

SUBSTANCE ABUSE & FAMILY VIOLENCE

Understanding How Substance Abuse Fuels the Cycle of Domestic Harm

Family is often described as the bedrock of society—a source of support, love, and stability. But for many families, this foundation becomes fractured under the weight of substance abuse. The relationship between drug use and family violence is intricate, pervasive, and devastating. In this blog post, we'll delve deep into how drugs can fuel family violence, the mechanisms behind this dangerous connection, and what can be done to break the cycle.

The Vicious Cycle: Substance Abuse and Family Violence

Family violence, encompassing physical, emotional, and psychological abuse within households, has long been recognised as a complex issue with many roots. Among the most significant contributors is substance abuse—particularly the misuse of drugs. Whether illicit or prescription, the effects of drugs can alter behaviour, impair judgment, and escalate conflict to dangerous levels.

When drugs enter the dynamic of family life, they don't just affect the user. Spouses, children, siblings, and even extended family members can become collateral damage in the struggle. Substance abuse and family violence are often entwined in a destructive cycle: drug use can trigger violent outbursts, and the trauma of violence may push individuals to use drugs as a means of coping. This creates a feedback loop that is difficult to break without intervention.

THE FAR-REACHING CONSEQUENCES

The effects of drug-related family violence extend far beyond the immediate victims. Children raised in such environments often suffer long-term psychological harm, including anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). They are more likely to struggle academically, face difficulties forming healthy relationships later in life, and may turn to substance abuse themselves as a coping mechanism.

Partners and spouses of substance users frequently endure emotional trauma, physical injuries, and social isolation. They may feel trapped, either by fear, financial dependence, or hope that their loved one will change. Extended family members—grandparents, aunts, uncles—may also be drawn into the turmoil, either as caregivers for affected children or as mediators in family disputes.

HOW DRUGS CONTRIBUTE TO FAMILY VIOLENCE

1. Impaired Judgment and Reduced Inhibitions

Drugs like alcohol, methamphetamines, cocaine, and opioids can severely impair cognitive functions. Users may lose the ability to control impulses, manage anger, or assess the consequences of their actions. Arguments that might be resolved peacefully in a sober state can rapidly escalate into shouting matches, threats, or physical altercations under the influence.

2. Increased Aggression

Certain substances are directly linked to heightened aggression. For example, stimulants such as methamphetamine or crack cocaine can cause paranoia, irritability, and even hallucinations, leading users to act violently toward those closest to them. Conversely, the agitation and frustration sparked by withdrawal symptoms can also provoke aggressive behaviours.

3. Financial Strain and Economic Abuse

Drug dependency is expensive. To support their habit, individuals may siphon family resources, leading to financial instability, unpaid bills, and mounting debt. This economic pressure can spark conflict between partners or family members. In some cases, the drug user may resort to controlling or withholding money to exert power over others—a form of economic abuse that often accompanies family violence.

4. Neglect and Emotional Abuse

Parents or guardians struggling with addiction often find it difficult to meet the emotional and physical needs of their children. This neglect can manifest in inconsistent care, lack of supervision, or emotional unavailability. Children growing up in such environments may experience deep feelings of abandonment and insecurity, and may also be at higher risk of becoming victims or perpetrators of violence themselves.

5. Coercion and Manipulation

Drug dependency can make people more likely to manipulate or coerce family members, whether to obtain money, drugs, or simply to avoid the consequences of their actions. This manipulation often manifests as threats, guilt-tripping, or even violence, further embedding family members in a web of fear and control.

BREAKING THE CYCLE - WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Addressing the issue of drugs and family violence requires a multifaceted approach. No single solution fits all, but there are several important steps that can help families heal and rebuild:

1. Early Intervention and Education

Preventing the intertwining of drug use and family violence starts with education and awareness. Schools, community organisations, and healthcare providers can play a key role in teaching individuals and families about the dangers of substance abuse and the warning signs of family violence. Early intervention programs targeting at-risk youth and families can prevent escalation before it begins.

2. Access to Treatment

Addiction is a disease, not a moral failing. Encouraging those struggling with substance use to seek professional help—counselling, rehab, medication-assisted treatment—can be life-changing. Family members should also have access to support services, such as therapy, support groups, and shelters, to help them cope and plan for their safety.

3. Strengthening Social Support Networks

Families are more resilient when they have strong social connections. Building a supportive network of friends, extended family, neighbours, and community organisations can provide practical and emotional help. These networks offer safe spaces for victims to seek refuge and for recovering addicts to find encouragement.

