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## **A Killer Among Us that No One Wants to Talk About**

By Wendy Kane

Drug Abuse has reached epidemic numbers in our society. The money spent for police involvement, lost and stolen property, hospitalizations, the loss of jobs, homes children removed from their homes and deaths have reached an all time high. Drug and alcohol addiction has touched families, friends and our community. Many of our friends, neighbors, co-workers and family members are dealing with this problem. People, in their addiction, are often told by friends and family to “just stop,” as if it’s a loss of will power, morals or weakness. They are often told, “if you love me, your children or your family, you would stop drinking / using drugs.”

Years ago the only hope for alcoholics or drug addicts was sanitariums or locked psych. hospitals. Many people felt that there was no hope for these poor souls. Today the AMA (American Medical Association) recognizes addiction as a disease and substance abuse is included in the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical manual of Mental Disorders). Statistics ([www.AddictionsandRecovery.org](http://www.AddictionsandRecovery.org)) show that drug /alcohol addiction is 3x more common than diabetes. It crosses all socio-economic boundaries. At least two times more people die from alcohol related deaths than die from car accidents.(AMA Journal 3/10/04). Alcohol intoxication is associated with 40 – 50% of traffic fatalities, 25 – 35% of non - fatal vehicle injuries, and 64 % of fires. Alcohol is present in nearly 50% of all homicides (either victim or perpetrator), in 31% of fatal injuries and 23 % of suicides.

Parents, spouses, co – workers and friends ask again and again what it will take to stop those they care about from this addiction? Pawning a great grandmother’s ring, sleeping on the streets, acquiring Hepatitis C or HIV, going to jail or prison, or losing their children should be the bottom for those affected, but often it is not. When it is not, their loved ones continue to watch the downward spiral of destruction hopelessly standing by and praying that they will quit. With each phone call comes a fear that our loved one has overdosed.

Help is available. There are residential rehabs, outpatient day programs, AA, NA, individual and group therapy, and intervention. Few alcoholics and addicts stop using the first time they try recovery, but each time they hopefully will learn more about living life on life’s terms.



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The following screening and questionnaire concerning substance abuse is based on criteria from the American Psychiatric Associations DSM and the World Health Organization.

1. Do you use more and more drugs/alcohol over time?
2. When you stop using have you experienced physical, emotional withdrawal, irritability, anxiety, shakes, sweats, vomiting or nausea?
3. Do you drink/ use more than you planned ? Once you start, can you stop?
4. Despite negative consequences to your self esteem, job family and finances do you still continue to drink or use?
5. Have you spent a significant amount of time<sup>4</sup> obtaining, using, planning, or recovering from using? Have you ever concealed or minimized your use? Have you ever made up stories or lied to avoid getting caught?
6. Have you ever thought about cutting down or controlling your use? Have you ever made unsuccessful attempts to cut down or control your use?
7. The substance use is continued despite knowledge of having a persistent or recurrent physical or psychological problem that is likely to be caused or exacerbated by the substance?

Addictions can be caused by many factors including negative childhood experiences, environmental factors, emotional disorders, genetics, and addictive personality and several other factors. If you are having a problem in this area, get help. If it's a loved one, listen to them and encourage them to get help. I believe, by working with hundreds and hundreds of people, that there is hope for anyone who has a desire to want to get better and live a healthier happier life.

Wendy Kane, a Registered Addiction Specialist with 25+ years in the recovery field, specializes with clients who chronically relapse, need intervention, or help putting their lives back together. Contact Kane for more information (619) 315-1288.