You are not alone

THE PARTNERSHIP™ AT DRUGFREE.ORG



Why is it that people with the disease of addiction – and their families – suffer so much **stigma, shame, fear, isolation and hopelessness**?

Well First, Let's Understand the Issue

23 million Americans are classified as having a substance dependence or abuse problem.

11 million are between 12 and 29!

NEARLY 90% AREN'T GETTING THE HELP THEY NEED

9 out of 10 of people who met medical criteria for drug or alcohol abuse or dependence started smoking, drinking, or using other drugs before the age of 18.



Let's Take a Closer Look at Drug & Alcohol Problems in Teen & Young Adults

90% of addiction starts in the teen years.

On an Average Day

- 7,540 teens 12-17 drank alcohol for the first time
- 4,365 used an illicit drug
- 2,466 abused a prescription pain medication

Vulnerable Teen Brain

The teen brain is not fully developed until age 24, and can be more vulnerable to the effects of drugs and alcohol; the part of the brain to develop last is the prefrontal cortex, responsible for decision making and moderating social behavior.

Drug & Alcohol Vulnerabillity

Some teens & young adults have special vulnerability to drug and alcohol problems, including:

- drug or alcohol use at an early age
- family history of drug/alcohol problems
- existing mental health problems
- having friends who use drugs & alcohol

Risky Behavior

There is a clear association between adolescent drug and alcohol use and unhealthy, risky behavior, including:

- unprotected, unplanned, unwanted sexual activity
- impaired motor vehicle driving/passenger
- involvement with juvenile justice system
- poor academic performance and dropping out

Teens in Treatment

Teens who get treatment and ongoing recovery support for their substance abuse problems are more likely to maintain recovery past the five year mark than those who don't.

Important Issue

Parents consider drugs and alcohol one of the most important issues facing teens and young adults today and feel ill-equipped to take action.

How Many People Are Impacted?

youmeeveryone

85 million people in this country are impacted in some way. **YES, 85 MILLION.**

(85 million impacted)

These are parents, siblings, relatives, friends & caregivers who suffer right along with the person with an addiction.

How are these 85 million people impacted?



They suffer from anxiety/social withdrawal.



Their normal daily routine/ activities are disrupted (such as work, hygiene, etc.)



They have continued and repeated feelings of sadness and/or isolation.

