

# Addiction and Recovery



**If you or a family member is struggling with addiction, you are not alone. There is hope.**

Addiction is a condition that results when a person ingests a substance (e.g. alcohol, marijuana, or heroin) or engages in a behavior (e.g. gambling, sex or eating) that is often initially enjoyable but becomes compulsive and causes harm over time. Addiction can take many different forms, including but not limited to, drug and alcohol use, exercise, food, shopping, pornography, sex, gambling, working, caregiving, video gaming and social media consumption.

People who struggle with an addiction have an intense focus on using certain substances or engaging in certain types of activities. In many cases, the substance or behavior interferes with overall functioning and a person's ability to carry out ordinary responsibilities such as work, relationships and maintaining their health.



## Helpful Scripture

*"No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it." (1 Corinthians 10:13)*

*"But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me." (2 Corinthians 12:9)*

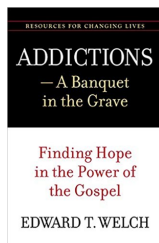
*"Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." (2 Corinthians 3:17)*

*"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery." (Galatians 5:1)*

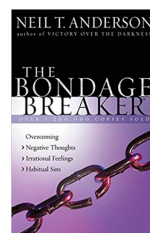
*"The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners." (Isaiah 61:1)*

## Helpful Resources

*Below are books on the topic of addiction and compulsive behavior written from a Christian perspective.*



Edward Welch  
*Addictions: A Banquet in the Grave: Finding Hope in the Power of the Gospel*



Neil Anderson  
*The Bondage Breaker*



Stephen Arterburn & David Stoop  
*The Twelve Gifts of Life Recovery*



Heath Lambert  
*Finally Free: Fighting for Purity with the Power of Grace*

## Signs That a Person May Be Struggling With an Addiction

**Loss of Control:** Using substances or engaging in a behavior more than a person wants to, for longer than they intended, or despite telling themselves that they wouldn't do it this time.

**Neglecting Other Activities:** Spending less time on activities that used to be important (e.g. hanging out with family and friends, exercising, pursuing hobbies or other interests), drop in attendance and performance at work or school.

**Relationship Issues:** Acting out against those closest to them, particularly if someone is attempting to address their addiction problems; complaints from co-workers, supervisors, teachers or classmates.

**Secrecy:** Going out of one's way to hide the amount of drugs or alcohol consumed or engagement in certain behaviors.

**Changing Appearance:** Serious changes or deterioration in hygiene or physical appearance (e.g. lack of showering, messy appearance, unclean clothes).

**Family History:** A family history of addiction can dramatically increase a person's predisposition to substance abuse.

**Tolerance and Withdrawal:** Over time, a person can adapt to a substance or behavior to the point that they need more and more of it in order to have the same reaction. As the effect of the alcohol or drugs wears off, the person may experience physical symptoms such as anxiety or jumpiness, shakiness or trembling, sweating, nausea and vomiting, insomnia, depression, irritability, fatigue, loss of appetite or headaches.

**Continued Use Despite Negative Consequences:** Even though it is causing problems (on the job, in relationships, for one's health), a person continues using a substance or engaging in an unhealthy behavior.

*If you are concerned that you may be struggling with an addiction, please talk to your doctor or professional counselor.*

**Addictive Behaviors Survey:** The SPQ (The Shorter PROMIS Questionnaire) is a free 160-question online survey that can be used to measure an individual's level of addictive tendency in each of sixteen different areas (alcohol, gambling, shopping, food starving, recreational drugs, tobacco, sex, caffeine, exercise, work, compulsive helping dominant, relationship dominant, prescription drugs, food bingeing, compulsive helping submissive and relationship submissive). Results are provided at the end of the survey and indicate the level of addiction severity in each area.

**Take the survey:** [www.s-p-q.com](http://www.s-p-q.com)

## Supporting a Loved One Who is Struggling With an Addiction

1. **Learn as much as you can about addiction.** It is important to be knowledgeable about addiction and available treatment options. There are many excellent printed and online resources to educate families.
2. **Offer love and support.** Often, a person who is struggling with addiction has strong feelings of shame, guilt, depression, worthlessness and hopelessness. Their behaviors may have driven loved ones away and created a sense of isolation. Therefore, it is important for addicts to have people in their lives who offer love and support in a way that does not enable unhealthy behaviors. This involves carefully discerning how to offer unconditional love towards the addict, while establishing healthy boundaries around unhealthy and destructive behaviors.
3. **Set healthy boundaries.** An addict's behavior patterns may interfere with important relationships in their life. They may lie, steal, blame, manipulate or act in an unkind or cruel way to those who care about them the most. In most cases, addiction distorts thinking and the compulsion to use becomes the sole focus of the person's life. Therefore, it is often necessary for a family to set and enforce healthy boundaries.
4. **Encourage the person to get help.** The initial goal in supporting a person struggling with addiction is helping them to realize they have a problem and help them connect to appropriate treatment and support. It is extremely rare that a person can break free from an addiction without support from professionals, peers, family and friends.
5. **Find support and set healthy expectations.** It is important for family members to understand that recovery takes time and is about more than just abstaining from drugs or certain behaviors. Underlying factors, such as past trauma, often contribute to a person's addiction. When these root causes are addressed, the person is more likely to remain substance-free. It is also important for the family to have a support system in place as they too recover and heal.
6. **Engage in community.** Once a person has acknowledged their struggle, it is important for them to engage in healthy relationship and community as they seek treatment and support. For some, accountability partners help them stay focused on their recovery and grow in their faith.
7. **Look to God for hope and strength.** Overcoming addiction is often a long and difficult process. It is important for both the addict and their family to have a healthy way of thinking about the process, a strong support network, people praying for them, and hope in God's healing power and strength.