

A couple is seen from behind, looking out over a vast valley at sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm, golden glow over the landscape. The couple's silhouettes are dark against the bright sky. In the top right corner, there is a red square with a white border containing a blue rounded square with the word 'ebook' in white. The background image is a landscape with mountains and a valley, with the sun setting behind the mountains.

ebook

DRUG ABUSE AND ALCOHOLISM: HOW IT AFFECTS THOSE AROUND YOU

Addiction and alcoholism affect virtually every individual who is in contact with the addict or alcoholic. For this reason, addiction is often referred to as a family disease.

OUR EXPERIENCE

Our experience is well founded in helping and assisting families affected. Contact us today to FIND OUT MORE

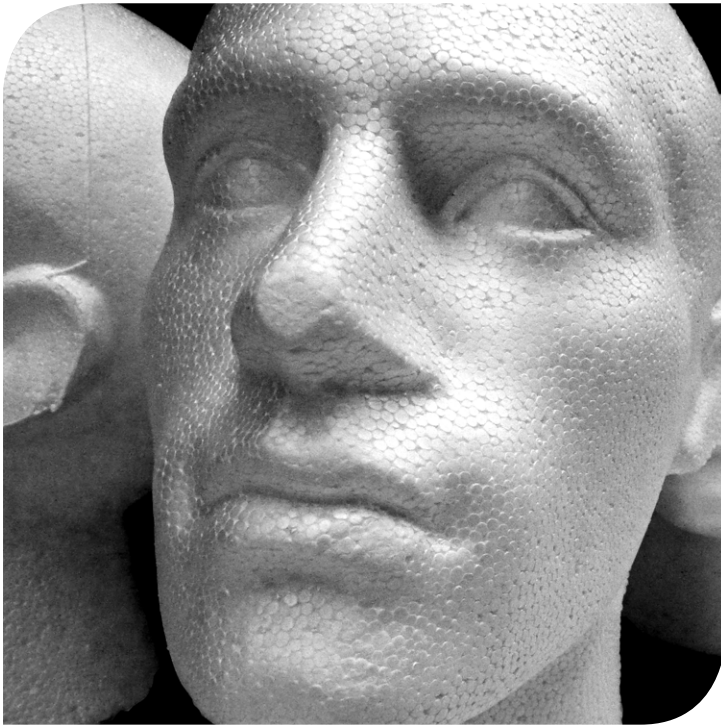
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WHY READ THIS eBOOK?

If you are a family member, friend or loved one and someone you care for has fallen prey to drug or alcohol addiction, this e-book will assist you in various ways to identify, plan and formulate a plan of action to assist your loved one.

1. INTRODUCTION

Addiction, a family disease

Addiction and alcoholism affect virtually every individual who is in contact with the addict or alcoholic. For this reason, addiction is often referred to as a family disease.

This article will show that the ripple effect of addiction goes far beyond the boundaries of the family, but it filters into every aspect of our lives, making it what could be called a "societal disease".

Unfortunately, the people closest to the addict or alcoholic feel the brunt of the

abuse first and possibly the worst, but it is only a matter of time before these effects are felt in other spheres of the abuser's life, like in his/her social circle, work environment, health, finances and later in society at large.

If left untreated, the destructive force of drug addiction and alcoholism eventually damages every aspect of the addict or alcoholic's life. Drugs or alcohol consume the addict's total existence, in such a way that obsession and compulsion to use dominate

their lives. Their responsibilities and moral standards fall by the wayside and this moral deterioration progress to a point where they could end up in jail or worse, in the morgue.

When loved ones become aware that someone close to them has developed an addiction, they may feel various intense and sometimes conflicting emotions, like shock, disbelief, anger, fear, sadness and compassion.

IF LEFT UNTREATED ADDICTION WILL DESTROY THE LIFE OF THE ADDICT

Often all these emotions are felt simultaneously and they find this very confusing and disturbing.

Such reactions are normal and a natural part of the coping process, as loved ones move into action to keep themselves safe and try to

help the person with the addiction problem.

A lot of information is available about the psychological and physical consequences of addiction and alcoholism, but what about the social effects?



“ If left untreated, the destructive force of drug addiction and alcoholism eventually damages every aspect of the addict or alcoholic’s life ”





2. PERSONALITY

One of the main reasons why addiction and alcoholism have such a significant effect on those around the affected person, is because addiction and alcoholism affect someone's personality and behaviour in a variety of mostly negative ways, effectively making him/her another person, who still needs to be accommodated in the otherwise stable environment.

