

Impact of Substance Abuse on Families

When one member of a family is abusing drugs, all members of a family are affected. Family members must often assume responsibilities of the substance abuser to keep the family going, while the substance abuser becomes less involved in the family. Family members can quickly fall



As a person's substance abuse problem progresses, using becomes more important than family commitments. Children learn that they can't rely on their parents to follow

into the trap of becoming part of the abuser's support system, making it easier for the person to continue using. This trap includes covering up for the drug abuser's behavior, such as lying to other family members or the boss.

Family members often live in fear, real or imagined, never knowing how the drug abuser may react. They may also feel guilt, believing that if only they were a better parent, partner, son, or daughter, the person would stop using drugs.

Children raised by a parent abusing drugs are often required to take on responsibilities far beyond their abilities or maturity. They may spend a lot of time and energy worrying about the parent using drugs, the non-using

parent, and their siblings. The drug problem can turn into the "family secret" and the children learn not to talk about what is really going on at home. They may stop bringing friends home to avoid the embarrassment of having their friends see what is going on.

through with promises. Some of these children will develop problems such as academic or social difficulties, depression or personality problems. Some of these children will grow up and develop substance abuse problems of their own.

You are not responsible for the person becoming dependent on alcohol, drugs, or gambling, nor can you make the person stop using. What you can do is change how you are dealing with the situation. If someone close to you has a substance abuse problem you can follow these steps toward a positive change:

- Get information.
- Stop covering up for the drug abuser in your life.
- Find someone to talk to about your

situation.

- Identify the things you can do to make your situation better.
- It is important to learn where you stop and others begin – a sense of your own boundaries.
- You can love the addict, but not the addictive behavior.
- When you allow the addict to take responsibility for their own behaviors, it helps them to see the effects of their behavior on the areas of their life. Until the addict is able to see the consequences of their behavior it makes it easier to deny the problem.

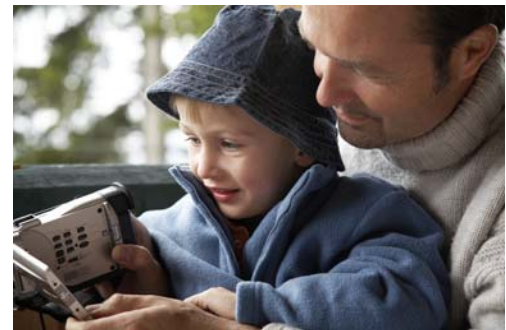
If you are concerned about the substance use of somebody you care about, help is available. AADAC offers a network of services across Alberta providing confidential, professional, and caring support. Sherwood Park AADAC services include assessments, individual and family counselling, and the new "Let's Face It" education/family support group to address the needs of adult family members of substance users and gamblers. For more



information on AADAC's services call Martie Murrell at 780-417-7221 or Kelly Ogurian at 780-417-7344.

U-Turn, a recovery group for youth, meets every other Tuesday from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. along with Parents Empowering Parents (P.E.P) a support group for parents that have children harmfully involved with alcohol and other drugs. Both groups meet at Strathcona County Hall, in Sherwood Park. For information on P.E.P please visit <http://www.pepsociety.ca/>

Bosco Homes also offers



outpatient counselling as well as a parent group. Bosco Homes intake coordinator can be reached at 780-440-0708 Ext 259.