



Growing up in a home with addiction is difficult.




Make a Difference by Helping Children Learn & Understand The Seven Cs The Seven C's Workshop Series: Recovery for Kids

Sources: *Helping Children Affected by Parental Substance Abuse*¹; *Treating Traumatic Stress in Children and Adolescents: How to Foster Resilience through Attachment, Self-Regulation, and Competency*, *The National Association for Children of Addiction (NACoA)*.²

The Seven Cs

I didn't **cause** it.
I can't **cure** it.
I can't **control** it.

I can help take **care** of myself by **communicating** my feelings, making healthy **choices**, and **celebrating** me.



The National Association for Children of Addiction's "7 Cs of Addiction."



CHILDREN DESERVE THEIR OWN RECOVERY

Many adults struggling with addiction today didn't get the support they needed in their youth.



Providing accurate & age appropriate addiction information helps children understand the illness is never their fault.

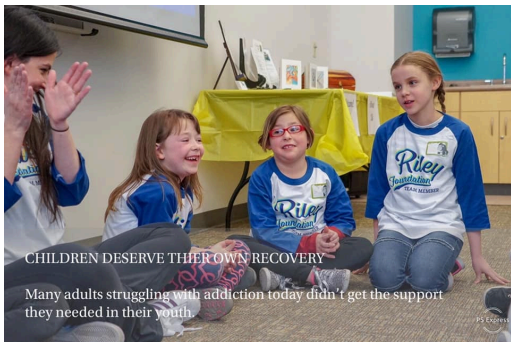


IT'S OK
To love the parent but feel angry at the disease.



You are NOT alone. Lots of kids have a loved one with the illness of addiction.

¹ "Helping Children Affected by Parental Substance Abuse" <https://www.amazon.com/Helping-Children-Affected-Parental-Substance/dp/1849057605>. Accessed 18 Jun. 2020.
² "Treating Traumatic Stress in Children and Adolescents: How" <https://www.amazon.com/Treating-Traumatic-Stress-Children-Adolescents/dp/1606236253>. Accessed 18 Jun. 2020.
³ "Home - Nacoa." <https://nacoa.org/>. Accessed 18 Jun. 2020.



Workshop 1: I Didn't CAUSE it.

Children need to know and understand that a parent's addiction issues are NEVER their fault.

Main Messages For Kids:

- I'm not alone, lots of kids come from similar families.
- I didn't *cause* my parent to become addicted.
- My parent isn't bad, they have an illness.
- It's ok to talk about addiction. I
- can be ok.
- I deserve to 'just be a kid' and have fun.
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Addiction Education:

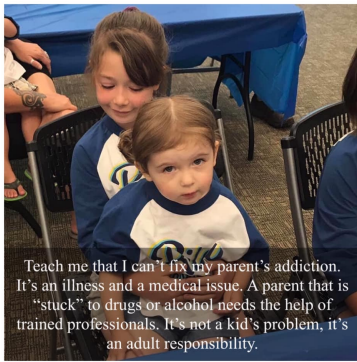
- Provide accurate and age appropriate addiction information.
- Addiction is a disease of the brain.

Skills to Build:

- Increase understanding of the disease model of addiction.
- Increase understanding of cause & effect.
- Children can control their own behaviors, choices and attitude.
- Children don't control other people's behaviors, choices, and attitudes.

Caregiver Focus:

- Follow the child's lead.
- Promote a positive bonding experience.
- Show positive regard for all children present. Active and enthusiastic engagement.
- Help kids navigate big feelings and big behaviors. Listen & validate.
- Refrain from criticism (the child & the parent with the illness).
- Model healthy coping, active listening, feeling validation.
- Provide a lot of emotional support when discussing/explaining addiction.



Workshop 2: I Can't CURE it.

Children need to hear that they can't fix their parent's problems with drugs or alcohol.

Main Messages For Kids:

- Kids can't fix their parent's addiction, it's an adult problem.
- It's ok to love the parent and feel angry at the illness.
- Kids can learn how to be ok even if a parent stays "stuck" to alcohol or drugs.

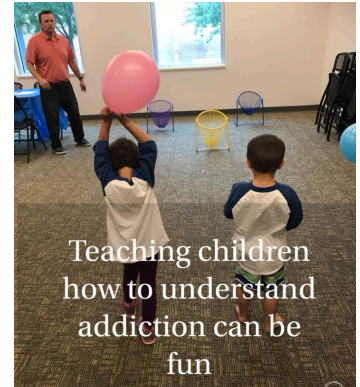
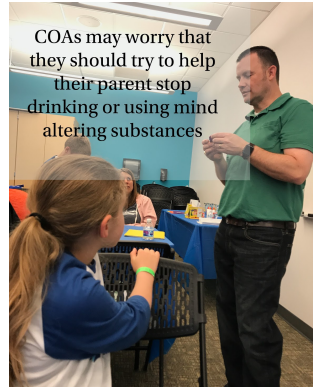
Addiction Education:

- Addiction is the "stuck on disease."
- There's no cure for addiction, but with help many people can lead healthy lives.
- Addiction is a serious illness that requires the help of trained professionals.

