

THE ADDICTION CYCLE

Understanding the addiction cycle is important when helping people with substance problems.



The addiction cycle, often referred to as the cycle of addiction, is a pattern of behaviour that characterises addiction to substances or behaviours. It consists of the stages in the diagram above, and triggers play a crucial role in perpetuating this cycle.

What are triggers?

Triggers are specific situations, emotions or experiences that can set off cravings and lead to relapse for individuals struggling with addiction.

Examples of triggers;

Environmental

Such as seeing an off-licence, being in a pub or passing a casino for example



Emotional

The way we are feeling such as; stressed, anxious, lonely, sad or angry



Social

Being around friends or acquaintances who use substances or engage in addictive behaviours



Situational

Certain events or situations such as holidays, celebrations, or personal crises can trigger cravings



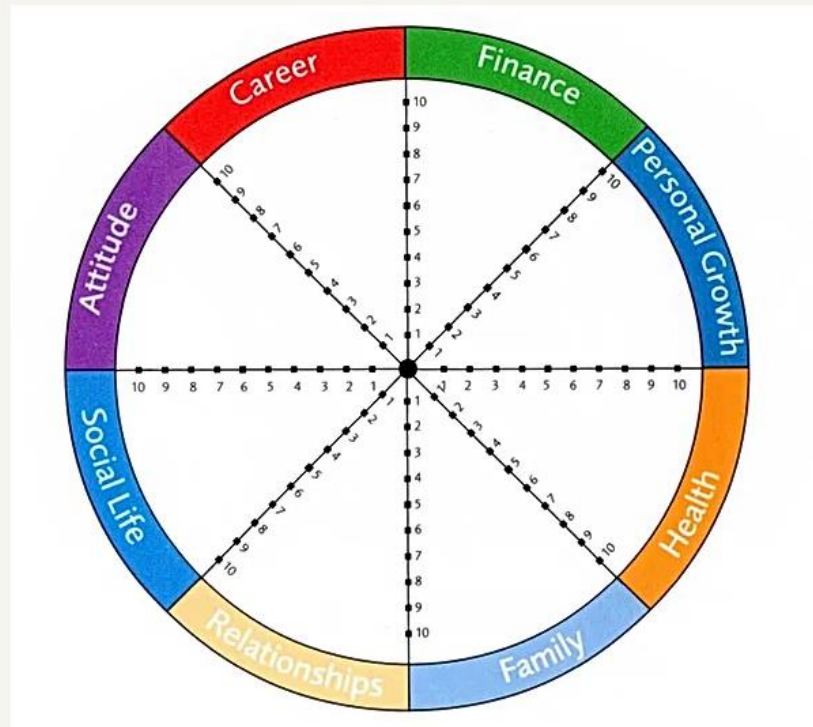
Physical

Physical discomfort such as pain or illness



Over time the trigger can result in us 'craving' the substance or behaviour. These cravings can be overwhelming and difficult to resist.

There are often negative consequences of using, or relapsing. The impact can affect any part of our life – the diagram below shows the aspects of our life that can be affected by addictive behaviour;



We may find relationships are impacted, our finances start suffering, or our ability to work, or work to our full potential is affected for example.

Following this, there may be feelings of guilt or shame, which then further fuels the cycle by triggering more cravings as a way to cope with these emotions.

The main issue is the more the cycle progresses, we can build up a tolerance to the substance or behaviour, requiring larger amounts or more frequent engagement to achieve the same effect.

Understanding the cycle of addiction can help to understand your own addictive cycle, or to recognise that of a friend / family member, work colleague or other acquaintance.

To break free from addiction, it's important to notice these patterns, get professional help, and learn how to deal with cravings and things that make them want to use. Understanding this cycle helps us see the challenges people face when trying to recover and why they need ongoing support and treatment.



How do I help someone who is showing signs of addictive behaviour?

Starting a conversation with someone who has an addiction can be challenging, but it's important to approach them with empathy and understanding. Begin by expressing your concern and support. For example, you might say, "I've noticed that things have been tough for you lately, and I'm here to listen if you ever want to talk about it. I care about your well-being and want to support you in any way I can." Being kind and not judging them can make them feel safe to talk about their addiction and maybe even consider getting help or treatment.

What steps can I take if I recognise that I have addiction issues?

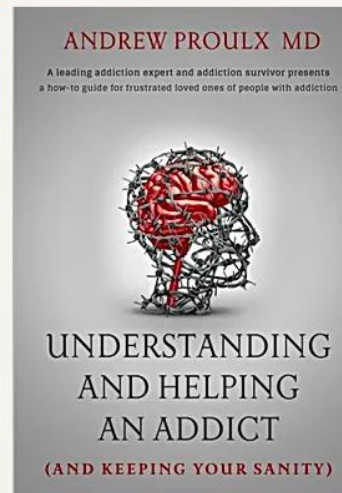
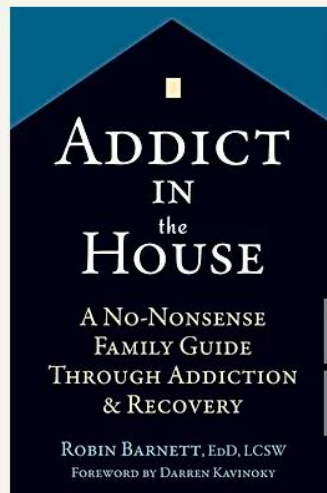
Recognising that you have addiction issues is a crucial first step towards recovery. Once the problem is acknowledged, there are several steps you can take to address your addiction, and work towards a healthier more fulfilling life.

1. Self-acceptance / honesty – accepting that there is a problem and being honest about the extent of the addiction issues and impact on your life
2. Reaching out for support
3. Accessing professional help
4. Attending support groups
5. Educate yourself by learning about addiction, it's affects on physical and mental health
6. Explore some potential lifestyle changes, such as ways to avoid triggers, adopting healthier habits, and finding alternative ways to cope with stress / emotions
7. Set yourself realistic goals
8. Practice self-care such as exercise, nutrition, and ensuring adequate sleep.
9. Don't forget to celebrate milestones!

What are your realistic goals?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Seeking help is a positive step towards recovery, here are some resources for individuals and their loved ones dealing with addiction.





If you have come across a particular resource or information that has helped you support someone with an addiction please do get in touch mentalhealthweekly@therapycentreservices.com

Lucy Johnson

Director

Therapy Centre Services