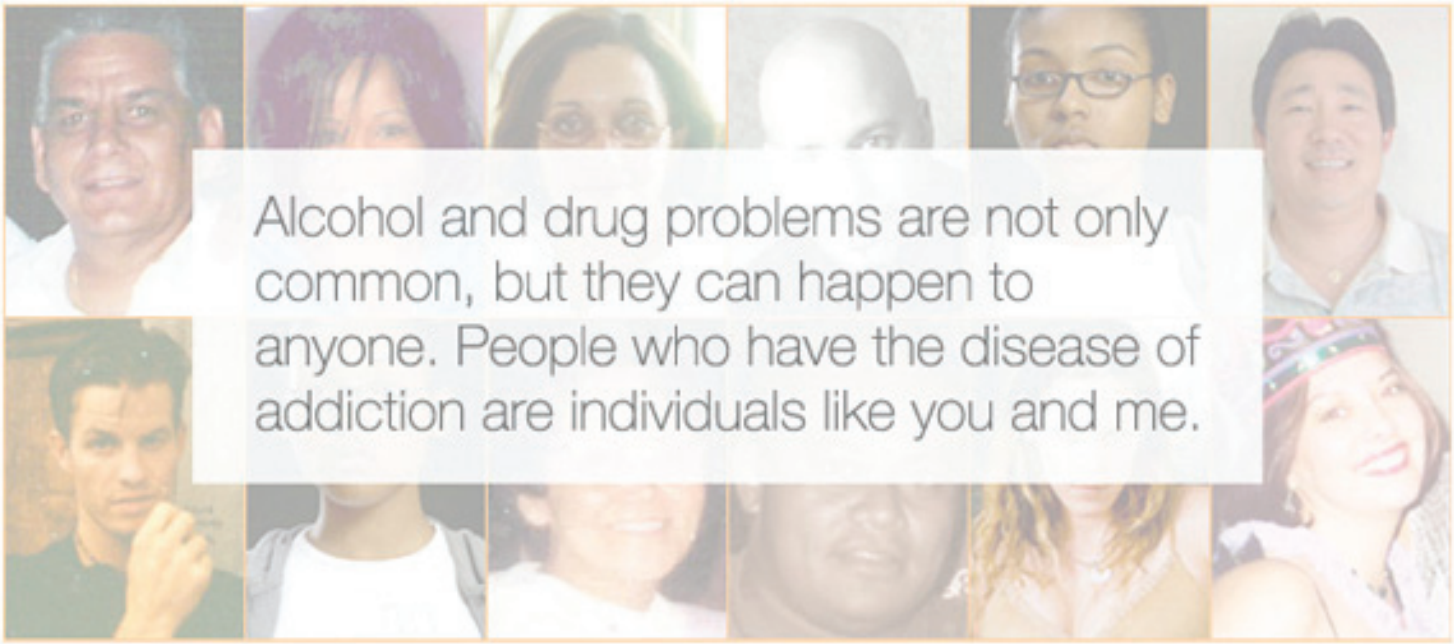


Their financial resources are often drained.

Do You Know Someone With a Drug or Alcohol Problem?

It seems like everybody does.

Drugs & Alcohol Problems **Do Not Discriminate**



ADDICTION CUTS ACROSS ALL WALKS OF LIFE.

"Most people think that they and their families are immune to drug problems — they happen to others, not to them — but **addiction is a tragedy that can befall any of us**. People — good people, loving people — transform into ones who are unrecognizable."

— **David Sheff, parent, journalist & author**



What is the Cost to Society?

Federal and state governments spend

$374 billion per year on substance abuse and addiction

BUT ONLY 1.9% OF THIS IS SPENT ON DRUG AND ALCOHOL PREVENTION AND TREATMENT.



Why Don't Families Get Help?

One of the most common reasons: Social Stigma

90% of young people don't get the professional help they need for their drug or alcohol problem.

(Continued)



SOCIAL STIGMA: A severe social disapproval of or personal discontent with a person on the grounds of their unique characteristics distinguishing them from others in society.



- Parents, as well as close relatives, of the young person with an addiction often face immense **stigma**.
- They feel **alone, isolated, alienated, uninformed, scared and cut-off from others**.



- Often their children are perceived as bad people (instead of someone with an illness) and they're perceived as bad parents.
- **Stigma** prevents them from reaching out to family and friends for support and guidance.

"For me, sometimes the **hardest part is the isolation**. There are so few people with whom I can share my thoughts and feelings about this."
– Manatee Mom, on Time To Get Help

"When my friends would ask where my son was, I would lie and say he was vacationing with family in Florida because I was too ashamed to admit he was either in treatment again or worse, that I didn't know where he was."
– Gabi Coatsworth



"We spent years hiding from our son's addiction. We denied it, we were ashamed of it, we tried protecting him from it, if we could have disappeared we would have."
– Ron Grover, on Intervene



"**I remember feeling profound shame** when my neighbors asked, 'Where's Larry?' **I was afraid they would think my son's addiction was my fault.** I'd be labeled. Larry would be that child that parents would say to stay away from. So I made up stories."
– Lorraine McNeill-Popper



"When I had breast cancer, I opened my door and 20 people were there to help me. When my son was struggling with a drug problem, I opened the door and there was no one."
– Libby Cataldi



Let's Set the Record Straight

12 common myths debunked.

myth #1

Drug addiction is voluntary behavior.

FACT: A person starts out as an occasional drug user, which is a voluntary decision. But over time, continued use of addictive drugs changes the brain resulting in compulsive and even uncontrollable drug use.

myth #2

Treatment for drug addiction should be a one-shot deal.

