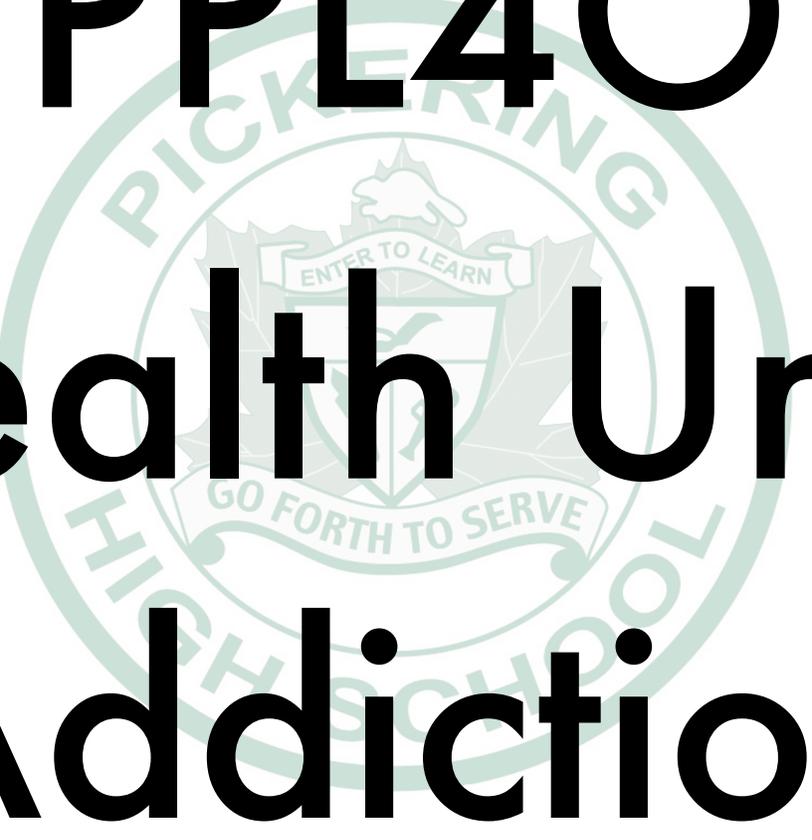


PPL4O

Health Unit:
Addiction

A large, faint watermark of the Pickering High School logo is centered in the background. The logo is circular and contains the text "PICKERING HIGH SCHOOL" around the perimeter. Inside the circle, there is a crest with a crown on top and a banner that reads "ENTER TO LEARN". Below the crest is another banner that reads "GO FORTH TO SERVE".

“The American Society of Addiction Medicine begins their definition of addiction by describing it as ‘a primary, chronic disease of brain reward, motivation, memory and related circuitry’” (www.asam.org).

“Addiction can also be viewed as a continued involvement with a substance or activity despite the negative consequences associated with it. Pleasure, enjoyment or relief from actual or perceived ailments would have originally been sought; however, over a period of time involvement with the substance or activity is needed to feel normal. Some psychology professionals and many laypeople now mean ‘addiction’ to include abnormal psychological dependency on such things as gambling, food, sex, pornography, computers, internet, work, exercise, idolizing, watching TV or certain types of non-pornographic videos, spiritual obsession, cutting and shopping” (www.princeton.edu).

Another word for addiction is “dependence.” There are two kinds of substance dependence:

Psychological dependence occurs when a person feels he or she needs the drug to function or feel comfortable (e.g., needing to drink alcohol to feel relaxed in social situations, or needing to be high to enjoy sex). Some people come to feel they need a substance just to be able to cope with daily life.

Physical dependence occurs when a person’s body has adapted to the presence of a drug. Tolerance has developed, which means that the person needs to use more of the drug to get the same effect. When drug use stops, symptoms of withdrawal occur.

People often think that psychological dependence is not as serious as physical dependence. This is not necessarily true. Cocaine, for example, does not cause physical dependence—but it is considered one of the easiest drugs to get hooked on and one of the hardest to give up.