4. Legal Protections and Policy Changes

Governments can make a difference by enacting and enforcing laws that protect victims of family violence and provide access to resources. Policies that ensure affordable healthcare, substance abuse treatment, and emergency housing for those fleeing violence are crucial. Law enforcement agencies should be trained to recognise the nexus between drugs and domestic abuse, and respond with empathy and efficiency.

5. Ongoing Research and Advocacy

Understanding the evolving landscape of drug use and family dynamics is essential for effective intervention. Ongoing research and data collection can inform better policies and practices. Advocacy organisations must continue to speak out, raise awareness, and push for the resources needed to support affected families. Here is some of the latest research:

[HERE](#)



STORIES OF RESILIENCE & HOPE

While the statistics are sobering, it's important to recognise that recovery is possible. Many individuals and families have broken free from the grip of substance abuse and violence, building healthy, fulfilling lives. Their journeys often involve setbacks and challenges, but with support, treatment, and unwavering resolve, healing can and does occur.

CONCLUSION: MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

The impact of drugs on family violence is profound, yet not insurmountable. By understanding the ways in which substance abuse fuels the cycle of harm, and by committing to prevention, intervention, and support, we can help families weather the storm. Compassion, education, and community involvement are our greatest tools in creating safe, nurturing environments—where families can not only survive, but thrive.

If you or someone you know is affected by substance abuse or family violence, reach out to local support services. You are not alone, and with help, a brighter future is possible.



KERRY'S KORNER

I have just returned from a wonderful experience on the Gold Coast.

I had the honour of being invited to speak at the "2025 First Nations Substance Abuse and Addiction Prevention" conference, which ran over three days at the Hilton Hotel, Surfers Paradise.

The information and stories shared were powerful and enlightening, as we gathered to develop some strategies for preventing both the use and the associated harms of AOD substances, in particular among our wonderful Aboriginal community.

I was especially heartened to hear some incredible stories from Aboriginal speakers, who shared real-life encounters in their traditional "Yarn" style of sharing. They absolutely recognise and value the power of story-telling.

Several different organisations shared the strategies they use in the areas of both prevention and recovery and it's good to see there are some extremely creative and beneficial programs operating across this nation. However, overall, it is clear to see that there is still not enough being done in the area of prevention.

I was a little anxious about how my presentation would be received, as I not only cover an educational side of substance use, but I very openly share some devastating lived-experience stories. As mentioned in earlier segments of KK, I am a survivor of a horror-filled journey through addiction.

I am pleased to report that I received an amazing response to my message. You could hear a pin drop as the room filled with some of the horror stories I have lived. This is the reality of substance use. My presentation was followed by a great Q&A time and some excellent conversations later in the day. All of my books were sold and I have since received another invitation to speak, on overdose, on International Overdose Day. (However, due to logistics, I'm not sure I can take this on??)

One of the presentations on Methamphetamines was of particular interest to me. Although I already have much information on Meth and how it affects the brain, I learnt something new that actually explains a lot.

There is an area of the brain that has a function to flush out or dilute drugs such as cocaine/speed etc., when these substances enter the brain. However, when methamphetamines hit this area, it causes these cells to close over thus allowing the entire dose of meth to flood the brain. The most devastating side of this, is that when a pregnant woman uses Meth, it crosses the placenta and also causes these cells of the brain to close over causing the foetus brain to receive the full dose as well.

So much more needs to be done in the area of prevention education, in order to save more individuals and their families from this catastrophic plague of our society.



VAPING LAWS - NEW REGULATIONS

In July 2024, the Australian Government introduced new regulations for vapes or e-cigarettes. Vapes are only allowed to be sold through pharmacies for the purpose of stopping smoking or to manage nicotine dependence. Other shops like tobacconists and convenience stores aren't allowed to sell any types of vapes or vape products. It's also illegal to purchase these products from overseas and have them shipped to Australia.

[MORE HERE](#)

How vaping harms your health

Vaping is not safe and can be dangerous. We don't know all the ways it can harm you in the long term just yet. But we do know that vaping in the short term can make you:



Feel Sick



Throw up



Have a sore mouth and throat



Experience chest pain



Have a faster heartbeat.

[SOURCE](#)



Rotary

AUSTRALIA
RAG AP
Rotary Action Group
for Addiction Prevention

FIGHTING ADDICTION by raising up a new generation of youth prevention influencers!

