

  Project supported by the PHA

Foundation Module: **Adults** and **Family** Members

Day One



  **Housekeeping**

- Breaks
- Microphones
- Internet connections
- Confidentiality
- Questions/comments



  **Course Objectives: Day One**

By the end of today, you will be able to:

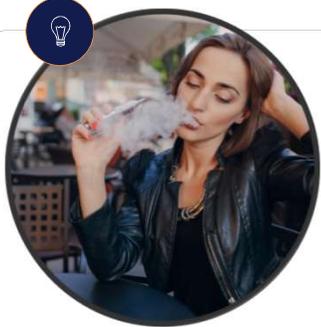
- Identify the reasons why people may use substances
- Describe how addiction and dependence can develop
- Explain the potential impacts of addiction on the individual and the family



  **Introduction:
Substance Misuse
and Addiction**

Why do people misuse substances, what is addiction, and how might it develop?

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Why do people use substances?
Think of some reasons why people might use alcohol or other drugs.

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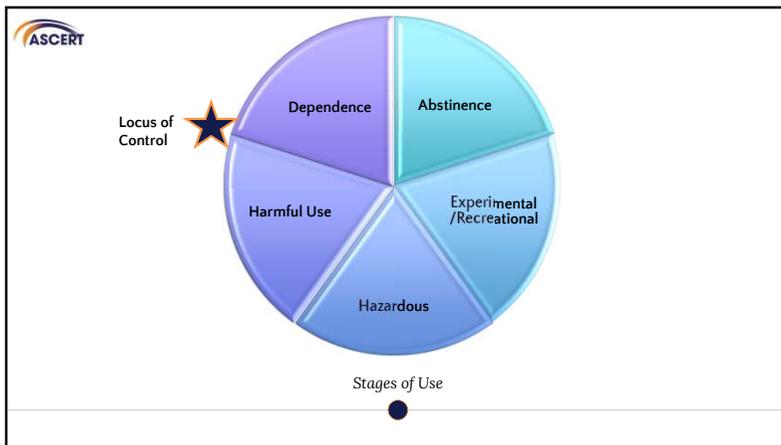
Relieving tension/anxiety/form of escapism



Boredom
Dependency
Availability

Rituals
Rebellion
Self-medication

Social norms and/or peer pressure



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Addiction is a **treatable** chronic medical disease involving **complex interactions** among brain circuits, genetics, the environment, and an individual's life experiences. People with addiction use substances or engage in behaviours that become compulsive and often **continue despite harmful consequences**.

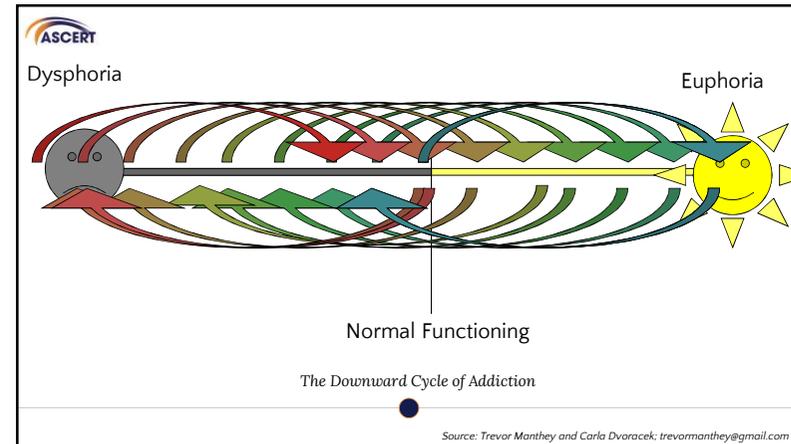
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American Society of Addiction Medicine (2019)

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What are some **myths or stereotypes** about addiction?



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Five Common **Factors** of Addiction



- **Loss of control** over the use of the substance
- **Preoccupation** with the substance
- A **compulsion** to look for something outside of the self for safety, security, and self-esteem
- **Withdrawal**
- A tendency to continue the behaviour despite **adverse consequences**

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Addiction: Petrol

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The Impact of Addiction on the Individual



- Once the psychological or physical craving for the chemical exists, it affects a person's thinking in much the same way that a bribe or other personal interest distorts one's judgement
- The need for the chemical is so powerful that it directs the person's thought processes to preserve the drinking or using
 - Function of addictive thinking – to permit the person to continue the habit

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The Impact of Addiction on the Individual



- Increased risk of suicide (particularly with the misuse of alcohol and opioids)
- Commonly co-occurring experiences with addiction
 - Self-harm
 - Abuse and exploitation
 - Organ failure and cancers
 - Mental health difficulty
 - Substance-specific disorders (e.g. Korsakoff's Syndrome)

Source: Hesse, Thystrup, Seid, & Skogen, 2020)

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Impact of Substance Misuse on Family Members: Introduction

2

What is the language of this issue, and what is the scope of the problem?