They behave in ways that are totally out of character and in some ways completely contrary to their moral make up. They may become deliberately offensive, lie,

cheat, steal and be secretive. They might place the need of their addiction above their family and friends.

Drugs and alcohol change certain structures of the person's brain, which is why there is such a dramatic change in personality.

The type and extent of these changes largely depend on the type of substance abused, the quantities used, their lifestyle as well as their psychological and physical health before the addiction interfered in their lives.

COMMON BEHAVIOUR



The addict or alcoholic has no or very little control over the occurrence of these changes, except to stop using or drinking, which at this stage of their process is normally not an option.

Seeking help is always an option though! Unfortunately, in most cases, it is the people who are the closest to the abuser and being hurt the most, who are also the ones most likely to find them the help they so desperately need. For more information on addiction see: www.wedorecover.com/addiction/understanding-addiction.html

The stress of alcoholism and drug abuse can place a huge toll on a marriage or romantic partnership, because the addict or alcoholic becomes untrustworthy and cannot be counted on to do what they say they will do. They may have changed from an easy going person to one who has mood swings and violent outbursts and whose behaviour in general has become completely unpredictable. Their focus is on getting

and using, which makes them forgetful and distracted. They may go out on an arbitrary errand and not return home for a few days.

They might lie and steal money to buy their substance of choice. They will probably end up doing terrible things which they would never have done if they were not abusing drugs or alcohol. They invariably become terribly selfish, self-centered and oblivious to other peoples' needs and concerns.

Spouses and partners may feel neglected and become resentful toward their partner for not being available or supportive anymore and for not taking responsibility for things like paying bills and domestic admin issues, as these are no longer of any importance to them.

They may find themselves disillusioned and upset, because their homes and finances are being put at risk. Financial hardship can impact the relationship due to the addicted person's need to buy alcohol and/or drugs and their subsequent inability to find and/or keep consistent employment. Sometimes the spouse or partner is unaware of the financial difficulties they are experiencing, as guilt and shame withhold the addict or alcoholic from being honest about their true financial standing.

There may be jealous rages, where unsubstantiated accusations are flung around. There will probably be an increase in arguments or "the silent treatment" may be given on a regular basis. Emotional hardship may become standard in the house and there may even be cases of slapping, hitting, throwing or smashing objects, which should not be taken lightly, as this is abuse and domestic violence. If the addict or alcoholic is craving the next drug or drink and is unable



to satisfy that craving, violence is often the result. The worst thing about this violence is, that is in normally committed by someone who is not normally a violent person.

Their addiction has become the main priority in their lives and that is all that matters. That does not mean that the violence should be excused or tolerated, as that is a form of enabling behaviour.

Partners may become distant, which can lead to infidelity through affairs with someone who "understands". The use of pornography, internet sex and prostitution usually escalate.

The general picture becomes one of domestic instability. Due to fear of embarrassment, the

spouse may begin to avoid certain situations and start to isolate the couple. This isolation may lead to estrangement from family and friends, who are the ones who will be needed most for support in the future.

Sometimes this loss of supportive relationships is the final blow that pushes the addict or alcoholic to seek help.

Spouses and partners can be frightened, because they do not know how to help their loved-ones and are unaware of available treatment options.

The best way to handle this is to do research and know who to contact in this regard.



RELATIONSHIPS

"Sometimes this loss of supportive relationships is the final blow that pushes the addict or alcoholic to seek help."



If one part of a partnership suffers from addiction and the other not, then co-dependence issues may be involved and help should be sought for that too.

For more information on finding a rehab facility, see: www.wedorecover.com/articles/article/help-finding-a-rehab-centre.html

All of this is a perfect recipe for marital and partnership breakdown, which more often than not lead to financial hardship and distress, which is even more difficult when children are involved.

3. HOME AND FAMILY LIFE

STRESS EFFECT ON THE FAMILY

A person with a substance abuse problem has a disease that can and probably will hurt their families. Addiction and alcoholism put a lot of stress on parents, brothers and sisters, grandparents, actually on anyone who is part of their home. The family is often the first people who are noticeably affected by the abuse, but at the onset of the problem, they are mostly unaware of what the actual problem is.