Skills to Build: Increase familiarity with different healthy coping skills.

Caregiver Focus:

- Help children separate the parent they love from the illness that hurts.
- Encourage bonding between peers (help kids identify similarities).
- Focus on having fun with each other and the other participants.
- Identify and correct thinking errors (hiding alcohol won't fix the problem and is unsafe, being a 'perfect' kid won't make a parent stop using drugs or alcohol).



Workshop 3: I Can't CONTROL It.

Children need to hear that they can't control whether a parent stays sick or seeks recovery.

Main Messages For Kids:

- Kids can't control other people. Kids can control their own choices, behaviors and attitudes.

Addiction Education:

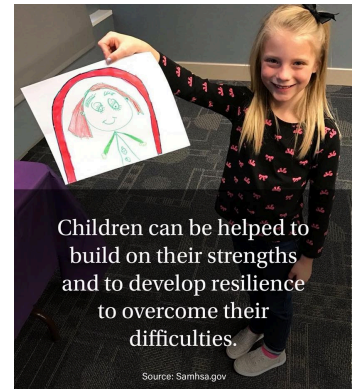
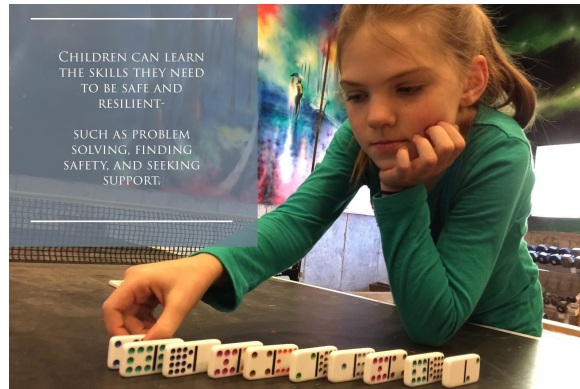
- Addiction means a person has lost control over drugs or alcohol and can't stop without help. Addiction affects the brain and includes mood swings, poor decision making, putting drugs or alcohol first.

Skills to Build:

- Increase understanding of what we can control and what we cannot control.
- Identify times in their lives that they've learned to "let go" of something they couldn't control. Experiencing adaptive distancing.

Caregiver Focus:

- Repeatedly remind children that they can't control/change their parent's illness.
- Model open-mindedness and curiosity as children express feelings and share ideas/experiences.
- Model non-defensiveness when children express feelings including anger with you.
- Verbalize how you cope with unexpected changes as they occur (letting go of control).
- Challenge thinking errors/irrational thinking that you hear children verbalize.
- Verbalize coping with unexpected change when it occurs.
- Practice non defensiveness when kids share difficult feelings about you.
- Remind kids to be nice to themselves, that everyone makes mistakes sometimes. Be aware when they are being too hard on themselves and help them practice self compassion.



Workshop 4: I Can Help CARE For Myself.

Children need to know they can do things to help themselves feel better and that they deserve care for themselves.

Main Messages For Kids:

- I deserve the care and help of others, I can do a lot to take care of myself.
- There are safe people and places that can help.
- It's ok to seek help if my parent is unwell.

Addiction Education:

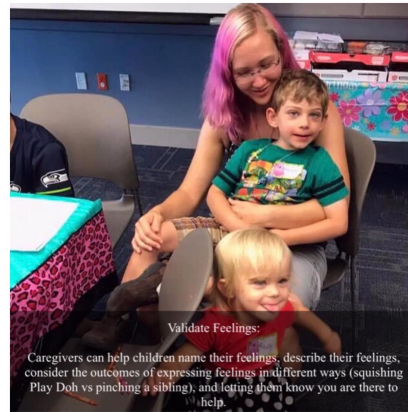
- Addiction affects the brain and can lead to unsafe choices and behaviors (drunk driving, unsafe surroundings and people).
- It's unsafe to hide or dump a loved one's drugs or alcohol.
- It's ok to ask for help from a non-using adult.

Skills to Build:

- Identify aspects and strategies needed to stay safe.
- Increase awareness of interpersonal dangers and improve assertiveness skills.
- Identify different types of self care practices.
- Recognizing and seeking out safe people and places.
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Caregiver Focus:

- Model safety. Explain when you are making a safe choice. (I'm going to use the crosswalk because it's safer than walking here).
- Model healthy coping. Explain to kids when you are using a coping strategy and why. (I'm feeling grumpy today so I think I'll go to bed a bit earlier tonight).
- Invite children to practice safe behaviors and self-care with you. (go for a walk, color, etc.)
- Take time to laugh and be silly.
- Remember humor and silliness is part of self-care.
- Identity/explain what makes an environment or person safe.
- Teach accident prevention and basic first aid.
- Provide kids with a contact card or list of numbers they can call if they need help staying safe.



Workshop 5: I Can COMMUNICATE My Feelings

Learning to be ok means being able to understand and communicate feelings.

Main Messages:

- There are no bad feelings.
- It's ok to feel.
- It's ok to love the parent and feel angry at the addiction.
- Having mixed feelings is normal (e.g. loving the parent and hating the substance use).