FACT: Like many other illnesses, drug addiction typically is a chronic disorder. Most of those who abuse drugs require longer-term treatment and, in many instances, repeated treatments.

myth #3

Nobody will voluntarily seek treatment until they hit "rock bottom."

FACT: There are many things that can motivate a person to enter and complete substance abuse treatment before they hit "rock bottom" – pressure from family and employers as well as personal recognition that one has a problem.

myth #4

If you've tried one doctor or treatment program, you've tried them all.

FACT: For many, finding an approach that is personally effective for treating their addiction can mean trying out several different doctors and/or treatment centers before finding a perfect "match."

myth #5

People don't need treatment. They can stop using drugs if they really want to.

FACT: It is extremely difficult for people addicted to drugs to achieve and maintain long-term abstinence. Long-term drug use actually changes a person's brain function, causing them to crave the drug even more, making it increasingly difficult for the person to quit.

myth #6

A person has to want drug treatment in order for it to be effective.

FACT: Virtually no one wants drug treatment. But studies show those who enter drug treatment programs in which they face "high pressure" to confront and attempt to surmount their addiction do comparatively better in treatment, regardless of the reason they sought treatment in the first place.

myth #7

There should be a standard treatment program for everyone.

FACT: One treatment method is not necessarily appropriate for everyone. The best programs develop an individual treatment plan based on a thorough assessment of the individual's problems. and combine a variety of methods tailored to address each person's specific needs.

myth #8

People can successfully finish drug abuse treatment in a couple of weeks if they're truly motivated.

FACT: Research indicates a minimum of 90 days of treatment for residential and outpatient drug-free programs. Follow up supervision and recovery support are essential.

(Continued)

myth #9

Treatment just doesn't work.

FACT: Treatment can help people. Studies show drug treatment reduces drug use by 40 to 60 percent.

myth #10

Drug addiction is a character flaw.

FACT: Drug addiction is a brain disease.

myth #11

You can't force someone into treatment.

FACT: Treatment does not have to be voluntary. People coerced into treatment by the legal system can be just as successful as those who enter treatment voluntarily.

myth #12

People who continue to abuse drugs after treatment are hopeless.

FACT: Drug addiction is a chronic disorder; occasional relapse does not mean failure.

The Good News

addiction is a treatable illness

With the right treatment and ongoing recovery support, it is very **possible to lead a healthy, productive life after addiction**. Millions of people do, likely someone you encounter on a daily basis.

"There is help out there, there is support, you're never alone with this, there are people to turn to."