What is addiction?

From: Addiction: An information guide (© 2007, 2010 CAMH)

People use alcohol and other drugs for many reasons. Some use these substances to help them to relax, to feel more lively, to feel less inhibited or to feel pleasure. Some find the effects of substances make it seem easier to cope with problems. Some use substances for religious reasons or to fit in with the crowd. Others may be curious about the effects of a specific drug.

No one plans to become addicted. People may think that they can handle their substance use and that they only use when they want to. But when they want to change the way they use, they may find it’s not that simple.

Because substance use is common, it’s important to be able to see when a person’s use puts him or her at risk of developing a problem.

Jessie loves going out after work with her friends. Her job is stressful, and having a few drinks with her friends helps her to unwind and relax. Lately, Jessie’s regular “after-work drink” has turned into a whole evening of drinking. She often misses dinner and doesn’t get home until late. A couple of times Jessie hasn’t remembered how she got home the night before, and she’s been late for work. Her manager has commented that she seems tired and distracted, and wonders if anything is wrong.

This example shows how substance use problems can develop slowly, and how it can be easy to overlook some early warning signs that a person’s substance use is becoming a problem. Next, we will look at some things that can signal when a person’s substance use might be a problem.

When is substance use a problem?

Two important signs that a person’s substance use is risky, or is already a problem, are harmful consequences and loss of control.

Harmful consequences

The harms of substance use can range from mild (e.g., feeling hungover, being late for work) to severe (e.g., homelessness, disease). While each time a person uses a substance may seem to have little impact, the harmful consequences can build up over time. If a person continues to use substances despite the harmful consequences, he or she may have a substance use problem.

The harms of substance use can affect every aspect of a person's life. Some examples are:

- injuries while under the influence
- feelings of anxiety, irritability or depression
- trouble thinking clearly
- blackouts
- problems with relationships
- spending money on substances rather than on food, rent or other essentials
- legal problems related to substance use
- loss of hope, feelings of emptiness.

The harms of substance use can also extend to the person's family, friends, co-workers and even strangers (e.g., when someone drives while under the influence of alcohol or other drugs).

Loss of control

Some people may be aware that their substance use causes problems but continue to use, even when they want to stop. They may use more than they intended, or in situations where they didn't want to use. Some may not see that their substance use is out of control and is causing problems in their lives. This is often referred to as being "in denial." This so-called denial, however, might simply be a lack of awareness or insight into the situation. Whether people realize it or not, lack of control over use is another sign that substance use is a problem.

Dan started smoking marijuana three years ago, around the time his dad left for good. At first he only smoked it with friends after school, but gradually he smoked more often. Eventually he smoked every day, beginning first thing in the morning. He felt the drug helped to "mellow" him out, and thought that it was harmless. His marks in school, however, which were never great, were slipping. His mother nagged him about his schoolwork, and his girlfriend complained that he was always stoned. Dan tried to stop using, but he found that without marijuana he was irritable and tense. His cravings to get high were stronger than his will to quit.

In this example, Dan is showing some signs of dependence. He's smoking marijuana regularly, is experiencing negative consequences of using (problems with his schoolwork and his relationship with his girlfriend), and is not able to stop using. He feels torn between wanting to quit and enjoying the effects of the drug and the relief it brings.

Defining addiction

The word "addiction" is often used to refer to any behaviour that is out of control in some way. People often describe themselves as being addicted to, for example, a tv show or to clothes shopping. The word is also used to explain the experience of withdrawal when a substance or behaviour is stopped (e.g., "I must be addicted to coffee: I get a headache when I don't have my cup in the morning").

However, neither enjoyment nor experiencing withdrawal, in themselves, necessarily implies addiction.

Because the term "addiction" is commonly used in such a vague way, there have been many attempts to define it more clearly. Here is one useful definition:

Addiction is a primary, chronic, neurobiologic disease, with genetic, psychosocial, and environmental factors. . . . It is characterized by behaviors that include one or more of the following: impaired control over drug use, compulsive use, continued use despite harm, and craving (Savage et al., 2003).