Invariably, the addict or alcoholic do not believe that they are sick and out of control and they do not see the problems they are causing themselves and those around them.

Parents can feel immense guilt and feel responsible for the addictive behaviour,

while also being constantly worried about their child's physical wellbeing. Siblings may blame themselves for not noticing the abuse earlier and may even feel guilty for being part of it on a social level.

Parents and siblings often feel powerless and can become very angry and frustrated. Children, they may not understand what is going on, but they are aware of a problem in that one parent may be absent from important events and they feel the tension in the home. They may be constantly anxious, scared or angry, which may be detrimental to their performance at school.

Due to the stress the abuse is causing, family members may start fighting among each other. They differ on opinions of the causes and the possible solutions.

In the early stages, they may even blame themselves for what they perceive to be the problem and believe that they are one of the factors perpetuating the abuse.

NEGATIVE SITUATIONS SURROUNDS ADDICTION IN MANY WAYS

Some may even believe that they are the sole reason for what is happening in the addict or alcoholic's life. Substance abuse in a home can cause a breakdown in communication, which can separate a once tight knit group, resulting in people taking sides and not working together to help the suffering addict.

The family may be ashamed or embarrassed about having an alcoholic or addict in the family, which may cause them to withdraw from their social circle. They struggle to present a positive public image, while living in fear and shame. The drug user or alcoholic might do and say things that upset friends and other acquaintances, which exacerbates the shame. They may stop taking part in normal activities in order to avoid questions and rumours, but may also be too afraid to leave the addict or alcoholic alone in case they harm themselves.



Due to constantly being subjected to lies and manipulation, they lose trust in their own judgement, causing their thinking to change and expecting the worst out of every situation. Addiction in the family can take once stable family members to places of distress and grief, which could influence not only their family lives, but also their social and professional functioning. This increased stress levels can further lead to detrimental effects on their health, like migraines and even heart problems.

Other problems that may arise are the potential loss of a job and the resulting loss of income for the family. Poor financial decisions due to addiction or simply pouring funds into substance abuse, will lead to general financial trouble in the household. This will lead to more conflict in the family, as they will feel a need to lend support, but also feel the financial burden.

Conflict with the children may cause them to disregard the authority of the addict or alcoholic or they could be afraid. The fear may be a result of violence or from emotional trauma inflicted from yelling, insulting and talking down to them.

It is clear how the disease of addiction spreads itself to the loved ones, proving over and over again how this is a family disease. Because children of addicts and alcoholics do not have positive role models to base their own parenting skills on, we see the behaviours and the effects of addiction and alcoholism passed down generations.

”CONFLICT MAY RESULT IN VIOLENCE”

Addicts and alcoholics are often being pushed out by their families. This is done for two reasons. It could be a form of “tough love”, in which the family withdraws support, thus giving the addict space and time to reflect on the consequences of the addiction and bringing him/her to their knees to ask for help.



They also do it to keep themselves safe from the effects of the addiction on the family. When the addict or alcoholic is ready for treatment, the families are invariably there again to lend the much needed support.

Once help is sought, it is recommended that the whole family be involved in the process of recovery, as the whole family is being affected by this disease. For more advice to families of addicts, see: www.wedorecover.com/articles/article/advice-for-families-of-drug-addicts.html

4. FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS

Addiction causes a great deal of social upheaval that has the potential to test the strength of friendships. Addicts and alcoholics probably lie to and manipulate their friends on a regular basis and may even steal from them to support their habit. Due to these negative effects of substance abuse, a lot of friendships are lost or we see the non-addict being abandoned in favour of friends who endorse and share the addict's addictive habits.

Substance abuse seems normal in the in the company of other abusers, for that reason, the addict or alcoholic will often neglect their family duties to rather share company with people who will not interfere with their using or drinking. For obvious reasons, the stability of these types of friendships are tenuous.

Research has shown that the incidents of violent crimes within groups of substance-abusing friends are disproportionately high.

Family members may have abandoned them, sometimes leaving friends who continue to support the addict or alcoholic as a surrogate family and the only people left to provide support.

