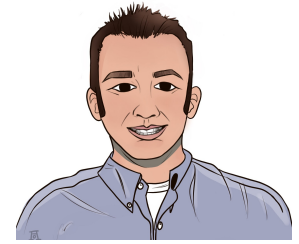




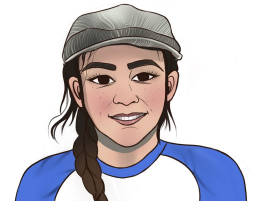
Addiction is a Sickness

Dr. John Livingston & friends talk about addiction.



"If you have a parent that drinks too much or takes drugs, I want you to know that **you are not alone**. Lots of kids come from homes where one or both parents have an **illness called addiction**."

"**It's normal to feel worried** about a loved one that drinks too much or uses drugs. Kids need to remember that **they didn't cause** their parent to become addicted. It's a sickness that can happen to anyone."



"Sometimes **I feel bad** because I think if my mom loved me enough she would be able to stop drinking."

"When a person is addicted to alcohol or drugs, they have lost control and **CAN'T stop without help**. It's like **they are stuck**. Kids aren't the reason a parent drinks or uses drugs, it's a serious illness that requires the help of people trained to treat

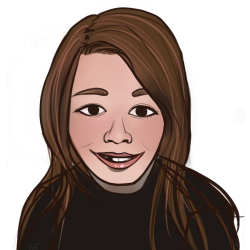


the disease."

"When I was "stuck" to alcohol no matter how much I loved my daughter I still needed help to stop. **She wasn't the reason I drank** and **she also couldn't fix my problems**. I had to be the one to work on getting healthy."



"Sometimes my dad is silly and fun when he drinks and I feel bad for wanting him to be more like that. Sometimes he gets angry instead and I feel bad because I don't like him when he's like that. Sometimes he talks weird or bumps into stuff when he's walking and it scares me."



"There are a lot of kids that have those same feelings. **Alcohol and drugs affect the brain**. When a person uses too much alcohol or they take drugs it can change their moods and the way they act and talk. They will say and do things they wouldn't do if they were healthy."

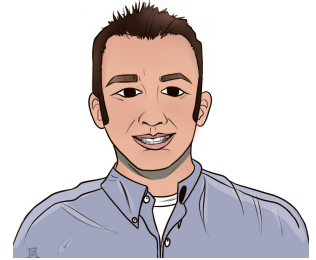


"It is hard to have a loved one who struggles with addiction, they might make promises they don't keep, or say and do things that aren't kind or safe. When people stop taking drugs or alcohol their brain can heal and they make healthier choices."



"If I can't make my parent stop using alcohol or drugs, what can I do to feel better?"

"Great question, I'm so glad you asked it! **There are lots of things kids can do to feel better.** It's important for kids to take time to take good care of themselves. This means **finding time to have fun, play and just be a kid.** It also **helps to have at least one adult you trust** to talk to about your feelings."



"So kids, what are some of the things you like to do?"

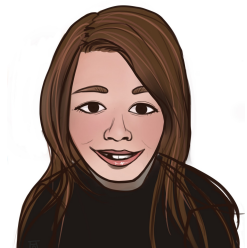
"I like to dance. I feel good about myself when I do it and it makes me happy."



"I like to draw. It takes my mind off of stuff when I make designs and draw pictures. No matter what I'm feeling I can draw and it helps me."



"I like to talk to my friends on the phone. They make me feel good about myself and they make me laugh. I always feel better after I talk to my friends."



The Riley Foundation

Team Answer

Questions About Addiction From Kids

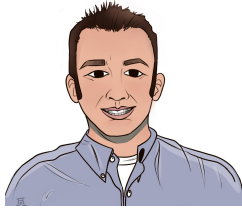
Dr. John



Livingstone
mental health director



Lauren Rencher
program director



Q.What is addiction?

John, "Addiction is an illness. Addiction means a person has lost control over drugs or alcohol and are not able to stop without help."

Q. How does alcoholism start?

Lauren, "Doctors don't know all the reasons why people become addicted. Some start out using a little bit and end up "stuck" on alcohol or drugs. A person might start taking drugs or alcohol to deal with problems or to feel less nervous. Some people after a while of using end up needing drugs or alcohol to feel normal. Once a person becomes addicted they need help to stop."



Q. If addiction is sickness, why don't they just go to the Dr?



John, "In the beginning they don't know that there is a problem or that they are ill. Even when they realize something is wrong they may not believe that alcohol or drugs are the problem. They might blame the problems on other people or other things in their life. But, really, it's the alcohol or drug that is the biggest problem."

Q. Are people with addiction bad?

Lauren, "No. They are good people that have an illness that affects the brain. When person is stuck in addiction they may make bad choices, or say and do hurtful things. But when they get help for the addiction their brain can heal and they go back to making healthy choices. Addiction can happen to any person rich, poor, female, male, old, young, religious or not religious, Even super smart people can end up having the illness of addiction."



The Riley Foundation Team Answer
Questions About Addiction From Kids

Q. Can family members make an alcoholic stop drinking?

John, "No. It is a medical problem that requires help from someone trained to treat the illness. And no one can make a person want to get help. No matter how hard you try or what you do, the person with addiction is in charge of whether they get help or stay sick."

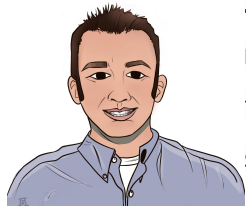


Q. How many kids have a parent with addiction?

Lauren, "There are millions of kids that come from homes like yours. You are not alone. There are probably kids in your classroom at school in similar situations at home. It's a pretty common problem in families but people have a hard time talking about it."



Q. I know I can't make my parent stop using drugs or alcohol, so what can I do?



John, "Having a loved one with addiction can feel really difficult and lonely. The good news is there is a lot that kids can do to be ok. We have 7 things we like to teach kids from homes with addiction issues to help them feel better. Those are on the other sheet."

Q. What is the cure for addiction?

Lauren, "There isn't a cure for addiction but with help people with the illness can lead healthy and happy lives. Like other diseases, addiction can be treated and managed. When a person stops drugs or alcohol and works on being healthy they are *"recovering from addiction."* *If a person starts using drugs or alcohol again it's called a "relapse." People can get healthy again after a relapse.*"

