

## Seeking Help

If you are using drugs or alcohol or if you are taking more medication than prescribed, seek help. If someone you know is having problems, urge them to get help.

### How much is too much?

A problem drinker is a person whose drinking is interfering with one or more important areas of life—either at home, school, or on the job. If someone's drinking is causing problems, it is a problem.

Groups are available to assist you in remaining sober. Most 12-Step recovery programs have local 24-hour hotlines. They can tell you meeting times and places. Members of Alcoholics Anonymous, Rational Recovery and other recovery groups often go out of their way to help people get to meetings. Al-Anon and Alateen programs are also available for family members.

*“Even for people who have had long periods of abstinence, stress is a very powerful trigger for relapse.”*

## Resources

Following is a list of people you can call who will help you find the right kind of help to work through this difficult time.

If you live in the metropolitan Denver area, Ft. Collins, Greeley, Pueblo (or associated counties), the San Luis Valley or any of the Eastern Plains counties, contact:

**Eric Stone** at Signal Behavioral Health Network: **1-888-607-4462** or **303-639-9320**.

If you live in El Paso, Teller, Fremont, Custer, Park, Lake or Chaffee counties contact:

**Annette Fryman** or **Steve Gilbertson** with Connect Care at **719-572-6133**.

If you live in Boulder county contact:

**Jo Ruder** with the Boulder County Health Department at **303-441-1275**.

Or if you live in any of the western slope counties contact:

**Sandy Roberts** with West Slope Casa at **970-725-3614**.

Colorado Department of Human Services

**Curt H. Drennen, Psy.D., R.N.**  
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Colorado Department of  
Human Services

## Colorado Mental Health Disaster Response System

Division of Mental Health



## Alcohol and Substance Use:

Staying Clean and Sober  
following a Disaster

## Alcohol and Drug Use in Times of Crisis

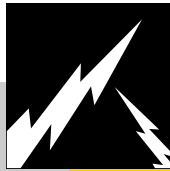
Everyone reacts differently to trauma and disasters. The emotional impact can increase stress and decrease our healthy coping strategies.

Following the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York of September 11, 2001, a significant increase in the use of alcohol, tobacco and marijuana was seen in people who were using these substances prior to the disaster. Six months later, people were still using at this higher rate when compared to pre-event use. This level of use then can cause other problems in daily living.

## Stress-induced Relapse

The stress and trauma that people experience following a major disaster, whether it is a natural event or a man-made event like a terrorist attack, will vary from person to person. Many people may begin or resume substance abuse because of their disaster experiences. Even for people who have had long periods of abstinence, stress is a very powerful trigger for relapse.

If alcohol or drug use is an issue for you or your loved ones during times of stress, it's important to pay close attention to how you or they are coping. When you are in recovery, stress can be the number one cause of relapse to drug and alcohol use.



## Staying Clean and Sober

For some problem drinkers and drug users in recovery, disaster often makes it difficult to remain sober. If you have a history of alcohol or drug dependence, or if you think you would be better off avoiding the temptation, remember the old adage, "Stay away from the people, places and things that you associate with drinking and drugging."



### Warning Signs:

If you are unsure if you or someone you know is having difficulties with substance use, ask yourself the following questions:

- Are you drinking more than normal?
- Do you use drugs or alcohol to deal with overwhelming feelings of loss and grief?
- Are you using drugs or alcohol to numb the pain?
- Are you having difficulty caring for yourself or family members?
- Are your relationships with family or friends deteriorating?
- Are your appearance and cleanliness in decline?
- Are you having problems attending school or work?
- Are you hiding the amount of alcohol or drugs that you use?
- Are you experiencing an increase in problems often associated with substance use?
  - Family violence?
  - Missing work?
  - Excessive spending?

If any of these situations happen to you following a disaster, it's important to seek some help. On the back panel are contact names and numbers for finding help with substance use issues.

## How to Help Others

If you think a family member or friend is having a problem with drugs or alcohol here are some things you can do to help:

- Remain calm, unemotional, factual and honest in speaking about their addictive behavior and its day-to-day consequences.
- Tell them that you are learning about alcohol and other drug abuse by attending Al-Anon, Narconon, Alateen, and other support groups.
- Discuss the situation with someone you trust.
- Establish and maintain a healthy atmosphere in the home. Try to include the substance-abusing person in all aspects of positive family life.
- Encourage them to develop new interests, renew friendships and participate in enjoyable activities.
- Explain the nature of addiction or alcoholism as an illness to the children in the family.
- Be patient and live one day at a time. Alcoholism and other drug addictions generally take a long time to develop, and recovery does not occur overnight.



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Human Services**