Another simpler way of describing addiction is the presence of the 4 C's:

- **Craving**
- Loss of **Control** of amount or frequency of use
- **Compulsion** to use
- Use despite **Consequences**.

Consider a person who finds alcohol so pleasurable that he regularly goes to the bar after work (Craving). His drinking escalates to overcome tolerance, and he experiences withdrawal when he abstains. He tries and repeatedly fails to cut down (loss of **Control**). He begins to reorganize his life in order to maximize drinking opportunities, neglecting his work and family (Compulsion). Eventually his spouse leaves and he loses his job (Consequences).

Why do people keep using?

Substance use can be hard to change. One thing that makes change so difficult is that the immediate effects of substance use tend to be positive. People may feel good, have more confidence and forget about problems. In contrast, the problems from use might not be obvious for some time.

People may come to rely on the effects of substances to bring short-term relief from difficult or painful feelings. The effects of substances can make problems seem less important, or make it seem easier to talk and to be with others. People may come to believe that they cannot function or make it through the day without drugs. When people use substances to escape or change the way they feel, using can become a habit, which can be hard to break.

Continued substance use, especially heavy use, can cause changes in the body and brain. If people develop physical dependence and then stop using, they may experience distressing symptoms of withdrawal. Changes to the brain may be lasting. These changes may be why people continue to crave substances and slip back into substance use long after they have stopped using.

When people who are addicted stop their substance use, they often compare the experience to leaving a relationship that was very important to them.

Alex began using heroin more than 10 years ago. Getting money to buy drugs was always a problem. He grew tired of the stress of always needing to score, and of knowing that if he got arrested again, he'd go to jail. Still, deciding to leave heroin and try methadone treatment was hard. Once the treatment became routine, he felt bored and didn't know what to do with his time. He wished he could go back to using, but was afraid of what would happen if he did. His counsellor helped Alex to think about what he wanted from life. Alex enrolled in school and got a part-time job. Soon after, he started a new relationship with someone he trusted. Some days are still a struggle, but with time, and keeping busy, it gets easier.

Alex found it hard to stop using heroin and to continue with his treatment, especially at first. But just as substance use problems don't start overnight, they don't get better right away either. By staying in treatment and continuing to get support, Alex began to get his life back on track.

How common is addiction?

Addiction affects many people. Those who have not experienced a substance use problem first-hand are likely to have a family member, friend or colleague who has. Although addiction affects men and women of all ages, rates are:

- two to three times higher in men than women
- highest among people aged 15 to 24 (Statistics Canada, 2003).

A 2002 study of the rates of addiction found that 2.6 per cent of Canadians were dependent on alcohol and that fewer than one per cent were dependent on illegal drugs (Statistics Canada, 2003). These numbers, however, do not reflect the full impact of substance use problems in Canada. Substance use problems can occur even with low levels of alcohol or other drug use, and in people who are not dependent. For example, estimates suggest that more than 25 per cent of men and nearly 9 per cent of women who drink alcohol are "high-risk" drinkers. These are people whose drinking can be said to be hazardous and harmful to themselves or others, even though these people may not be substance dependent (Adlaf et al., 2004).

The stigma of addiction

Stigma is another reason why the rates of substance use problems may be higher than studies suggest. Stigma marks substance use problems as shameful and makes people want to hide their addiction.

Stigma also affects the families of people with addiction. It makes them hide the problem or pretend it isn't there at a time when families need support.

What can we do about stigma? One simple way you can help is to choose to talk about "people with substance use problems" rather than about "addicts," "alcoholics," "junkies" or "stoners." Try this approach whether you are talking about another person or about yourself. When you do this, you put the person ahead of the problem. This helps to show that you know there is more to a person than a problem. You are also giving the person with an addiction the support and understanding it takes to recover.

What causes addiction?

