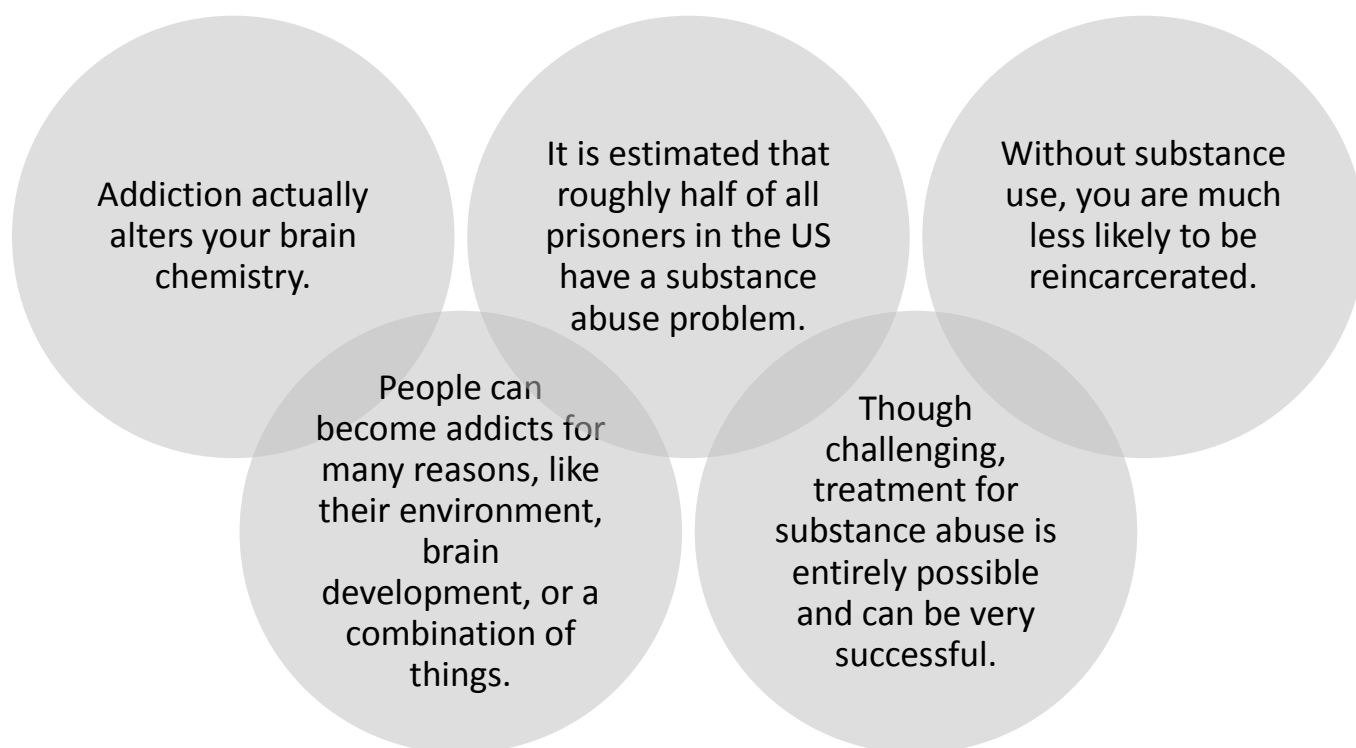
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# The Issue of Addiction

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Addiction is very complicated and the reason people become addicted to drugs and alcohol is not well understood. Addiction creates intense and uncontrollable cravings that don't stop, even when the effects are very bad. Addiction can threaten so many aspects of your life and can affect both you and the people around you forever. Thankfully, treatment for addiction can work. It may be challenging but it is entirely possible to live an alcohol and drug-free lifestyle. If you think you have a problem with substance use or if addiction might be a problem for you, keep reading.

## Something To Think About...



This workbook is not meant to replace treatment. It is designed to help you reflect on your substance use behaviour and to help you plan for a better future.

Draw a line on the scale below to show your need to change your substance use behaviour.



No change  
needed.

A lot of  
change needed.

# Motivation for Substance Use

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People use drugs and alcohol for different reasons, and using them can affect us in many ways, both good and bad. For example, some people might feel that getting drunk makes it easier to talk to people. Others might find that they tend to treat others poorly when they drink.

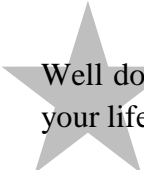
Think about how your own substance use has affected different parts of your life. Check the box if it has affected that particular area positively or negatively, or both.

