

When things get really bad, remember the six C's:

I didn't **CAUSE** the problems
I can't **CONTROL** what this person does
I can't **CURE** things.

BUT...

I can take **CARE** of myself
I can **COMMUNICATE** my feelings to others
I can make good **CHOICES**.



addaction

How do I cope?

Worried that someone you care about is taking drugs or drinking too much?



This booklet is for children who have a parent or carer who takes drugs or drinks too much. It gives information and advice. It also tells you where you can find out more or get some help.

Addaction, a national drugs charity, has published this booklet. To find out more about our work, visit www.youngaddaction.org.uk. You can call 020 7251 5860 to find out if there's a youngaddaction service near you.

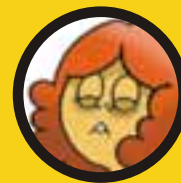
© Addaction and educari 2006.

This booklet may not be reproduced without permission.

This booklet was written by Richard Ives of educari (www.educari.com) with the assistance of Rebecca Cheshire and Addaction Communications.

Illustrations by Elliot Elam (www.elliottcartoons.com), design by Kirsty Powell, Addaction Communications.

Thanks to funding from HSBC Insurance Brokers (www.insurancebrokers.hsbc.com).



So your mum takes drugs... or your dad, brother, aunt, sister... whoever it is, it's someone that you care for.

Life can be tricky, and it's even harder when someone in your family takes drugs or drinks too much. You don't like what they are doing to themselves. You don't like them making your life difficult.

Perhaps they're great when they aren't taking drugs or drinking. You can have a good time with them. You know they have their own problems and life can be a struggle for them. But what about you? What about your needs?

Young people with drug users in their families say they often have problems like having to look after the person, or

having to take care of younger brothers or sisters. Not being able to go out and have fun, not having close friends, messing up at school, or just having to put up with a lot of stuff they shouldn't have to deal with.

If you've got any of these problems – or even if you haven't – you'll find this booklet useful. In it are some stories about young people who had drug or alcohol problems in their families.

And remember, help is there if you need it. Look at pages 22–23 for details of organisations that can help.

Douglas's Mum



Douglas's mum injected heroin. She had tried to keep it a secret from him when he was young, but he found out.

A lot of the time she was a great mum, but when she took heroin with her mates, she forgot about everything – including Douglas.

One of his mum's mates asked her to store some heroin for him.

Someone told the police. Douglas was terrified when they came to search the house.

His mum was arrested. It was in the local paper. People at school found out and bullied Douglas.



But he got on OK with one teacher, who saw that he was good at art.

Douglas joined the art club and did some good paintings. He also made a few friends.



Douglas got his painting in an art exhibition. His friends told him his work was great. His mum was proud of him, and told him so.



Douglas was having a really rough time. His mum's problems were causing him problems. He worried about what would happen to her. He didn't have any friends. But he found something he was good at and made some friends. His new confidence helped him with things at home.

What do you do to feel good about yourself? It could be anything that you are good at and like doing. Maybe playing a computer game, or cooking a meal, maybe a sport or school activity. Whatever it is, do it!

Is there an adult who can help you? Maybe a relative or teacher, or the parent of a friend?

May's Aunt



May was born too early and had to stay in hospital for a long time. When she went back home, things weren't good. All the family's money was spent on drugs and there was nothing left over to make a nice place to live.

They had to leave home because May's mum and dad didn't pay the rent. They had to move to a new place. May got asthma and had trouble breathing.

Then the Social Services decided that May's parents weren't looking after her properly and put her into foster care.

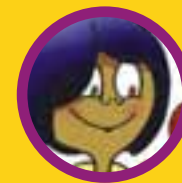




Mum left Dad because he was getting violent when he drank too much. Mum tried hard to make things better. But life was still a struggle.

They moved home again and again. May didn't go to school for a while. When May got a bad toothache her mum couldn't find a dentist.

