

Presence of Mind: Understanding Addiction Transcript

Introduction to the course and Getting Started

(Calm music)

On-screen: [Presence of Mind, sponsored by Cloud9, Kaiser Permanente and Shatterproof.

Erin Ashley Simon opens the video by talking about the importance of talking about substance misuse. Erin is a multi-media personality, host, producer, consultant and part owner of the new esports organization, XSET.]

[Erin]: Hi, I'm here to talk about a really important issue, addiction. If you think addiction is something that only happens to other people and that it can't happen to you or the people you care about, please, think again. None of the many young people who are suffering now with an addiction or those who died last year thought it could happen to them. In this video, you'll learn that addiction is a treatable health condition.

You'll hear more about who is most at risk and how dangerous drug and alcohol use is when you're younger. Many people judge others who struggle with an addiction thinking it's a personal failing. No, it's not their fault! They need our support, not our judgment. If you don't know how to start a difficult conversation this video will give you ideas to help. As a community, we can remove unhealthy stigma about addiction by talking about it and by getting people the help they need.

Watch the video and learn why we need to rethink what we know about addiction.

On-screen: [Accessibility options: If you use a screen reader, we recommend using the Accessible transcript. For keyboard navigation, use these shortcuts:

- On PC:
 - Next screen Alt+]
 - Previous Alt+[
- On Mac:
 - Next screen Opt+]
 - Opt+[

If your navigation is not working, select an area inside the screen and try again.]

Our narrator

Introducing our narrator Caleb Browner, professional e-sports commentator and gaming show co-host.

[Caleb]: Hi, I'm Caleb, a professional e-sports commentator and gaming show co-host. I'll be guiding you through this interactive video, so let's get started.

Learning objectives

This video focuses on helping you understand when alcohol or drug use is a problem. It will answer the following questions:

- What is addiction?
- Why do some people develop an addiction and others do not?
- How do you know if someone's alcohol or drug use is a serious problem?
- What can you do to help someone else?
- What resources are available to people that need help?

Impact of drugs and alcohol

The harm caused by drugs and alcohol on young people is real. 2020 saw the highest overdose deaths among 15-24-year-olds ever recorded, a 48% increase over 2019. Nearly three quarters of those deaths are due to opioid overdoses, an epidemic fueled by overuse and misuse of prescription and street drugs. Addiction has even been called an adolescent disease because many of those who develop a substance use disorder begin use as adolescents. To change this devastating epidemic, we need to start with understanding how alcohol and drugs affect the brain.

How is the brain impacted by drugs and alcohol?

Our brain rewards us when we do things that feel good to us. Think about that great feeling you get when you win a game, exercise, or are attracted to another person. These positive behaviors release chemicals in our brain that make us feel good and encourage us to repeat the behavior.

Alcohol and drugs hijack that same part of the brain. In some people, this happens in an extreme way encouraging them to keep drinking or taking drugs even when these behaviors become a serious problem. With an addicted brain it becomes more difficult to control the urge to use.

People with addiction often describe their initial use as a fun experience. Over time, they need to use more and more to feel good. When they stop using, they feel depressed, anxious, or just bad. Their brains tell them to use again and again creating a vicious cycle. This negative cycle can damage the person's health and future.

Why do some people develop an addiction?

Voices from the gaming community 1 – Paydn's Story

Let's listen to Paydn talk about his early experiences with another highly addictive substance - nicotine and some of the risk factors for addiction he possessed.

[Paydn]: I had my first cigarette when I was 12 years old and me and my friends, we just loved the appeal of smoking cigarettes - the whole Hollywood thing with cool guys having a cigarette hanging out of their mouths - that was really right up my alley when I was younger. And of course, I wanted to ignore everything that older people told me about the right way to live my life. I knew at a young age that I had the way to live.

Um...so, I started at middle school age. I always kinda knew I wanted to smoke. I had an aunt who had a strong influence on me and I looked up to her a lot. She smoked so you could kinda say I was raised to be a smoker. As well, my parents warned me all the time before I started that both of them came from families that suffered from addiction.