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Exploring Attitudes

In groups, take a look at the five brief scenarios presented to you. Who would you be the most concerned about and why?

 **Let's Be Clear With the Words We Use**

- Family
 - Group of people with a strong emotional connection, whether they live together or not
- Drug
 - Chemical that causes a change/changes in the way the human body works (mentally, physically, or emotionally)
- Addiction
 - When someone continues doing something (e.g. drinking/using drugs) despite harm (e.g. physical health, mental health, relationships)

 **Let's Be Clear With the Words We Use: Co-Dependency**

- Idea that says that individuals (usually partners) become “addicted” to the relationship/negative consequences associated with addiction; “loving too much” (Peterson & McBride, 2002; Anderson, 1994)
- Counterpoint: No such thing as “co-dependency”; family members are merely responding to the stressful situation they find themselves in (Orford et al., 2010a)



 **Let's Be Clear With the Words We Use: Enabling**

- When someone knowingly or unknowingly supports another's substance misuse
 - Soften the impact
 - Reduce the pain
 - Allow the person to avoid consequences of his/her own behaviour
- Does this pathologise care?
- “An abnormal reaction to an abnormal situation is normal”

 **The Scope of the Problem: Drug Misuse in the UK**



- At least 1.5 million adults significantly affected by a relative's drug use
 - 575k spouses, 610k parents, 250k other (e.g. grandparents, siblings)
- Estimated impact of drug misuse on the family in the UK: £2.5 billion/year*
 - £13,829 per affected family member/carer

Source: Supporting the Supporters: families of drug misusers. UK Drug Policy Commission

 **The **Scope** of the Problem: Parental Alcohol Misuse**

- Estimated 40,000 young people in NI are living with PAM
- 40% of children on the Child Protection Register and 70% of Looked After Children are there as a direct result of PAM
- In 2020, 7.4% of clients on the NI Substance Misuse Database said they lived with children (either dependent or non-dependent)
 - Approximately 315 households

Source: Hidden Harm Action Plan, Public Health Agency

 **Impact of Substance Misuse on Family Members: The Experience**

3 **What is it like living with substance misuse in the family?**

 **In your experience, how does substance misuse impact family functioning?**



 **The **Impact** of Substance Misuse on Families**

- Major addiction issues are often hidden underneath a seemingly small problem and ignored, not unlike “the elephant in the room”
- People don’t talk and avoid dealing with how *they* feel about addiction
 - Often filled with shame and guilt
 - May even feel like it’s their fault that their loved one is misusing substances



 **The Impact of Substance Misuse on Families**

- All domains of life can be severely affected
- Family members can suffer extreme stress socially, financially, and in regards to health/safety
- Strong correlations with mental health problems, violence/abuse, neglect, and social exclusion
 - All of these increase a family's risk of harm
- Attempting to cope often creates difficult dilemmas, and there is often little guidance on what to do

 **The Impact of Substance Misuse on Families**

- Family members are usually very isolated due to stigma/fear and/or lack of resources available
 - Professionals who might help are often badly informed at best, or critical at worst
 - Social support is needed but tends to fail
- Many family members believe things will get better only if the substance misuse stops
- Family involvement in treatment can improve outcomes but they have needs in their own right

 **The Impact of Substance Misuse on Families: Common Concerns of Family Members**

- The person using substance's physical health
- The individual neglecting themselves
- The individual's mental health
- The individual's success (or failing) in education, work, or sporting performance



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 **The Impact of Substance Misuse on Families: Common Concerns of Family Members**

- The individual's financial affairs
- The frequency, quantity, or form of the individual's addictive behaviours
- The company being kept by the individual



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Rules of Shame

<p>Don't Feel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Don't get angry ○ Don't get depressed ○ Don't be afraid 	<p>Don't Talk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Don't tell other people about family problems ○ Don't talk about problems with other family members 	<p>Don't Trust</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Don't trust anybody outside the family ○ Don't trust the police ○ Don't trust the person with the addiction or your own perceptions
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The Impact of Substance Misuse on Families



- Family members living with someone's addiction can show:
 - A higher risk of physical and psychological problems
 - Poorly-defined problems (e.g. frequent trips to the doctor)
 - More use of mental health services
 - Isolation
 - Chronic low self-esteem

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The Impact of Substance Misuse on Families

- Children can be particularly affected
 - Familial (usually parental) substance misuse is one of the most common characteristics of social workers' case loads
- Hidden harm
 - Serious negative consequences on children due to living with parents/carers who misuse drugs/alcohol (including OTC and prescribed medication)
 - 1 in 11 children in NI is affected by parental alcohol misuse



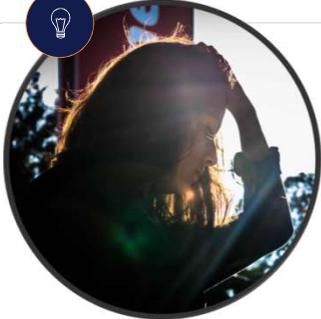
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The Impact of Substance Misuse on Families: Parenting Capacity