<b>Substance abuse has impacted my...</b>	<b>Positively</b>	<b>Negatively</b>
General living	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mental abilities (e.g., concentration, ability to learn)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Physical health	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Physical dependence (e.g., feeling uncomfortable without it)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ability to cope with problems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Work or school performance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social life	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Relationships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Self-esteem	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Family	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Good! Now, think about your substance use behaviour.

What have been the top three consequences? List them here:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

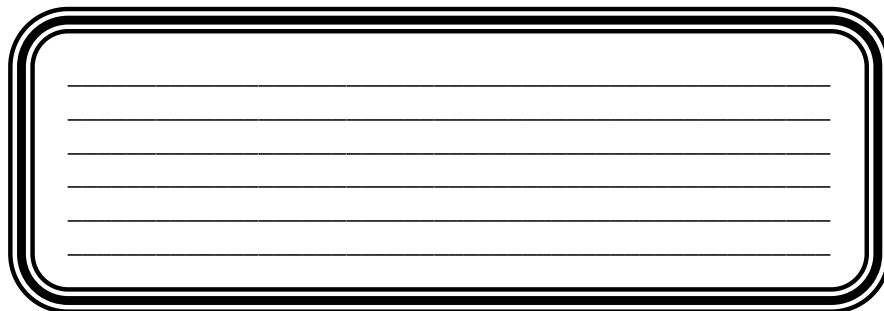
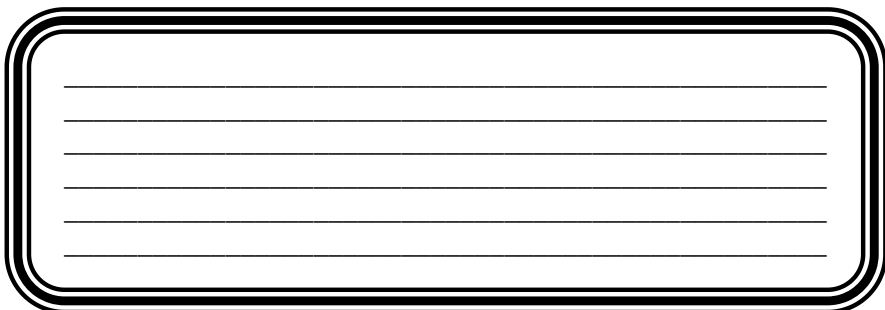
 Well done! Now that you've started to think about the impacts that substance abuse has had on your life, move on to learn about *why* substance abuse has become part of your life.

# Motivation for Substance Use

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The path to drug addiction most often begins with choosing to take drugs, which people have many reasons for doing. Over time, though, your ability to choose not to do drugs goes away and the drug use becomes more and more needed. Often the reasons why people started using are different from the reasons why they keep using. It's important to see the differences between why you started and why you continue, in order to understand what you can do to stop.

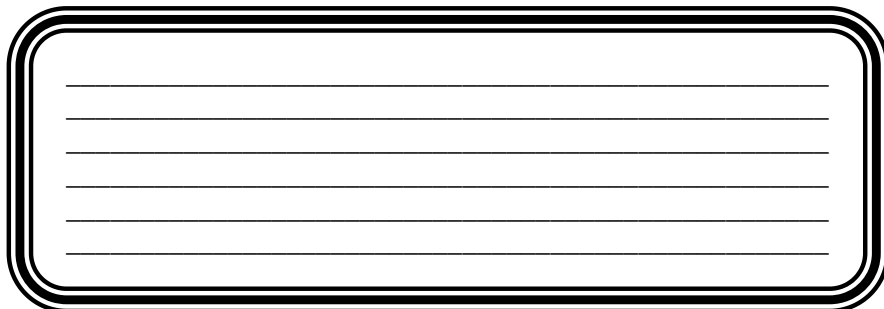
Start by describing the reasons why you started using. It may be one reason or it may be many. For example, "I was very stressed out about losing my job" or "I wanted to be cool."



Good, now think about why you continued using over time. What were your reasons? Are they different than why you started?



Most importantly now, think about and write down why you have stopped using. You can come back to this any time to remind yourself why you stopped.



# Substance Abuse and Crime

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While it's not the only reason for it, there is a clear link between alcohol, drugs and crime. In fact, many people arrested for crimes were high or drunk when they did it. Also, the type of substance abuse is often related to different types of crime.

- ❖ **Alcohol and Crime:** Alcohol is an important part of many violent crimes. For instance, people that abuse alcohol are at a higher risk for violent behaviour, such as fights and domestic assaults. *Important note:* although they may be related, fixing a substance abuse problem cannot totally fix domestic abuse because there are often other problems involved that also need to be dealt with.
- ❖ **Drugs and Crime:** Drugs are often a key factor in many property crimes. For example, breaking and entering, or robbery are often committed in order to get money to buy drugs.

