

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this member guide is to provide a summary of the interplay between addiction and stress, as well as tips and techniques on how businesses can support their employees who may be struggling.

### WHAT IS ADDICTION?

According to [Turning Point](#), '(a)ddiction is a chronic health condition that occurs when someone is unable to stop consuming a drug or activity, even if it is causing physical or psychological harm, or affecting their life.'

[Lifeline](#) notes that 'When a substance is addictive, it means that you often need more of the substance to experience the same effects, you might have cravings and urges to use the substance and experience symptoms of withdrawal when not using the substance.'

### THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN ADDICTION AND STRESS

[Turning Point](#) notes that '(a)ddiction is a major contributor to the burden of disease in Australia, and a leading preventable cause of injury, illness and death. Addiction also does not discriminate, and can affect young and older people from all communities.'

The [Alcohol and Drug Foundation](#) have reported on the 'bi-directional' impacts of alcohol and other drug (AOD) addiction or substance abuse and mental health challenges. Either one can impact the other.

#### **If you are struggling, you are not alone. Addiction and stress impacts many Australians everyday:**

- 'At least 55 per cent of people experiencing an AOD use disorder have a co-occurring mental health condition.'<sup>1</sup>
- '60 per cent of people with a mental health disorder are also experiencing AOD dependence.'<sup>2</sup>
- 'One in four Australians will struggle with alcohol, other drugs or gambling in their lifetime, yet many will wait years, even decades, to get the help they need because of stigma and shame.'<sup>3</sup>

### CHANGING THE STIGMA

According to [Monash University](#) 'addiction remains one of the most stigmatised of all health conditions globally... Too often, we blame the individual, believing the addiction is their fault. But addiction is an unfortunate consequence of something much more complex.'

The impacts of stigmatisation can hinder people's confidence to speak up and get the support they need. Monash University advocates that '(u)ntil we change how we view addiction – from personal failure to a mental disorder, something we cannot control any more than we can control cancer – Australians, and millions globally, will continue to suffer.'

Businesses can help de-stigmatise addiction by educating their staff on how it is a mental health challenge like any other. Additionally, businesses may be interested in reading more about Monash University's national campaign, [Rethink Addiction](#).

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<sup>1</sup> Alcohol and Drug Foundation, [AOD and mental health](#). Original source: Jaffe A, Jiang D, Huang D. Drug-abusing offenders with co-morbid disorders: Problem severity, treatment participation, and recidivism. Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment. 2012;43:244-50.

<sup>2</sup> Alcohol and Drug Foundation, [AOD and mental health](#). Original source: Jaffe A, Jiang D, Huang D. Drug-abusing offenders with co-morbid disorders: Problem severity, treatment participation, and recidivism. Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment. 2012;43:244-50.

<sup>3</sup> Rethink Addiction, [Why it's time to rethink addiction](#).

### SIGNS SOMEONE MAY BE STRUGGLING

[Lifeline](#) has developed a guide on some of the signs that may indicate someone is struggling with substance misuse:

- Neglecting responsibilities
- Participating in dangerous or risky behaviours
- Criminal behaviour
- Relationship problems
- Developing a tolerance to the substance and increased usage to experience the same effects
- Inability to control use of the substance
- Substance use taking over someone's life and ability to function

### SUPPORTING SOMEONE WHO IS STRUGGLING

Kelsey Moreira, sober founder and CEO of [Doughp](#), a mission-driven dessert platform for mental health & addiction recovery, has written an article on [Forbes](#) with tips for workplaces supporting someone with addiction, including:

- Setting up a supportive culture that enables conversations on addiction and recovery
- Have a plan to support employees accessing the support they need
- Educate employees about addiction to reduce stigma and prepare managers to recognise signs

### SUPPORT SERVICES:

There are various organisations providing support to deal with stress and addiction:

- [Lifeline](#) – call on 13 11 14 or chat to a Crisis Supporter online 7pm-midnight every night
- [Turning Point](#) – call on 1800 858 858
- National Alcohol and Other Drug Hotline – call on 1800 250 015
- [National Gambling Helpline](#) – call on 1800 858 858
- [Beyond Blue](#) – by phone on 1300 22 4636
- [National Cannabis Information and Helpline](#) call 1800 304 050 11am-7pm Mon to Fri

*This guide provides a summary only of the subject matter covered, without the assumption of duty of care by Consult Australia. The summary should not be relied on as a substitute for legal or other professional advice.*