Genetically, I was the perfect target for nicotine to take a hold of and uh yeah - growing up and dealing with that for a very long time its share of consequences. I think the most prolific of all of those was a decades long struggle with depression that I only recently got over. It was only after quitting smoking that I was able to really turn my life around and uh take it by the reigns and as it's supposed way to be lived and which is, in my opinion, healthy and with a love of life. I, uh, stopped smoking cold turkey when I was 26. Four years ago now. I really wish that I could help people quit as easily as I did.

What are the risk factors for addiction?

Like other diseases and ailments, substance use impacts everyone differently. Scientists refer to several risk factors that increase the likelihood of substance use becoming an addiction. These include age of first use, genetics, and environment.

Age of first use

The first risk is the age that a person first tries drugs or alcohol.

Our brains continue to develop until around age 25. Teens who start drinking by age 14 are 7 times more likely to develop addiction to alcohol than those who start drinking at age 21 or older. 25% who begin misusing drugs at age 13 will develop a substance use disorder.

Consider the healthy choice of delaying or avoiding early use of alcohol or drugs. If a problem does exist addressing it early on can make a big difference in a young person's health and wellbeing.

Genetics

Genetics account for up to 60% of a person's risk. If anxiety, depression, ADHD, or other mental health issues exist the risk for experimenting with and developing an addiction to drugs or alcohol is greater. If someone has mental health issues or a family history with addiction, educate them about their risks and discuss with them how to reduce them.

Environment

A person's environment can contribute to addiction risk. If there is mental or physical abuse, limited family or community support, or parents that misuse substances, the risk increases. Peer pressure to use and bullying also creates risk.

Protection from environmental risks includes participating in positive online communities, wellness activities and connection to positive role models in your family or community. One positive role model can make all the difference.

Protective and Risk Factors

What do you think? What are some of the risk factors for addiction? What are some ways to reduce addiction risk?

Protective Factors

- Playing sports
- Good relationships with teachers
- Strong spiritual affiliations
- Yoga
- Meditation
- Adults who are supportive

Risk Factors

- Early use of substances
- Family history of addiction
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Being bullied
- ADHD
- Friends who use drugs

How do you recognize if someone's use of a substance is harmful to them?

Voices from the gaming community 2 – Emily's Story

Let's listen as Emily describes her early exposure to alcohol and how she was able to get the help that she needed.

[Emily]: The first time I was introduced to alcohol was around my family in Chile growing up. I thought it was really casual and didn't think much of it. I didn't really get introduced to alcohol until I was in college and was starting to get invited to parties that quite frankly, I didn't get invited to in high school.

It was a new social situation, and I was making new friends. I was in a new environment that was uncomfortable and different. And I looked to alcohol as a way to decompress from the anxiety of the situation. I was able to let go and not think about all of the consequences of having a few extra drinks here or there. However, over time that added up and it started to put my schooling and work and my friendships and family relationships at risk.

I wasn't able to see that there was a problem until I hit rock bottom. And then it became really clear to me that I needed to seek help. Alcoholism runs in my family, and I grew up knowing the risks and understanding the genetic predispositions and I still, unfortunately, battled with this when I was in college.

I was able to seek out great counseling resources and the support of some great family and friends I was able to turn it around and not go down the path of addiction that many of my family members ended up going down. It is okay to reach out for help. It's important to talk about your experiences and you are valid.

What are the signs of addiction?

Emily's story talked about the impact her alcohol use was having on her life and sought help. There are 11 signs that can indicate a substance use issue.

Within the last 12 months, is the substance user:

1. Using more than intended?
2. Trying, but unable to cut down?
3. Focused on obtaining and using?
4. Experiencing cravings?
5. Unable to manage work, school or home commitments?
6. Using despite causing relationship issues?
7. Giving up important school or work activities?
8. Using in dangerous situations?
9. Using despite negative health impacts?
10. Experiencing increasing tolerance?
11. Experiencing withdrawal symptoms?

People with two or three symptoms are considered to have a mild substance use disorder, four or five a moderate disorder, and six or more a severe substance use disorder, or what we commonly refer to as addiction.

Remember, this assessment is not a replacement for a professional one.

Thinking about substance use

Maybe this video or something else is making you think twice about your substance use. Or maybe, you are thinking about another's substance use and worrying about them. The first step is to realize that there may be a problem. A great next step is to talk to someone who is willing to listen without judgement and provide support.