**Below are some questions that can help you start making the link between substance abuse and your criminal behaviour. Circle the answers that best describe you.**

1. Do you typically abuse:

- a) Alcohol
- b) Drugs
- c) Both

2. What type of crime are you currently charged with:

- a) Assault
- b) Domestic Violence
- c) Break and Enter
- d) Theft
- e) Drug possession
- f) Other

If other, list: \_\_\_\_\_

3. The day you were arrested for your current charge, were you:

- a) Drunk
- b) High
- c) Both

# Issues with Problem Solving

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Addictions affect the way we think about and solve problems in our daily lives. Substance use lowers our self-control and blocks our ability to think about the consequences of our actions. This also means that drinking or using one drug can lead to using other drugs. While you are using you will not see the consequences of your actions as clearly as if you were sober or straight. This can, and often does, lead to making poor decisions. You might get into trouble because of it, or do impulsive things you later regret like stealing or getting into fights. Can you think of a time when this has happened?

In the spaces below, describe a time when you were faced with a problem that you solved poorly because of your substance use.

What was the problem?

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How did you solve it?

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Good! Now, think about if you were faced with the same problem now. How would you try to solve it?

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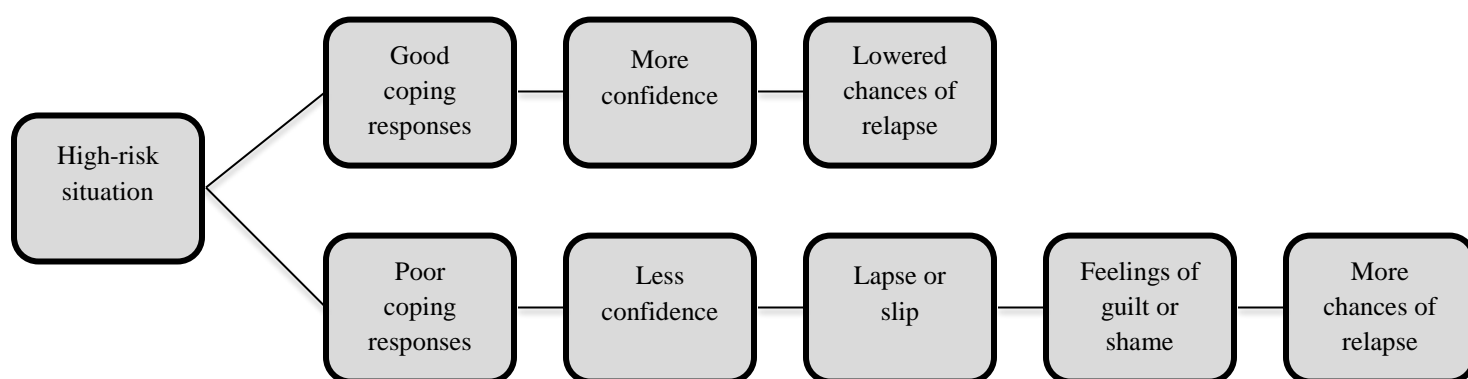
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# Relapse Prevention

A “Relapse Prevention Plan” can help change your addictive behaviour by first finding the things that cause the biggest risk for you and then making a plan to deal with or avoid those risk factors.

The figure below shows the pathways that a person may go through when they are faced with a high-risk situation.



- ❖ People who have good coping responses (e.g. leaving the party early, taking a “time out”) will have confidence that they can handle the high-risk situation. This may lower their chances of a relapse.
- ❖ People who have poor coping responses (e.g. thinking they can have just one drink) will have lower confidence that they can handle the high-risk situation. This can lead to an initial lapse (first use of alcohol or drugs), which can cause feelings of guilt or shame. This may increase their risk of a full relapse (going back to their old ways).

Good work! *Remember:* Avoiding high-risk situations in the first place is one of the best ways to prevent relapse. The next section will outline the different steps in making a relapse prevention plan.

# Relapse Prevention

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## Step 1: Identifying high-risk factors

There may be times when you are faced with situations or have feelings that can put you at greater risk for a relapse. Some examples include:

1. Negative (e.g., stress, anger, boredom) emotions that lead to using substances to feel better, or positive (e.g., excitement, happiness) emotions that lead to using substances to celebrate.
2. Thinking: thoughts that make using or drinking seem ok. (e.g. *"I can handle just one drink"*)
3. Conflict with others: this can lead to negative emotions (e.g. having an argument with your partner can leave you angry).
4. Hanging out with friends or family when alcohol or drugs are there.

Remember, it is not always possible to avoid these high-risk situations. However, once you are aware of the people, feelings, and situations that can put you at risk for a relapse, you can handle them better.

