

The background features a vibrant, abstract design. At the top left, there are thick, curved bands of yellow, blue, and pink. To the right, there are several concentric swirls in green, pink, and blue. In the center, a grey dove with its wings spread is flying towards the left, positioned in front of a blue wire birdcage. At the bottom, there are more colorful swirls and curved bands of pink, blue, and yellow.

Eating disorders and addiction

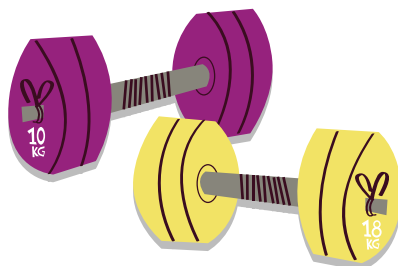


What is addiction?

Addiction happens when a substance or behaviour starts to take over, even if it is **causing harm**. It's often when a person **ceases to have control** over something they habitually do or consume.

It's **not just about smoking, drugs, or alcohol**. People can also get addicted to **work, social media, sex, shopping, food, exercise, and many other things**.

And, contrary to stigma, it's not just about 'willpower'. It's about **how the brain and emotions respond to stress, pain, or past experience**.





What's the overlap between addiction and eating disorders?

If you've ever struggled with an eating disorder, then you might notice some similarities between EDs and addiction:

Feeling out of control

Using food or substances to cope

Feeling shame or guilt around addictive / ED behaviours

Experiencing stigma, being misunderstood

Feeling isolated

Feeling stuck in a cycle that is hard to break






Living with an ED and an addiction

If you are living with an ED and some kind of addiction, it may feel especially difficult to break these cycles, and one condition may make the other harder to cope with.

For example, when you have an ED and/or are under the influence, it can be harder to access the rational part of your brain, so it can feel harder to make safe and healthy choices.





Taking it one step at a time

EDs and addiction often come about as coping mechanisms for difficult emotions or experiences. So it could be quite difficult or unsafe to attempt to recover from both conditions all at once, especially if you don't have other forms of support in place to help you cope when things feel tough.

Recovery needs to be carefully thought about: what needs to be looked at first? Having support, doing it alongside somebody, and breaking it down into slow, manageable steps is often a safer approach.



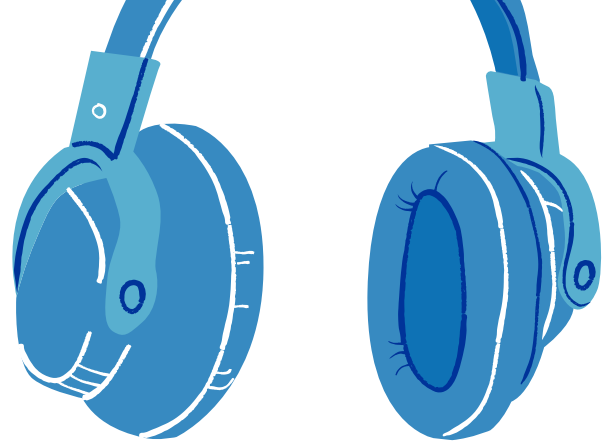


Recovery support

One-to-one therapy means somebody can be supported by an expert to take recovery one step at a time. Therapies such as CBT and trauma informed care can help break unhealthy cycles.

Dual recovery support groups are dedicated to supporting people who are experiencing both a substance addiction and a mental health condition such as an ED. These provide a space to talk about what's going on for you and discover that you are not alone with what you are experiencing. Sharing stories and connection can also be a great source of hope for recovery.





Online resources: listen & read



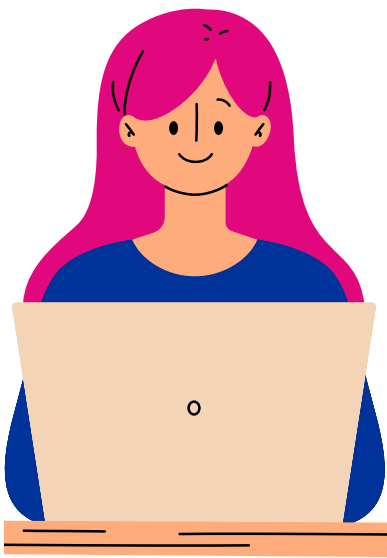
Recovery Warriors

An online community full of resources and peer support for people recovering from EDs. They have lots of blog posts and podcast episodes focused on addiction and EDs.



The Addicted Mind

A podcast focused on addiction and recovery; they have several episodes exploring eating disorders in particular. Their website also has resources and blogposts.





Ways to reach out

wearewithyou.org.uk – Supports people with drug, alcohol or mental health problems, and their friends and family.

changegrowlive.org – find information and local support services for alcohol and drug use. Also offers support for mental wellbeing, and other issues like housing and work.

adfam.org.uk – Support for **family & friends** of a person living with drug or alcohol addiction.

[0300 888 3853](https://03008883853) – Addiction Family Support helpline **for those supporting a loved one** with a substance or gambling addiction.