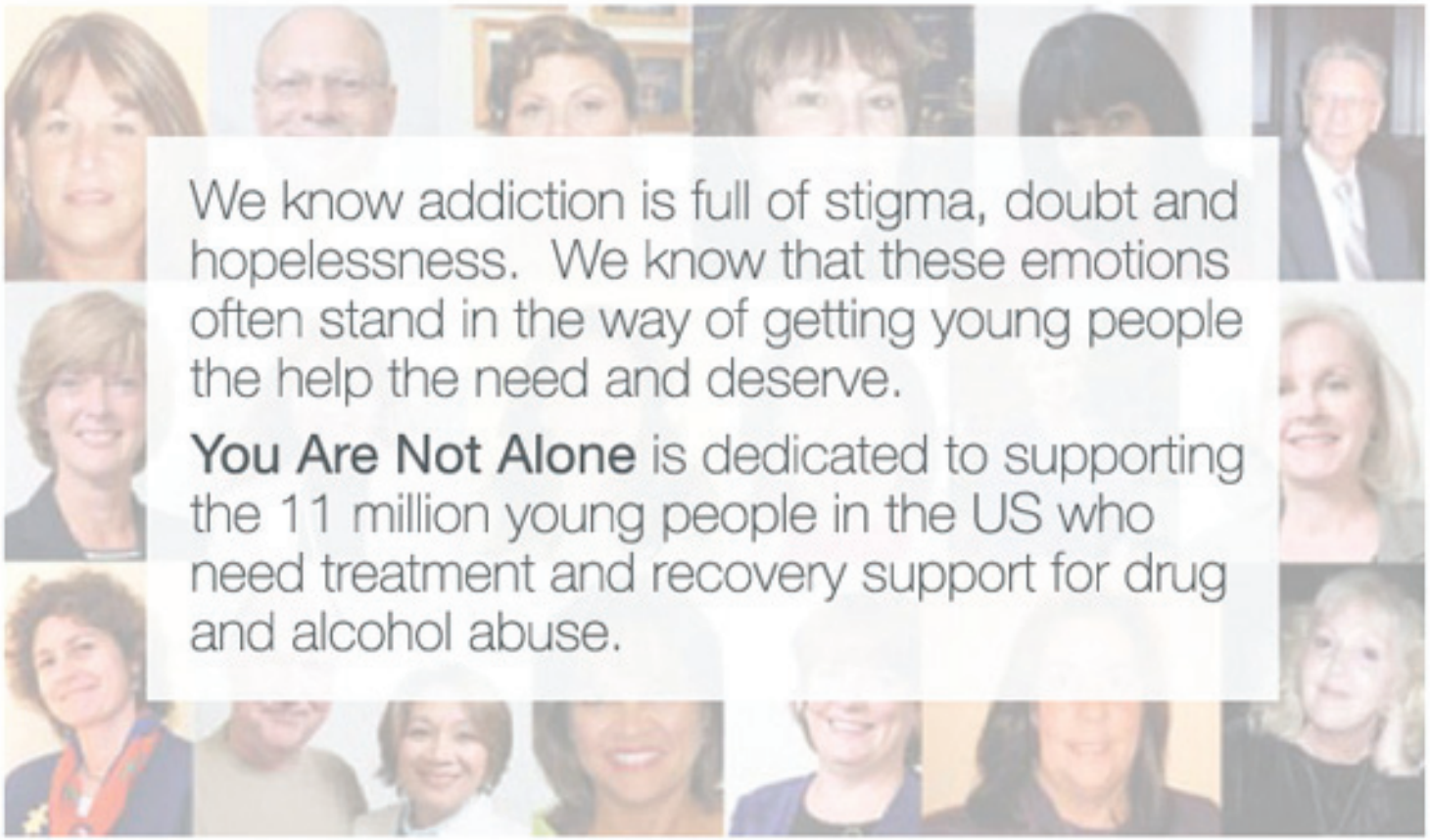
– Jan Lajeunesse, mother of Josh, 33, who was addicted to heroin and prescription opiates for nine years. After trial and error, Josh found a treatment and recovery support program that worked for his individual needs. He has been drug- and alcohol-free since December 2002 and is the proud father of three children.



There is no one right treatment program. **Relapse does not mean failure**. It is critical to remember that there are also multiple ways to approach recovery support, from outpatient programs to 12-step groups. Some people find support in faith-based settings, others in the world of recovery communities on social networks and websites.

Similar to other chronic diseases, living a life in recovery includes having a regular care plan and daily support system tailored to individual needs.

You Are Not Alone



We know addiction is full of stigma, doubt and hopelessness. We know that these emotions often stand in the way of getting young people the help the need and deserve.

You Are Not Alone is dedicated to supporting the 11 million young people in the US who need treatment and recovery support for drug and alcohol abuse.

The Partnership at Drugfree.org, a national nonprofit that helps parents of teens, is leading a national cause campaign, **You Are Not Alone**.

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The goal of the campaign is to initiate change and create a new dialogue around addiction, leveraging the power of stories and the reach of social networks.

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Find out what
The Partnership at Drugfree.org
is doing to help

Join Us Today!

Sources: National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, 2011; National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2010; National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2009; OAS/SAMHSA, 2008; Dennis, 2008; Dennis, 2007; Kelly, Brown, Abrantes, Kahler, & Myers, 2008; Kelly et al, 2011; Partnership Attitude Tracking Study 2008, 2009, 2010; Hart, 2001, 2004; Harwood et al. 2002; Harwood, 2000, 2004; National Institute on Drug Abuse, 1999.

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