At last May's mum decided to get help. May has gone to live with her aunt while her mum is getting treatment and is now going to school. May hopes to be living with her mum when her treatment has finished.



May has had a difficult time. She missed out on school and moved house so often she couldn't keep any friends. Because of this she felt worried and scared about things, especially the future.

While her mum is getting better and May is living with her Aunt, things are more stable and she's made some good friends. Her aunt has taken her to see the doctor about her asthma, and found a dentist to deal with her bad tooth.

Maybe you have been upset because of your parents' problems. Perhaps, like May, you have a health problem and haven't seen a doctor, or you've missed out at school.

Is there an adult who might help you to live a more stable life? Some kids may need to live away from their parents for a while – but this can be a big step and may not be right for you. Perhaps there is someone who can help you take care of yourself.

Rob's Cousin

Rob was shocked when he found out his older cousin, Danny, was using cocaine. Rob talked to his mum about Danny, but his mum said there was nothing she could do, it was up to Danny and his parents.

But Rob was still worried, so he went and had a chat with Danny. At first, Danny didn't want to talk, but Rob was determined to help Danny see that he had a problem.



Eventually Danny started to talk. About how his step-dad took drugs use and how his older brother might go to prison. Danny was afraid he'd end up in prison too.

Rob suggested calling Childline for some advice. They were helpful and made some good suggestions about what Danny could do.

Danny went to see a social worker who found him help for his drug problem, and gave him advice about his step-dad and brother. Danny was grateful to Rob for his help and support and they became really good friends.





Rob helped his cousin, even though his mum said that there was nothing that could be done. With Rob's support, Danny got some help.

Remember, we can't help everyone who needs help, and sometimes people won't accept our help. But we can try to do our best when it seems right.

Do you know someone who needs help?
Is there anything that you can do to help them?
If you needed help, who would you go to?

Sophie has a baby



Sophie got pregnant when she was 14. She was delighted to have a baby of her own but worried that she wouldn't be able to care for him properly.

Sophie went to a class where she learned how to look after her baby and most of the time, things were great. Sometimes, though, her baby cried so much, Sophie couldn't bear it.

Sophie's mother wasn't much help as most of the time she was drunk.



One night, Sophie hit her baby, but this just made him scream even more. And Sophie felt terrible about it.



When the health visitor came around, Sophie told her how hard it was being a mum. The health visitor helped Susie to see she could care for her baby without losing her temper.

It made Sophie think about when she was younger. She remembered that her mother had often been angry and how bad this made Sophie feel.

Sophie decided that she would treat her baby much better than she had been treated.

She began taking her baby to nursery and started helping out there. She learned a lot about children and eventually, after she had done some training, she got a job as a nursery assistant.



Sophie didn't know much about being a mum. Her own mum got angry and was often drunk. Sophie was determined to give her baby a better life. The parenting classes were really good, and the support she got from the health visitor helped a lot. As a young, single parent, Sophie's life was not always easy, but she found the support that she needed.

If you had a baby, how well would you be able to look after it?
What problems might you have?
How would you tackle these problems?

Sandra's Brothers and Sisters

For as long as she could remember, Sandra looked after her brothers and sisters. When her parents got drunk or took drugs they weren't able to look after the children.

Sandra enjoyed looking after the children, but sometimes she got very tired, and wished that her mum and dad would do more.

Sometimes, Sandra got upset that her life wasn't as much fun as the teenagers she read about in magazines. She wished that she had some friends of her own age, but she didn't have time to do things after school.



She sometimes had to look after her mum and dad when they got too drunk. She often said to herself: 'It isn't fair!'.

Then she found out about a young carers' project, where she met other young people. Like her, they had to look after other people.

Sandra had fun at the project. She made friends with the other young people there and shared her problems. The staff were great too. They helped her get more support, and a bit more free time.