- Impact of PSM on children/young people may not be directly correlated to amount or frequency of the substance use
- Knowing about the amount of substances used can help us understand the impact on the parent as an individual
 - Shouldn't be taken as an indicator of harm without assessing parenting skills



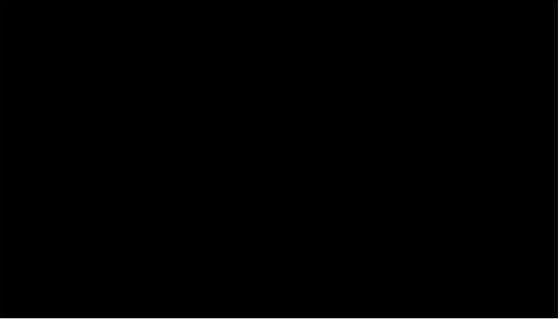
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What is the **experience of hidden harm?**

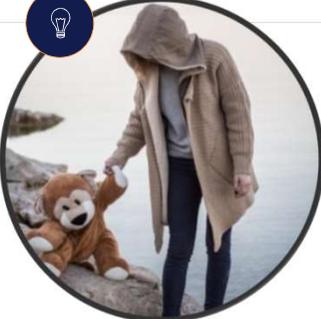
Listen to Laura's Story and pay attention to how she describes her experience of living in a household with parental alcohol misuse.

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Laura's Story

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What did you hear **Laura say?**

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Hidden Harm: **Laura's Story**



- Ruined 5th/6th birthday party
- Does housework most of the time
- Relationship breakdown
- Difficulty with food/eating
- Happy in school but doesn't want teachers to know about the situation – "it's embarrassing"
- Missing school
- Money issues
- Self-harm

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Risk Factors Associated With Worsened Outcomes for Children: **General**

- High levels of family disharmony
- Domestic violence
- Abuse (physical, sexual, emotional)
- Inconsistent, ambivalent, or neglectful parenting



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Risk Factors Associated With Worsened Outcomes for Children: **General**

- Absence of a stable adult figure
- Parental loss
- Material deprivation/neglect
- Family not seeking help



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Risk Factors Associated With Worsened Outcomes for Children: **Substance-Specific**

- Both parents misusing substances
- Substance misuse taking place in the home
 - Child being present during misuse
 - Child witnessing use/paraphernalia
- Severity of substance misuse
- Exposure to/awareness of criminal activity (e.g. drug dealing)



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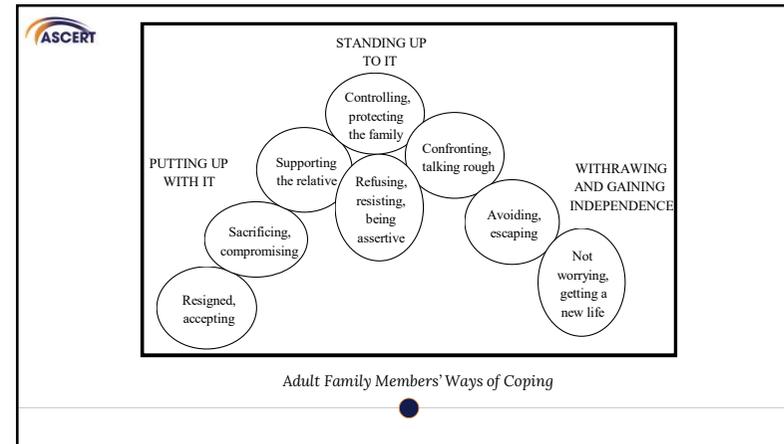
4 Impact of Substance Misuse on Family Members: How Families Cope

How do family members cope with substance misuse?

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How Do Family Members Tend to Cope/Respond?

- Adults tend to cope in 3 ways – is it different for young people?
 - Tolerant
 - Engaged
 - Withdrawn
- “Coping may not mean the same as being resilient. It may just mean doing what you need to do to get by.”
 - Silent Voices Report, 2012

Fearfulness/Self Protection	Confrontation/Self Destruction
Fearful Inaction Terrified	Discord Rows arguments
Protective Action Hide money, took special care of own possessions	Emotional Attack Tried to show him up make jealous
Fear of the Future Afraid for the family	Action against self Gets drunk, makes self sick, hurts self
Unemotional or Indifferent to Pain Stoicism, put on a brave face, pretend all is well	Detachment/Internalising/ Help Seeking
Involvement	Avoidance Refused to talk, stayed in the bedroom
Anti Drink Pours down sink	Switched off Built shell around self, day dreamed
Indulgence Gave him drink, make comfortable	Help seeking Sought help from neighbour relative
Self Blame Felt guilty, blames self	

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Thanks!

Any questions?

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