Substance abuse has the potential to cause a ripple effect of anxiety and concern through the neighbourhood. Neighbours may be aware of dealers visiting or other criminal activities at the property and are concerned for their and their children's safety. They do not want contact with those neighbours, as they fear for their own safety and security. They may even be concerned about property values, as the addict or alcoholic



may fail to maintain their home and garden. Friends who do continue to support the addict or alcoholic look forward to the day when the person is ready to get help and enter treatment.

Their best route is to be prepared with as much information about treatment and facilities as possible.

To find out more about how to help a person with addiction, see: www.wedorecover.com/addiction/help-addiction.html

5. EMPLOYMENT

We basically spend a third of our day in the workplace, which makes it quite natural that colleagues and business associates will be affected by substance abuse around them. We may find that an employee changes from an efficient, punctual and smart person, into someone who neglects their appearance and personal hygiene, turns up late for work and becomes erratic and displays unacceptable behaviour in the workplace.



Addiction and alcoholism damage work relationships, in that colleagues often have to cover up for them not doing their bit, either through being incapacitated at work or through absenteeism. This causes resentment in the workplace and can negatively influence team spirit and productivity. Companies can lose business due to missed meetings by the addict, while multiple errors and missed opportunities can cause a decline in the company's fortunes. To support their habit, they can further damage their workplace by stealing from their colleagues or from the company. It is not uncommon that petty cash drawers are raided, wallets and purses are stolen from and stolen company goods end up in pawnshops.

Depending on the type of work, the addict or alcoholic may not only put themselves in

harm's way, but they may be a danger to their customers and co-workers.

In many work environments, people partner with colleagues to work on projects that are too big for one person to complete. It happens often that one person buckles under the pressure to succeed and start using stimulants, like cocaine, methamphetamine and prescription medication, to boost productivity.

All too soon, the person's work becomes erratic, he/she does not show up for scheduled meetings and drop project milestone balls. Once one part of a team abuses drugs or alcohol or gets addicted, the whole project can fail, with huge financial consequences for the company.

The end-result of addiction or alcoholism

in the workplace is often the termination of the services of the addict or alcoholic. Unemployment may drive them into worse self-destructive behaviours, damaging chances of finding other employment.

The loss of a job means a reduction in income and that may put strain on the relationships at home, which can lead to a breakdown in the marriage and ultimately divorce.





6. HEALTH

Drug addiction and alcoholism are very harmful to the health of the sufferer and is one of the most obvious effects of addiction.

A lot of drugs are linked to mental health problems and affect how the brain works, making concentration and learning difficult as well as causing memory problems. Research has proven that drug use can also cause relapse back to previously successfully treated mental health problems. Some drugs are linked to trigger schizophrenia, while paranoia, frightening flashbacks, hallucinations, Hallucinogen Persisting Perception Disorder (HPPD), depression, psychosis, mood disturbances, anxiety and panic attacks are frequently associated with drug abuse.

Lung disease like asthma, chronic cough, bronchitis and pneumonia are also caused by some drugs. Liver and kidney damage are also commonly associated with alcoholism and drug abuse. Other direct results of abuse can be a negative effect on fertility, severe weight loss and extreme dental problems. Certain addicts can suffer from tremors and myelin break down, which can lead to muscle spasm and possible permanent motor functioning problems.

Some drugs can cause an over stimulating of the heart and nervous system, which can lead to high blood pressure, increase in LDL ("bad" cholesterol), decrease in HDL ("good" cholesterol), and heart disease, which can eventually lead to a heart attack.

This can also lead to overheating and dehydration, but at the same time have fluid retention as a side effect. Depending on how some drugs are taken, it can lead to damage of the cartilage of the nose or seriously damage the veins and body tissue and even cause difficulty in swallowing. Sharing of needles can cause HIV or viral hepatitis.



It is thus quite obvious that addiction and alcoholism have very negative short- and long-term consequences on the health of the addict or alcoholic. These matters become the problems of the family, employer and society, as addicted people invariably lose their jobs and their medical benefits and become a burden on their loved ones and the state. Even where they manage to hold things together and stay on medical aid, abuse and corruption occur frequently, draining the resources of the fund, which effects all its members. As mentioned before, addiction is a societal disease.

At this point it is also extremely important to be reminded of the fact that addiction and alcoholism can be fatal – an overdose can happen very easily, the suicide rate among addicts and alcoholics is extremely high, they are prone to accidents and that can be fatal too.