Addiction Education:

- Addiction is a disease that affects the brain and body.
- When someone is sick with addiction it can feel confusing and scary to kids because of mood swings, slurred speech, mean words, even lying.

Skills to Build:

- Increase emotional literacy, understand different strengths of feelings.
- Identify difficult feelings and increase ability to talk about them.
- Explore methods of coping with uncomfortable feelings.
- Increase awareness of nonverbal cues.
- Recognizing negative thoughts and practicing positive thoughts.

Caregiver Focus:

- Validate feelings. "I can see that you are upset."
- Describe the feeling. "I can see that you are breathing very fast and your body seems tight."
- Help them consider the outcome of expressing big feelings. "If we are angry and pinch our sister it will hurt her and everyone will probably feel bad. If we moosh Play Doh no one will get hurt and it might feel nice."
- Remind kids that there are no bad feelings. Some feelings are uncomfortable.
- Remind kids that you are there AND happy to help them navigate difficult feelings.
- It's normal to feel opposite feelings about a loved one with addiction...



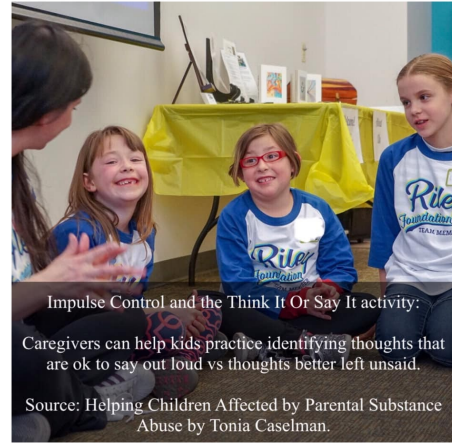
Impulse Control & The Self Talk Exercise:

When playing a game like Jenga together have kids practice "thinking out loud." Ask them to describe their decisions out loud during their turn, which helps them practice pausing to think before they act.



Delayed Gratification:

Create opportunities for children to experience something worth waiting for. Build a lego project together, practice saving to buy a special toy or activity, talk about other times they've waited and it was worth it. Help them navigate the discomfort of waiting.



Impulse Control and the Think It Or Say It activity:

Caregivers can help kids practice identifying thoughts that are ok to say out loud vs thoughts better left unsaid.

Source: Helping Children Affected by Parental Substance Abuse by Tonia Caselman.

Workshop 6: I Can Make Healthy CHOICES

Learning to be ok means learning to make healthy choices.

Main Messages: I can be ok whether my loved one stays sick or gets better.

Having a parent with addiction doesn't mean I'll be that way too.

Staying safe makes it possible to have more fun.

Addiction Education:

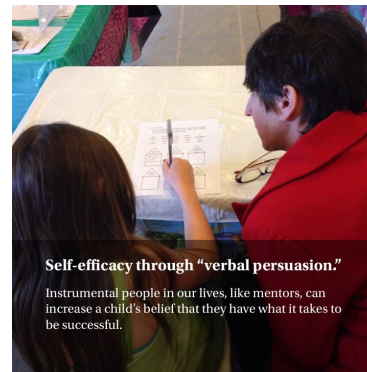
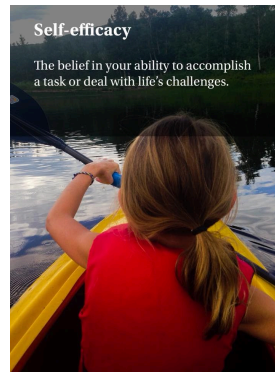
- Addiction is a disease that affects the brain and alters the ability to make healthy choices.
- When a person stops using drugs or alcohol their brain can heal and they can make healthier choices more easily.

Skills to Build:

- Increase internal self-talk (pause and think before acting),
- Practice problem solving.
- Improve delayed gratification.
- Consider the consequences of different choices.

Caregiver Focus:

- Be patient with big behaviors.
- Make sure kids that do struggle to behave still get plenty of time for fun and play.
- Make sure kids that struggle to behave get positive reactions from their caregivers. Regularly catch them doing something good.
- Help kids identify and practice self-regulation/coping skills.
- Help kids plan for what to do in certain scenarios to stay safe.
- Vocalize how you cope waiting for something you really want.
- Give recognition when you catch kids practicing impulse control.
- Help kids stop and think if you notice them about to act impulsively.



Workshop 7: I Can CELEBRATE Me.

Every kid is already great and deserves to celebrate themselves!

Main Messages:

I am unique and worth celebrating.

I have skills, talents and abilities.

I am resilient and can overcome the life difficulties that come my way.

Mistakes are part of the learning process.

Addiction Education:

Recovery is challenging, parents and kids that are recovering from addiction in the family are worth celebrating.

Recovery is an ongoing process.

Relapse happens.

It is possible to recover after a relapse.

Skills to Build:

A sense of competence, mastery and self-efficacy.

Awareness of

Caregiver Focus:

Provide access to mastery experiences.

Help children identify their abilities.