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## Addictions

People can become addicted to almost anything that produces a rewarding outcome. Common addictions include drugs, alcohol, gambling, work, success, sex, shopping and pornography. Generally addictions are activities or behaviours which most people participate in without it causing major disruption in their lives but for the person who becomes addicted they become dependant on the behaviour, activity or substance to the detriment of relationships, responsibilities and other interests.

People are especially vulnerable to developing addictions if they have underlying difficulties, stresses or grievances that they feel unable to deal with. If this is the case, dealing with the underlying difficulty can go a long way to the person with the addiction feeling like they are back in control of their life again. People are often ashamed of their addictions or are worried about the consequences of being found out. This often leads to lying to their family and friends and having to keep secrets about their addictions, which is disruptive to relationships.

If you are struggling with an addiction it may be helpful to:

- ◆ Carefully weigh up the pro's and con's of making a change versus continuing the addiction. You may decide that on the balance of things you do not want to change at the moment and are willing to accept the negative aspects of your addiction. Alternatively, you may decide that you have had enough of the negative aspects and are willing to participate in the process of changing your ways.
- ◆ Carefully think about when you first started being addicted. Consider what difficulties, stresses and grievances you were experiencing at this time. It is important to do what you can to deal directly with these difficulties in a proactive way. This may mean grieving for a loss you experienced at the time, apologizing for behaviour you are ashamed of or sorting out a lost relationship that really matters to you.

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- ◆ Recognise that addictions tend to have an important role in peoples lives. It is important to understand the role of an addiction and find other ways of addressing that need. For example someone might get anxious in social situations and drink alcohol to deal with their nervousness. For this person it will be important that they learn more positive ways to deal with their nervousness in social situations to assist in reducing their alcohol intake.
- ◆ Understand that in order to participate in most addictions people generally need to justify to themselves that their behaviour is okay. Think about how you give yourself permission to feed your addiction and start giving yourself more helpful messages about these things.
- ◆ Know what your high risk situations are and carefully plan for how you will deal with these. For example if a person knew that in the past they have dealt with family stress by over investing in their commitment to work, it is important to know this habit and have a plan on how to deal with family stresses more productively.
- ◆ Recognise that breaking an addiction involves breaking habits. Look carefully at how your day to day life allows you to participate in your addiction and make as many changes as you are able to.
- ◆ Understand that blame and shame tend to be extremely unhelpful for dealing with addictions.

Please feel free to contact Life Supports on 1300 735 030 if you would like to discuss your situation with a professional counsellor. You can find more information about Life Supports services by visiting [www.lifesupports.com.au](http://www.lifesupports.com.au).