7. FINANCIAL IMPACT

Addicts, alcoholics and their families pay a heavy financial cost, both in terms of funds spent on substances and related activities, as well as in terms of lost salaries or wages and missed job opportunities. The financial impact snowballs when we look at the cost of lost productivity, expenses on health care, drug and alcohol treatment programs (both privately funded and government subsidised), substance abuse related law enforcement endeavours, drug addiction and alcoholism helplines, support groups and the accommodating of drug and alcohol offenders in prisons. Indirectly, we are also dealing with lost revenue of tax when we deal with job losses and an increased burden on social welfare

An alcoholic who drinks as little as a six pack of beer a day, can spend as much as R 19,800.00 a year on beer, while a nicotine addict who smokes a pack of 20 cigarettes a day, will spend R 10,800.00 on nicotine.

Marijuana users can easily spend R 18,000.00 a year on their drug, while cocaine addicts (on two grams a day) can easily rack up a drug bill of R 216,000.00 a year.

Take into consideration that the addict or alcoholic, who still has a job, is probably not performing well at work and miss out on promotions that could improve their financial position.



They often drop out of school or fail to gain an advanced education. These associated costs can add up to hundreds of thousands and even millions of rands in a lifetime of one alcoholic or addict.

As mentioned above, health costs increase exponentially as the addiction progresses, but an increase in accidents and loss, due to negligence, can cause an increase in insurance premiums and can even lead

to insurance policies being cancelled, increasing the financial load on families and society at large.

Addiction and alcoholism can easily trap future generations of a family in poverty. Many children of substance abusers also develop substance abuse problems, with consequential lack of adequate education and a shortage of access to opportunities.



8. EDUCATION

Addiction's impact on young people is often first seen in their relationship with and performance at school. This is the case both when the child or a parent has the problem. As these are the forming years and looking at the utmost importance of education in the years ahead, this is a most important relationship to be nurtured.

Truancy is one of the first signs of a problem being present. Due to peer pressure and a desire to fit in, addiction tends to occur more quickly in young people, as they tend to be able to get hooked from just the first time they try a substance.

ANTI SOCIAL AND ERRATIC BEHAVIOUR

A child who is using drugs may show signs of anti-social or erratic behaviour. There may be problems at school, like absence, reports of theft and violence or even dealing. They may spend a huge amount of time in their room or stay out most of the night with people the parents do not know.

Their concentration will be poor, their motivation will be dropping and their performance would most likely be deteriorating.

FAILING EDUCATION IS A SIGN

These factors may lead to the child failing at school or not performing well enough to qualify for tertiary education. In some cases the child may be expelled and not be given further opportunities or the child may lose interest in any form of education, which will have a terrible impact on life in the future.

The way in which addiction affects education again shows the significant snowball effect of this disease and how important it is to seek help as early as possible. For more information on teenagers and drug abuse see:

www.wedorecover.com/articles/article/teenage-alcohol-and-drug-abuse.html



9. LAW AND ORDER

Addiction costs money, making crime rife in the world of the addict and alcoholic. Stealing or fraud to obtain funds to sustain addiction is common.

It normally starts small, like stealing from one's partner or family, which quickly, as the addiction progresses, escalates to stealing from friends, employers and later from other organisations.

A large portion of general crimes committed is usually drug related. Addicts and alcoholics easily resort to burglary, mugging and robberies to fund their

addictions and the more serious the addiction, the greater the chance of these being accompanied by violence.

Addicts become so fixated on getting the next fix that their needs overtake any thoughts of rational or civilised behaviour and they become willing to do anything to get the funds for it – violence and prostitution are quite common among addicts and alcoholics.

They think of no one but themselves when they are consumed by their addiction. The cost of maintaining law

and order in terms of police staffing and the legal process is immense and just another way in which we see how addiction and alcoholism affect society as a whole.



10. GENERAL REACTION AND BEHAVIOUR

In order to get or give help, it is important to look at people's general behaviour patterns when confronted with addiction or alcoholism.