Many possible factors have been considered in trying to explain and understand the causes of addiction. One thing is clear: no single factor can be said to cause addiction. People become addicted because of a combination of factors.

Genetic factors

It appears that some people may inherit a vulnerability to the addictive properties of drugs. Studies have shown, for example, that the risk of substance use disorders is higher for people who have close relatives with substance use disorders (Glantz & Pickens, 1992). However, many people who have a genetic vulnerability to addiction do not become addicted, and others who do not have a family history of addiction do become addicted.

How drugs interact with the brain

People use alcohol and other drugs because they stimulate the brain in ways that "feel good." This immediate rewarding experience makes people want to repeat it. All substances with addictive potential stimulate the release of dopamine, a chemical in the brain that is associated with reward and pleasure. Eating, drinking and having sex are all activities that release dopamine. Substance use, however, brings a flood of dopamine, which alters the chemistry of the brain. The brain, in turn, tries to keep things in balance by developing tolerance, which means that more and more of the drug is needed to bring feelings of pleasure. The brain also adapts by decreasing the amount of dopamine available. That's one reason why people who are addicted report feeling "flat" and depressed without drugs (nida, n.d.; Glantz & Pickens, 1992).

Environment

The home, neighbourhood or community where people live, go to school or work can influence whether or not they develop substance use problems, as can the attitudes of their peers, family and culture toward substance use. People who experience prejudice, discrimination or marginalization due to culture, race, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, age or other factors may use substances to cope with feelings of trauma or social isolation.

Mental health issues

Research shows that more than half of people with substance use disorders have also had mental health problems, especially anxiety or depression, sometime in their lifetime (Reiger et al., 1990). The relationship between substance use and mental health problems is complex. Some people with mental health problems use substances to help themselves feel better, but end up making the situation worse. When people have mental health problems, even limited substance use (e.g., a drink or two) can worsen the problems.

Coping with thoughts and feelings

People may turn to substances as a way of coping with difficult emotions or situations. They may find it hard, for example, to calm themselves down when they feel angry or upset, and come to rely on substances to help them regulate their emotions. People may also use substances to help relieve stress, boredom or sadness, or to reduce their inhibitions and make it easier to talk to others and speak up about feelings.

Spiritual or religious affiliation

Spirituality can mean different things to different people. One aspect that many people experience is a need to feel connected to others and the world around them. People who lack this sense of spiritual connection may feel empty or hopeless. They may use substances to mask these feelings and develop a substance use problem as a result.

Risk and protective factors

Researchers have tried various ways to sort out the complex causes of substance use problems. One way is to ask which factors put people at risk and which protect them from substance use problems. Since substance use often begins in youth, research has focused on this age group.

The **risk factors** for substance use problems in youth include:

- alcohol or other drug problems among family members
- poor school performance
- poverty, family conflicts, chaos or stress
- having friends who drink or use other drugs
- not fitting in socially, or being excluded because of race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, abilities or other factors
- emotional, physical or sexual abuse
- experiencing discrimination or oppression.

The **protective factors** for substance use problems in youth include:

- having a positive adult role model (e.g., a parent, relative or teacher)
- good parental or other caregiver supervision
- having a strong attachment to family, school and community
- having goals and dreams
- being involved in meaningful and well-supervised activities (e.g., sports, music, volunteer work).

Risk and protective factors do not guarantee that a person will or will not develop problems, but they do affect the level of risk. Once a person has a problem with substance use, risk and protective factors also influence how readily that person is able to change his or her use.

Source: www.camh.ca

Limitless Assignment

Using references from class and the movie, *Limitless*, discuss the effects of addiction. Remember to use proper paragraph structure. Consider and include the following when composing your written discussion:

- the pressure addiction puts on society
- the effect addiction has on one's relationships
- the effect addiction has on one's health

Length: 1 page, typed, double-spaced.