Rotary Action Group (RAG AP) is Rotary clubs, in partnership with local communities taking action to prevent and reduce drug addiction in all its forms, at community level to keep communities healthier and safer.

INTERNATIONALLY SUPPORTED

Evidence based, data driven prevention programmes, for youth, sports, local councils, schools, businesses, health agencies and law enforcement.

NOMINATIONS NOW OPEN FOR YOUTH PREVENTION INFLUENCER CANDIDATES WHO WILL BE:

- selected by Rotary clubs in collaboration with professional prevention organizations.
- trained in the principles of addiction and prevention by trained professional prevention workers. The training for the professional prevention workers was developed by Carlton Hall Consulting.

Following their training, the candidate Youth Prevention Influencers are supported by the rotary club which selected them to develop and implement their own actions in their own (youth) environment and in their own way.

Every year, selected candidates are invited to attend the United Nations meeting of the Youth Prevention Influencers in Vienna, where they brainstorm among themselves, learn from each other, evaluate and adjust in order to continue working on new ideas.

Most importantly government representatives at the United Nations, hear from the youth contingent. This is a REAL vehicle for positive change. This gives HOPE to emerging generations.

TO NOMINATE A YOUTH PREVENTION INFLUENCER: Email details to admin@drugfree.org.au



MORE INFO VISIT: RAG-AP.ORG

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

UK Drug Laws Introduce tighter restrictions:

The UK Government has announced tighter restrictions on a range of synthetic drugs with the enforcement of The Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 (Amendment) (No. 2) Order 2024 and accompanying regulations set to take place on 15 January 2025. These sweeping amendments reflect the government's response to an escalating public health and safety crisis posed by emerging and dangerous substances.

These measures send a powerful message about prioritising public safety over permissive drug policies. Alongside stringent controls, the penalties reflect the gravity of these substances' impact on communities—amplifying consequences not only for users but also manufacturers and suppliers.

The reforms aim to stay ahead of new drug threats, keeping the public safe from serious risks tied to misuse and stopping access to dangerous drugs that cause lasting harm.

New classifications now place six potent synthetic opioids, including AP-237 and nitazenes, under the most severe legal category, Class A. These drugs, associated with fatal respiratory depression, have no medical use and can now only be accessed under strict licensing for research purposes. Possession could mean up to 7 years in prison, while production or supply carries a maximum life sentence. This decisive action comes after recommendations from the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD), highlighting the escalating dangers of these substances on public health. As noted in Hansard (UK Parliament), “Fifteen synthetic opioids, including 14 nitazenes, will be controlled as Class A drugs under the 1971 Act. This follows recommendations from the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs”. Benzodiazepines, despite their reputation as sedatives, have seen an influx of dangerous, unregulated variants across Europe, prompting the classification of 15 new compounds, including cloniprazepam and flubrotizolam, as Class C drugs. Meanwhile, xylazine, a veterinary sedative linked to deaths in illicit drug mixtures, also joins the Class C roster but retains limited approval for veterinary use under strict regulation. The rise of such substances, especially when combined with opioids, has intensified their role in life-threatening overdoses. According to the Waltham Forest Council Bulletin, “Synthetic opioids such as fentanyl and nitazenes caused spikes in drug-related deaths in England in 2017, 2021 and most recently in 2023”.

Additionally, the legislation renamed and clarified control measures for methoxyphenidine, a drug known for hallucinogenic effects similar to ketamine, further tightening monitoring mechanisms. Significantly, these updated controls prohibited substances like nitazenes through even broader “generic definitions,” ensuring new analogues cannot bypass regulation. The law targets the evolving tactics of illicit drug manufacturers seeking to exploit loopholes and flood the market with untested, highly potent products.

Source: [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)



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FIND OUT HERE >

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE WORLD?

FIND OUT HERE >

**Substance
Abuse & Family
Violence...**

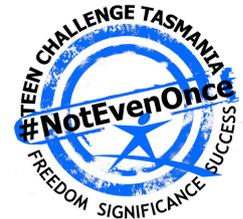


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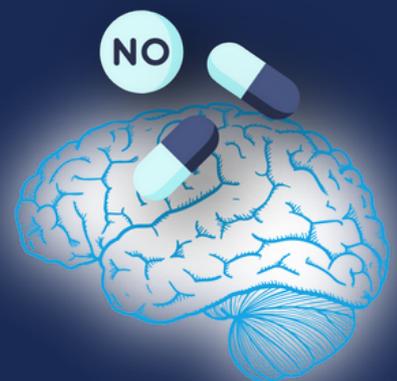
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