



Addiction is a family disease

Addiction is a family disease. You commonly hear this phrase among clinicians, at recovery meetings, and family support groups. But what does it mean?

Genetics

First, addiction is a family disease because family genetics are primarily responsible for determining who will have a problem with drugs and alcohol in their lifetime. In fact, research shows that about half of what determines whether a person will become addicted rests in their genetic makeup.

Families can help to prevent addiction

The most important role models, guides, and mentors in a child's life are in their families. Family members need to set a good example for children by avoiding the use of tobacco and illicit drugs and by drinking alcohol responsibly. Research shows that families can help to prevent addiction by monitoring their child, involving in them in extracurricular activities, and providing structure and routine.

Addiction affects the entire family

Addiction does not only affect the individual who is addicted. Addiction affects every single member of the family system. No matter how healthy or loving a family may be, addiction impacts them all. Family members experience grief, pain, and heartache, just like their loved one who is addicted.

The entire family can help addiction

Here is the good news: Families are not defenseless against addiction. Many families are at first paralyzed by fear when they learn of their loved one's addiction. But they eventually find that they can have a positive effect. Research shows people recover at a better rate when families support them tangibly and emotionally, have an attitude of love and acceptance, and get involved in treatment. In fact, one of the best things a family member can do for their loved one is to seek support for themselves.

References

<https://www.samhsa.gov/brss-tacs/recovery-support-tools/parents-families>

<https://store.samhsa.gov/product/TIP-39-Substance-Abuse-Treatment-and-Family-Therapy/SMA15-4219>

Source: Alex Elswick, Ph.D., Assistant Extension Professor for Substance Use Prevention and Recovery

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