Get started helping yourself

What can you start doing today for yourself?

- To begin, recognize the problem and start the conversation.
- Talk to someone, a good friend, trusted adult, parent, counselor, or addiction clinician. There are also anonymous resources that you can access you'll hear about next.
- Treatment works, it works. As with other health conditions, addiction is treatable with addiction therapy, support and sometimes medications.

What can I do to help someone else?

Voices from the gaming community 3 – Kala's Story

Let's listen to Kala talk about how he tried to help friends whose substance use was concerning.

[Kala]: So, I grew up with alcoholism and drug addiction ravaging my household in childhood. I would get so angry at my parents being drunk 24/7 and I would scream at them to quit everything they were doing. And, uh, while I think my feelings of abandonment and anger were justified in that situation, I now know that there is pretty much nothing I can say to make someone quit drinking or using drugs.

I've had countless phone calls from old friends that are completely incoherent because they are on a salad of drugs and alcohol. And it's really hard to deal with because you love them so much and you see the harm they are doing to themselves and you just want to help them.

But, I've learned over the years that the absolute best thing you can do in these situations is to be patient and kind and loving and understanding without being patronizing or preachy. Be there for the person. They are talking to you for a reason. They need you. They feel like they need you.

But you also need to be able to set an emotional boundary. It's not your job to list the things the person needs to do in order to fix themselves. At the end of the day, they just need help but they need to be the ones that reach that conclusion. Most of the time, people in an addictive situation know they need help but they just aren't able to make that decision.

Um, know that it's not your job to be in complete emotional stress 24/7 over someone else's actions. You're free from that. It's not your responsibility. Their addiction is not your fault and it's not your job to fix them. Loving them and being there for them is the best thing that you can do. Only once they ask for help should you offer it. Everything else is in their hands.

How to engage someone else

Not sure how to engage with someone? Concerned you don't know the right thing to say? It can be hard to start the conversation. Here are some things to keep in mind

- Use "I" statements. Avoid the word "you". "I'm worried" is far more effective than "you need help". Don't tell the person what to do.
- Focus the conversation. Keep your talk centered on how worried you are about them. Relaxing your body language will make them more comfortable.

- Be curious, ask questions. This shows that you're really trying to understand and not judge. Don't fill silences or you may miss important information.
- Leave the door open for future conversations. You don't need to solve the problem in this moment, provide opportunities for future discussion when someone is ready.

Denial and ambivalence from others

Denial and ambivalence toward help is common. What you may be hearing is:

- "I don't have a problem."
- "I can handle it"
- "You're just imagining things."
- "It's not affecting my life."
- "All my friends are doing it and they're okay".

Response to denial

Here are some things you can say in response to the denial and ambivalence:

- "I'm worried about you."
- "Is there anyone you feel comfortable talking to about this?"
- "I feel you're missing out on a lot of things."
- "I'm always here for you to talk."
- "I watched some videos recently and learned a lot, can I send them to you?"
- "Do you ever feel like the drugs and alcohol are taking all your time and energy?"

How to get help?

Get support at Find Your Words, a website full of resources

Sometimes it's hard to know how to talk about addiction.

Please check out [Find Your Words.org](https://www.findyourwords.org). It's a place to learn about available resources and get support for yourself or someone else.

Find Your Words: navigation

On the home page for Find Your Words, select Support center. Here, you can scroll down to find all kinds of support, for yourself, or for someone you care about who might be struggling.

You can also connect with others and explore support resources, people that you can talk, text, or chat online with.

Wrapping up

On-screen: [Erin Ashley Simon wraps up the interactive video with a few parting words.]

[Erin]: Thank you so much for taking the time to watch this video. I'm really proud to be a part of this community and I really appreciate you wanting to learn more about addiction. We need to look out for each other and by doing so that means we have to keep openly talking about hard topics like addiction. The stigma around it is literally killing people who don't get help. Let's continue to have these conversations in our community and reach out to save lives. Use what you've learned in this video to help. Take care of yourself and those around you.

On-screen: [Congratulations on completing the interactive video. Your actions make a big difference.

Please complete a [short survey](#). Cloud9 | Kaiser Permanente® | Shatterproof™]