

Unhealthy dependencies

If we believe TV stereotypes, addicts are criminal characters lurking in the back alleys of town. That's the myth. Today's reality is that the addict is more likely to be your colleague in the next cubicle or the Mom dropping her kids off at daycare. The word addict comes from the Latin verb *addicere*, meaning "to sentence," "to condemn" or "to enslave." That's right on target because addiction causes deep suffering for the addict, as well as for friends and family.

Addiction is often associated with substances like alcohol, nicotine or illicit drugs, but drugs don't have to be illegal to become a problem. Today, addiction to painkillers is reaching epidemic proportions. Prescription drugs now surpass heroin as the nation's top drug problem.

There are many types of addictions

Addiction isn't simply confined to physical dependence on chemical substances -- it can also involve an unhealthy compulsion to certain behaviors. People can be addicted to eating, gambling, hoarding, shopping, sex, smartphone use or any number of other things. In fact, it can be helpful to view addiction as simply this: any unhealthy dependence or compulsion that interferes with ordinary life.

Are you an addict? Or living with an addict?

If you are trying to determine whether you or a loved one might have an unhealthy dependence



on a substance or a behavior, here are a few questions to ask. Does the substance or behavior ever:

- Interfere with or disrupt your ordinary life: work, family or relationships?
- Have a negative effect on your physical, mental or emotional health?
- Pose a safety, health or financial risk?
- Cause anxiety, discomfort, irritability or illness when stopped?
- Result in arguments?
- Pose difficulties in limiting or stopping?
- Continue even in the face of negative consequences?

If you answered yes to a few of these questions, don't despair. Addictions and dependencies are treatable and respond well to counseling and therapies. Peer support programs have also proven helpful in overcoming addictions.

The first step is recognizing that there is a problem and then seeking help. You can learn more at www.HigherEdEAP.com, or you can call your EAP 24-7 and speak to a counselor confidentially.