



Drug Addiction and Alcoholism

Substance abuse can strain relationships, interfere with responsibilities at home and work, and lead to financial ruin. An individual with a substance use disorder will often do things they never thought they would, like stealing from their employer to get money to buy drugs or alcohol, or taking money meant for their children so that they can get high.

Drug addicts and alcoholics cannot control their substance use even when they know it is hurting themselves or their loved ones. Drinking and/or getting high is all they can think about and all they want to do, no matter the consequences. Addicts will continue using whether they're happy or depressed. Even when they know the drinking and drug use is damaging their health, even when they can't afford to buy alcohol or drugs, people with a substance abuse addiction can't stay sober for very long.

Problem drinkers and drug users typically deny or minimize the problem. They also go to great lengths to hide their addiction. For example, addicts and alcoholics often withdraw from their loved ones, sneak around, and lie about where they've been and what they've been up to.

Addicts and alcoholics can have a problem, however, without being totally out of control. Substance *abuse* is any behavior that disrupts your life. If you're preoccupied with drinking or using drugs, spending more and more time getting drunk or high, spending more money on it than you can afford, or using drugs and alcohol despite serious consequences, you have a

substance use disorder. If you have a drug or alcohol problem, you may think you can't stop, but drug and alcohol addictions are treatable. If you're ready to admit you have a problem and seek help, you can overcome your substance abuse problem and regain control of your life.

The following are some common myths about addiction:

MYTH: You have to drink or use drugs everyday to be a drug addict or alcoholic.

FACT: A problem drinker or drug addict may use drugs or alcohol only occasionally. Substance abuse is a problem if it *causes* problems.

MYTH: Addiction is not really a problem if the drug user or alcoholic can afford it.

FACT: Problems caused by substance abuse are not just financial. Time spent drunk or high can lead to relationship breakdowns, loss of a job and loss of important friendships.

MYTH: Partners of addicts and alcoholics often drive them to drink and use drugs.

FACT: Addicts and alcoholics often rationalize their behavior. Blaming others is one way to avoid taking responsibility for their actions, including what is needed to overcome the problem.

Do you have a problem with drugs or alcohol? You may have a substance use disorder if you:

- **Feel the need to be secretive about your use.** You might drink alone in secret or lie about how much you drink, feeling others won't understand.

- **Have trouble controlling your drinking or drug use.** Once you start drinking, can you stop after one drink? Or are you compelled to drink until you pass out? Are you taking more of a prescribed medication than recommended?
- **Drink even when you can't afford it.** A red flag is when you are spending more on alcoholic beverages than you can afford. If you are using money you don't have—money to pay bills, credit cards, or things for your children to pay for going out "partying" you have an addiction problem. You may feel pushed to borrow, sell, or even steal things to get money to buy drugs.
- **Family and friends are worried about you.** Denial keeps addiction going. If friends and family are worried, listen to them carefully. Take a hard look at how drinking or drugging is affecting your life. It's not a sign of weakness to ask for help.

Treatment and Counseling

The biggest step in treatment is realizing you have a substance abuse problem. It takes tremendous strength and courage to own up to this, especially if you have strained or broken relationships along the way. Don't despair, and don't try to go it alone. Many others have been in your shoes and have been able to break the habit. Overcoming addiction is never easy. But recovery is possible if you stick with treatment and seek support. When you are ready for advice or a treatment referral contact your personal physician for help or go to: <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-treatment> to locate a treatment center in your area.

The following information is provided by the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities.

Strengthen Your Skills

You never know when you might encounter somebody who is thinking about suicide.

Family members, friends, neighbors, and coworkers may be struggling, and we might not pay attention to the warning signs in time. The good news is that suicide is preventable, help is out there, and those who make it through a time of crisis usually go on to live meaningful and productive lives.

You can become a suicide prevention "gatekeeper" by attending a suicide prevention training. A gatekeeper is someone who can see the warning signs and help somebody in need. Gatekeepers are heroes.

A very popular suicide prevention gatekeeper training is QPR, which stands for Question, Persuade, Refer. Just like CPR is an emergency lifesaving procedure, QPR teaches simple steps anyone can use to save a life.

QPR training is a proven tool for suicide prevention. It is an easy, cost-effective training and can be done in as little as 60 to 90 minutes. QPR training can be given in-person or virtually.

Think about bringing QPR training to your company or place of work. Email suicide.prevention@dbhdd.ga.gov to request QPR training for your staff or coworkers. You can also visit the QPR Institute website for more information at www.qprinstitute.com.

If you experience any thoughts about suicide, call the Suicide Prevention Lifeline at **1-800-273-8255**.

To learn more about suicide prevention, visit the DBHDD website at: <https://dbhdd.georgia.gov/suicide-prevention>.

Or contact the Suicide Prevention Director, Rachael Holloman, at: rachael.holloman@dbhdd.ga.gov.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:
1-800-273-TALK (8255).