Paragraph Rubric • Name: _____

/25

	1 Topic Development Overall effect of paragraph.	2 Support Degree to which the response includes examples that develop the topic sentence.	3 Organization Degree to which the response is focused, clear, and in a logical order.	4 Communication Vocabulary Word choice Usage	5 Mechanics Spelling and capitalization Punctuation Paragraphing
5	Clear and complex focus in topic sentence. Thorough development of idea. Original/insightful topic. Shows a high degree of understanding of themes, concepts, and ideas.	Supporting details are rich, interesting, and well-developed. Details are relevant, enhance the topic, and are appropriate for the audience and focus.	Details are effectively and carefully organized. Organizational devices are incorporated effectively. Paragraph shows thorough evidence of revision.	Uses a formal tone and appropriate diction and style, with a high degree of effectiveness. Communicates ideas with a high degree of clarity. Rich, effective use of vocabulary.	Complex use of grammar and sentence structure, with minimal mechanical errors. Information cited properly, with minimal errors.
4	Clear focus and topic. Clear development of idea. Shows an understanding of themes, concepts, and ideas.	Supporting details are effective and well-developed. Details are relevant and appropriate for the audience and focus.	Details are organized effectively. Organizational devices are incorporated. Paragraph shows evidence of revision.	Uses formal tone and appropriate diction and style. Communicates information with clarity. Effective and correct usage of vocabulary.	Few errors that do not interfere with communication. Information cited properly, with some errors.
3	Basic focus and/or topic. Some development of idea. Shows some understanding of themes, concepts, and ideas.	Clear topic. Some clear supporting details are included. Some details are relevant and appropriate for the focus and audience.	Some details are organized. Some organizational devices are incorporated. Paragraph shows some evidence of revision.	Uses some informality in tone, diction, and style. Communicates some information with clarity. Acceptable, generally correct usage of vocabulary.	Some errors that interfere with communication. Information cited with several errors.
2	Vague focus and topic. Limited development of idea. Shows limited understanding of themes, concepts, and ideas.	Basic, undeveloped topic. Limited details are often inappropriate for the focus and audience.	Limited organization of details. Often resembles free-writing. Few organizational devices are incorporated. Paragraph shows minimal evidence of revision.	Often uses informal tone, diction, and style. Communicates information with limited clarity. Simplistic vocabulary, with inappropriate/incorrect usage of vocabulary.	Noticeable errors that interfere with communication. Information cited improperly.
1	Topic is missing and/or focus is very unclear. Shows a lack of understanding of themes, concepts, and ideas. Too brief to evaluate accurately.	Topic/evidence/quotations are missing. Supporting details are irrelevant, missing, or unclear. Weak topic.	Focus and details are inappropriate for focus and audience. Resembles free-writing. Lack of length and clarity, which results in poor organization. Paragraph shows no evidence of revision. No rough copies submitted.	Rarely uses formal tone, diction, or style. Communication of information lacks clarity. Inadequate vocabulary, with numerous errors in usage.	Errors seriously interfere with communication. Too brief to evaluate accurately. Information is not cited.
Total	T= /5	S= /5	O= /5	C= /5	M= /5

Rounders Assignment

After watching the movie, *Rounders*, you might have a better understanding of how an addiction can break down your life and cause you to lose important relationships. One of the most important scenes in the movie comes when Matt Damon's character, Mike, asks his professor for help. This had to be a difficult task for the character.

Your assignment is to create a storyboard or a comic strip **to demonstrate who would be the hardest person to confess to or ask for help**. This person is someone you would be the most embarrassed to contact, someone who you would rather run from than ask for help. The easy answer is obviously your parents or friends; however, I want you to think hard about this. In the movie, Mike goes to the professor because he knows his family would not have the money. Sometimes you need help from someone who can actually help you, not necessarily someone you know will always love you.

Below is an example of storyboard panels.

1. Intro Panel	2	3
4	5	6. Conclusion Panel

Name: _____

/40

Mark Scheme:

Creativity/Originality:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Topic Development:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Clarity & Conciseness:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Organization & Neatness:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10