Addiction to alcohol or drugs affects your health, work and family life. It affects your performance, work relationships and your financial benefits. It is a progressive disease that affects every member of your family. As you continue to drink or use a drug, a range of emotional, spiritual, and financial problems occurs for almost everyone you relate with including family, friends, and coworkers.

The United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON) has a Staff Counseling Service that is offered by a qualified psychologist who understands the process of addiction and recovery, that you may consult with.

WHAT IS ADDICTIVE BEHAVIOR?

Addiction to alcohol or other drugs is a chronic disease. It is progressive, continuous, and long term. Alcohol or drug abuse means that a person has control over whether he or she drinks or uses. Chemical dependence means that a person has lost control over his or her drinking or using behavior.

People suffering from addictive disease engage in compulsive behavior and gradually lose control of their lives. They continue to drink or use drugs even when they know that doing so has negative consequences. They tend to have low self-esteem and almost inevitably suffer from anxiety and depression.

If someone in your life suffers from addictive disease, you have experienced his or her extreme
behavior—ranging from depression to exhilaration—and probably have also experienced his or her denial (“I can quit anytime” or I don’t have a problem”), dishonesty, frequent disappointments and series of ruined relationships. These are hallmark behaviors of a person who suffers from addiction to alcohol or drugs.

Sometimes the alcoholic or addict is in such a strong state of denial that the best alternative is to arrange an intervention.

WHO IS AFFECTED BY ADDICTIVE DISEASE?

Alcoholism and drug addiction affect people from all parts of the society and from all professions. They affect, rock stars, journalists, accountants, managers, doctors, artists, psychologists etc., the homeless people as well as stay-home moms and dads, teenagers and corporate executives. There are addicts who are students at the top universities as well as in the best high schools. They may be teachers at your neighborhood school, nurses at your local health facility, security guards at the gates of your or sales people at your local hardware store.

Studies show that there is genetic predisposition to alcoholism. About half of all alcoholics had an alcoholic parent. Men seem to be more vulnerable than women to the alcoholic traits of their parents. Women may be affected more by environmental (e.g., financial and life circumstances) than inherited factors.

WHAT ARE THE PHYSICAL EFFECTS OF ADDICTION?

Alcohol produces many long-lasting damage in many areas of the brain function. It damages the capacity for abstract thinking, problem-solving, memory, and physical dexterity. It impairs verbal, visual, and spatial ability. The extent of damage to the brain tissue depends on the extent of heavy alcohol abuse. When the drinking stops, a certain amount of healing is possible.

People who suffer from addictive diseases continue to drink or use drugs even when they know it will lead to negative consequences.

ARE PRESCRIPTION DRUGS ADDICTING?

Prescription and illegal drugs with psychoactive side effects target the brain and can change a person’s mood, causing these drugs to be potentially addicting. Some people think that if a
doctor has prescribed a drug, it is not addictive. This is not true. It is important to tell your doctor if you:

- Are an alcoholic (currently using or in recovery)
- Have ever been addicted to any drug
- Have taken more than the prescribed dose of a prescribed drug
- Have taken a prescribed drug for a long time
- Have taken a prescribed drug with alcohol.

**WHY IS THE TREATMENT?**

Addictive disease is progressive and can be fatal. Fortunately, recovery is possible with the right treatment.

Since addiction is primarily a brain disease that results in behavioral symptoms, the main treatment is psychosocial therapy.

The first phase of treatment of addictive disease focuses on the physical effects of alcohol or drug use on the body of the addicted person. This can include detoxification or treating life—threatening disorders such as liver failure.

Since addiction is primarily a brain disease that results in behavioral symptoms, the main treatment is psychosocial therapy. This treatment usually focuses on irrational feelings and distorted thinking that accompany chronic alcohol or drug abuse.

Alcoholism and drug addiction are chronic diseases that require a lifetime treatment plan. Successful treatment plans include a focus on the 12 steps of Alcoholic Anonymous and involve ongoing, long term participation in self-help groups. People who have been hospitalized continue attending AA meetings; participate in group therapy and also in individual relapse prevention programs.

**FOR ASSISTANCE CALL**
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