Sandra realised that she couldn't solve her parents' problems. She still looks after her brothers and sisters more than she should. But now she's found the support to enjoy her own life, too.

Sandra had a lot of responsibilities for someone her age. They were difficult to cope with. But thanks to the young carers' project, she found she could manage. Her parents didn't change, but she did.

What would you do if the people around you couldn't change? Would you keep it to yourself? Or could you try to change your situation?

Perhaps, like Sandra, you have to care for others. Are you getting the support that you need? You might like to contact a local young carers' project – see the website address given at the back of this booklet to find out if there is one near you.

If someone close to you has a drug or alcohol problem



It can be hard to cope when someone you care about takes drugs or drinks too much. You don't want anyone to know, and maybe you're afraid of what other people will say.

But you are not alone. There are a lot of young people like you. These are some of the problems they said they had:

- feeling bad about what was happening in their family
- fears about what might happen to their parents
- fears about adults being violent or angry
- not having friends and feeling lonely
- not having enough money for basic things like food and rent
- not having regular mealtimes, bedtimes, or any routine to their day
- having problems at school because they had too many other things to think about
- missing school because of moving house a lot, or because they had to look after their parents or their brothers and sisters
- feeling that they had to keep their parents' drug use a secret
- not getting the help they needed to deal with their problems.

Here are some ideas that might help you to cope



It's not your fault

You're not to blame for someone else's drug or drink problems.



You can't control them

It's a person's own responsibility to tackle their problems. You can tell them how you feel but this might not change what they do.



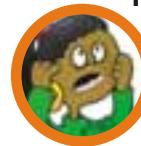
Talk

It's OK to talk about how you feel. Keep telling your family how you feel so that they know what you are going through. And if you can't talk to them, or they don't seem to listen, find someone you trust and tell them. You'll feel better for having shared your problems.



It's not a good idea to cover things up

If something is wrong, you need to say so. Tell someone you trust. Get the help that you need. If you feel you can't trust anyone, call Childline. Their number is at the end of this booklet.



It's normal to feel the way that you do

Maybe you feel confused or upset. You might feel angry or frightened. You might feel ashamed or frustrated. Maybe you love someone, but hate what they do. These feelings aren't comfortable, but it's OK for you to feel that way.



Make time for yourself

Maybe you have so many responsibilities that you don't find time to have fun, make friends or look after yourself properly. But these things are important so find time for them. Don't feel guilty about taking time for yourself.



Things can change

People can change. But it can take a long time. They can promise you that they are changing, they can seem like they are changing, but it doesn't always happen. But stay positive and don't give up.

Help and advice

Talking to someone can make it easier to cope. People in these organisations will listen to you and give you support and advice.

ADDACTION

Addaction runs drug and alcohol treatment services for young people, adults and families. You can find your nearest service at www.addaction.org.uk

FRANK (England and Wales)

Frank has accurate drug information and gives free and confidential drugs advice 24 hours a day to anyone. Phone **0800 77 66 00** Web: www.talktofrank.com
Email: frank@talktofrank.com

KNOW THE SCORE (Scotland)

Information and facts about drugs and a free, confidential 24-hour service that will put you in contact with trained advisers. Phone **0800 587 587 9**
Web www.knowthescore.info

CHILDLINE

Confidential helpline for children or young people in any kind of trouble or danger. Phone **0800 11 11** (helpline open 24 hours) Web www.childline.org.uk

YOUNG CARERS

This organisation is part of the Children's Society. Their website has a link to help you to find young carers projects in local areas. www.youngcarer.com

ALATEEN

Support and local groups for teenagers affected by someone's drinking. Helpline 10am – 10pm, 365 days a year
020 7403 0888

Web: www.al-anonuk.org.uk/alateen/

CONNEXIONS

Confidential advice, support and information by phone, text, email, or webchat for 13- to 19-year-olds. Phone **080 800 13 2 19** Text: **077664 13 2 19**
Web www.connexions-direct.com