- **Guilt:** Guilt is a very common feeling to experience when addiction or alcoholism is involved. Parents may wonder what they did wrong, while raising the child that could have caused the problem, while significant others may blame themselves and feel guilty for not seeing the problem and thus not doing something about it. Common among siblings and friends is the thought "why him or her and not me?", as the chances are good that they used or drank with the addict or alcoholic at some stage. It is important to not let guilt interfere with giving or getting help. Feeling guilty serves no purpose, while taking action will make all the difference.
- **Responsibility:** People often experience the feeling that they may be responsible for the addict or alcoholic having developed the problem, but that only serves a purpose if they also feel responsible for helping. One of the most effective ways of helping the addict or alcoholic is to do research on treatment options and even on interventions, so that help can be at hand when it is asked or desperately needed. Financial assistance for treatment might be needed and moral support will always be welcome. For more information on interventions, see www.wedorecover.com/articles/article/interventions---how-they-work.html
- **Enabling:** To enable the addict or alcoholic is to act in a way that you intentionally (or not) support him or her in the alcoholism and addiction. Forms of enabling behaviour are to cover for them when they do not show up for work and making excuses for their unacceptable behaviour or providing money to buy drugs or alcohol or supply other resources to make their abuse comfortable – like food and a warm bed – while they make living with them impossible. Family and friends must be aware of their enabling behaviour. To continue enabling is to support addiction and serves no purpose toward a solution. For more information on enabling see: www.wedorecover.com/family/enabling-addiction.html
- **Betrayal and Anger:** Addicts and alcoholics lie, cheat, manipulate and steal to support their habit and they constantly betray the trust of those who love them and care for them the most. These are very normal and extremely valid feelings, but it is important for family and friends to get past these feelings, or put these feelings aside, in order to embrace the person with addiction, once they make the decision to enter recovery and get the vitally needed treatment.

11. FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN TREATMENT

It is clear that the family plays a vitally important role in substance abuse. From being branded as the cause in many cases, to being the closest and most harshly impacted by these diseases, most addicts and alcoholics manage to seek and get treatment for their substance abuse because of positive family involvement and intervention. As the family is so intricately involved in the addiction, it is important to understand how incredibly powerful the family dynamics can be. Addressing an unhealthy imbalance in communication in the family is a significant step in moving toward addiction therapy. Positive family involvement can lead the whole family on a journey of self-discovery and recovery for all, individually and as a unit. Treatment for the addict or alcoholic often enable the family to gain new perspective about their loved one's addiction as well as their own behaviours and thus their contribution to the problem.

Treatment helps the family to step back and recognise negative behaviour patterns, like seeing how they were trapped in a cycle of enabling and co-dependency with the addict. They realise how pretending that nothing is wrong and thus ignoring the problem, unintentionally assists the substance abuser in his or her addiction.

Treatment helps the family to identify behaviours and traits that they can adjust, so that they can break the cycle of anger and resentment, which exacerbates the abuse.

Support from the family is essential in the successful treatment of addiction and alcoholism. That is why treatment centres involve the family through regular visiting times and provide educational programs, supportive and dynamic recovery workshops and group sessions for families.

Families are also encouraged to attend AlAnon and NarAnon meetings. These are programs to provide support to families and friends of alcoholics and addicts and address things like building a family through

the addiction therapy process and supporting themselves and their loved ones through the recovery process. There is no true end to the addiction therapy process.

Addiction and alcoholism are truly considered "family diseases" and families should continually attend these meetings during and after formal treatment, in order to continue a constructive program of support and ongoing education.

These meetings assist family and friends of addicted individuals to continue to stay out of the destructive cycle of enabling and co-dependency and truly realise the benefit of addiction therapy.



12. CONCLUSION

The diseases of addiction and alcoholism affect the addict and alcoholic terribly, but as shown above, the effects are felt far wider than initially expected.

As denial is a huge part of these diseases, causing the addict and alcoholic to not recognise that he or she has a problem, the onus invariably lies with the ones most hurt by this disease, the spouse, partner, family, friends and colleagues, to take initiative and find help.

Fortunately, a large amount of research-based resources and information are available to help these people to help the addict and alcoholic to get the treatment they so desperately need. Be prepared with the needed information and know what the next step is, so that help can be available as soon the addict and alcoholic agree to it. For more information in this regard see:

www.wedorecover.com

“The onus invariably lies with the ones most hurt by this disease, the spouse, partner, family, friends and colleagues, to take initiative and find help”





CONTACT US TODAY

Our team of highly trained staff are standing by to assist you with advice that can help change your life.

LIFE CHANGING ADVICE

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Our Team

We have a highly trained team standing by to assist you with advice, simply contact us on:

SA 082 747 3422 | UK 0800 955 4357