## Step 2: Making a Plan

Once you have identified your high-risk situations, it is important to make a plan or a way to cope (or *deal*) with these situations. This can help you be prepared so that you are less likely to be caught off guard. Having a plan may also give you a bigger sense of control and confidence in these situations. This involves planning what you will say or do in these situations.

For example, you are invited to celebrate a friend's birthday at a restaurant. You could:

**Plan 1:** Order a non-alcoholic drink before sitting down.

**Plan 2:** Plan to leave early if you begin to feel uncomfortable.

**Plan 3:** Have an answer ready if they offer you a drink. e.g. "No thanks, I'm driving" or "No thanks, I don't drink anymore."

**Plan 4:** Go with a non-drinking friend.



# Relapse Prevention

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Using the information from the previous section and the example below, think of some possible risk factors and how you plan to handle them in the future.

## High-risk factors

Make a list of 3 factors that hold the highest risk for you:

1. When I'm out with friends who are drinking
2. When I'm feeling depressed
3. After I get into an argument with my girlfriend.

## Make a Plan

Develop a plan to deal with each risk factor you listed.

1. I can order a non-alcoholic drink or leave early
2. I can call a friend when I'm feeling depressed
3. I can go for a walk to cool off or go to the gym

Make a list of 3 factors that hold the highest risk for you:

1.

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2.

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3.

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# Planning for Failure

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Changing your addictive behaviour is a process that can be very hard at times. Some people will have several lapses (i.e. slips) before they stop for good. After a slip occurs, you may feel guilt or shame, which may lead you to start drinking or using drugs again in order to avoid these negative feelings.

*But*, if you do have a slip it does not mean you are a failure or you lack will power. By viewing these slips as a learning opportunity, you can learn to deal with them so they do not turn into a full-blown relapse (i.e. when you go back to your old ways, such as uncontrolled drinking or drug use).

Below are some ways that can help you manage a lapse before it turns into a relapse.

## Have a Support System

Having a support system of friends and family can help you stay on track by:

- ❖ Helping you watch for warning signs.
- ❖ Supporting your goals.
- ❖ Helping to fill your spare time.
- ❖ Providing support and understanding when setbacks happen.

## Learn from your Experience

Think about where you may not have planned or acted carefully. Think about:

- ❖ What were you feeling just before you felt like drinking or using drugs?
  - e.g. Feeling happy, or feeling lonely.
- ❖ What were you telling yourself?
  - e.g. “I can handle just one drink.”
- ❖ What did you do?
  - e.g. “I had a couple of drinks.”

## Identifying Warning Signs

There are usually warning signs that can lead you to using again. Once you recognize them, you can learn to better cope and manage them. Some warning signs include:

- ❖ Feeling you have the problem under control.
- ❖ Not working out stress and problems at work, school, or home.
- ❖ Not handling negative emotions and thoughts.
- ❖ Beginning to isolate yourself from others.
- ❖ Doubting your ability to stay clean.

# Realistic Goals

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Setting realistic and reachable goals is an important part of really changing your behaviour. It is also a huge part of setting yourself up for successful recovery.

When setting goals, some recovering addicts feel like they won't be successful unless they give up absolutely *all* substances, even ones they didn't have a problem with. For example, a heroin user might also stop using alcohol or even tobacco.

Others feel like it's not realistic for them to give up all substances. For example, a cocaine user may stop using cocaine but continue using alcohol because they find it doesn't make them want to use other drugs or do crime.

It's important to think about this very carefully and to be honest with yourself about what is realistic for you, and what is the best decision for you in terms of the success of your recovery.

What are your reasons for abstaining completely?

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Circle one:

Is this a realistic goal for you?

Yes                  No

Is this the best decision for you?

Yes                  No

If any, what are your reasons for *not* abstaining completely?

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Circle one:

Is this a realistic goal for you?

Yes                  No

Is this the best decision for you?

Yes                  No

# Summary

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**Here's a quick summary of what you have learned about substance use:**

- 1) Addiction is a complex illness that can affect your life and the lives of those around you.
- 2) Treatment and recovery can be challenging but very successful.
- 3) On the road to recovery, it's important to figure out why you started using, and also what made you continue using.
- 4) It's also important to remember why you have stopped using. You can come back to this and remind yourself of your motivation during challenging times.
- 5) Substance use lowers our self-control and leads to poor decision-making when we try to solve daily problems.
- 6) There is a link between substance abuse and crime. People who abuse alcohol are more likely to be involved in violent crimes and hurting others. People who abuse drugs are more likely to be involved in robberies and potentially hurting others.
- 7) Having a relapse prevention plan can help you be prepared when you are faced with a high-risk situation.
- 8) It's important to be realistic and honest with ourselves when we are making goals.