

Overcoming Addiction

What is addiction?

Addictions can be described as an irresistible craving to have or do something that you are not able to live without. It can be a physical or psychological state of dependence on a substance or type of behaviour. Addictive behaviours can be overt or covert and sometimes can result in health, legal, financial, marital problems or family disputes.

Not all addiction will have such obvious or dire consequences but can still rule an addict's life. The overpowering craving of addiction will ensure that other fulfilling factors diminish.

What are the warning signs that I might have an addiction?

Realising that you may have an addiction is a good first step to overcoming it. Most people come to this realisation after their addiction becomes problematic for them, and the negatives of the addiction outweighs the benefits. A good way to assess whether you may have an addiction is by asking yourself the following questions:

- Am I finding it difficult to meet my responsibilities at home and at work?
- Am I having reoccurring problems with health, relationships, finances or law?
- Is my behaviour becoming a part of how I cope with everyday life?
- Am I organising activities around the behaviour?
- Is this behaviour continuing to increase more and more overtime?
- Do I feel unwell or moody when I don't give into cravings for the behaviour?
- Have I tried unsuccessfully in the past to cut down or stop the behaviour?
- Do I find that my behaviour is more dominant around certain people and may be a way to maintain friendships?

How do I overcome an addiction?

1. Admit you have a problem.

Acknowledging that you have an addiction that needs breaking, is essential and takes great courage. It can sometimes be difficult to admit that you have a problem but it can be helpful to consider the impact of your behaviour, and what life would look like without your addiction. This can be achieved by thinking about the consequences involved with the addiction, and what the advantages and disadvantages of cutting down or quitting would be.

2. Replace the substance/habit with something positive.

Identify what desires the addiction is meeting, and find other ways of satisfying those needs. Although your addiction may help you meet those desires in the short term, you may find that it become less effective overtime and creates additional problems for you in both your work and home life.

3. Find ways to deal with your cravings.

Acknowledging When trying to cut down or quit an addiction it is common to experience strong urges for it. Some suggestions that have been found to be useful when coping with cravings include:

- Acknowledging when and where you are most likely to experience cravings and creating a plan to help you cope with them before they happen.
- Dealing with the craving when it first arises, not waiting for the urge to become more intense.
- Reminding yourself that having cravings is a normal part of quitting an addiction and they will pass overtime; the less you give into cravings the weaker they become.
- Finding something to distract yourself with.
- Talking to someone supportive.



Converge International is your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider. To make an appointment or speak to a consultant:

1300 our eap
1300 687 327

Overcoming Addiction

4. Use strategies to help you cut down on your addiction.

Some people find that cutting down on an addiction gradually overtime can be more effective than quitting an addiction all at once, as it allows you to gain back control on your behaviour. When cutting down an addiction it may be useful to:

- Plan your use by setting limits of use each day.
- Attempt to have a minimum of two addiction free days a week.
- Make plans for how you will deal during times where you might find it difficult to ignore cravings.
- Go at your own pace.
- Ask a friend or family member for support.
- Take up a new hobby to try and get your mind off your addiction.
- Surround yourself with people who support your change and you feel comfortable with.
- Decide on how you should respond to friends who may influence you in giving into the addiction.
- Remind yourself of the positives of cutting down.
- Seek professional help through counselling services.
- Join a support group.

5. Reward your efforts.

Reward every effort you make to change your behaviour, even if you don't always meet your expectations. Changing habits can be a difficult thing to do so don't be too hard on yourself. Persevere with your efforts and reward yourself for every milestone you make. Celebrate your achievements. Remember that lapses are common; **don't give up trying to give up.**

For further information and support:

This NSW Government site is a one stop shop for information: Excellent links and plenty of resources for all.

www.druginfo.sl.nsw.gov.au

The Lifeline site provides helpful facts and information about substance misuse and what you can do to overcome an addiction.

www.lifeline.org.au

The Family Drug Support Australia site contains up-to-date information on all aspects of alcohol and drug use relative to the family of addicts and users.

www.fds.org.au

The Australian Drug Information Network provides reliable information on alcohol, drugs and mental health, with links to treatment services, research, journals, campaigns, events and much more.

www.adin.com.au

References:

Australian Psychological Society, *Alcohol and other drugs*, APS, retrieved 16 May 2014 <http://www.psychology.org.au/publications/tip_sheets/alcohol/>



Converge
international

Converge International is your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider. To make an appointment or speak to a consultant:

1300 our eap
1300 687 327