

**Addiction**  
communities take action

# HBO'S "ADDICTION"

A Viewer's Guide



[www.AddictionAction.org](http://www.AddictionAction.org)

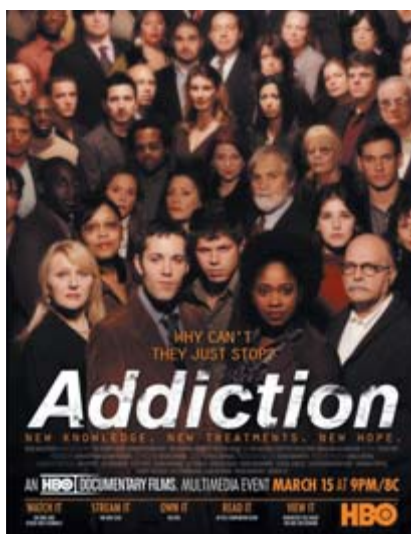
**W**hether you're a person who stopped drinking fifteen years ago or a mom struggling with your child's drinking and drugging, there's a whole new world of information and effective new treatments that will change how you think about addiction and the opportunities for long-term recovery.

HBO's show "ADDICTION" focuses on six themes that you can use to engage your family, friends and neighbors as well as policymakers and the media in deeper discussions about the science of addiction and other important topics. Out of these discussions can come new understanding and calls for improved policies that will make it possible for more people to get the help they need to heal themselves, their families and their communities.

This Viewer's Guide, developed through a partnership between Faces & Voices of Recovery, Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America, and Join Together is designed to encourage dialogue about the issues raised in "ADDICTION." The questions and topics in this guide are designed to spur discussion.

## Pre-Show Questions

- What do you say to people who say that addiction is a moral issue, not a health problem?
- Are there places in your community where people can go for help with alcohol and drug problems?
- Have you ever heard the expressions "hitting bottom" or "denial" when talking about addiction?
- What are AA/NA and other 12-step programs?
- What difference does it make if someone starts drinking and drugging as a teen-ager or as an adult?
- Have you (or do you know anyone who has) been denied health services as a result of addiction?



## Themes from the Show

### THEME NO. 1: **The Trauma of Addiction as Seen in our Nation's Emergency Rooms**

The devastation of addiction is seen in trauma centers and emergency rooms across our country every day. Doctors and nurses experience first hand the too frequent deadly effects of untreated addiction to alcohol and other drugs.

### THEME NO. 2: **Youth: Addiction, Treatment and Recovery**

Alcohol and drug use usually begins in adolescence when the brain is still undergoing dramatic changes in structure and function. That is why early prevention is so important and why the younger a child starts using alcohol or drugs, the greater the chances are for addiction in the future. For parents, finding the right treatment and recovery support for their kids can be very challenging.

### THEME NO. 3: **Understanding the Science of Addiction and Recovery**

Over the last 15 years, scientific advances have revolutionized the understanding of the neurobiological underpinnings of why some people suffer from addiction to alcohol and drugs while others do not. Using brain imaging, researchers can observe the neurochemical changes in the brain as it responds to alcohol, drugs and medications for addiction treatment. This research helps explain why people with addiction find it so difficult to stop using alcohol and drugs and why treatment medications are effective.

#### THEME NO. 4:

### New Treatments for Addiction

Millions of Americans have used mutual support groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA) to get and stay clean and sober and achieve long-term recovery. A new generation of medications has been developed in the last decade that can help effectively treat addiction, especially when coupled with counseling and other recovery support. There are already several FDA-approved medications available to treat alcohol and drug dependence, including buprenorphine, naltrexone, methadone, and acamprosate. These new effective treatments are an important addition to the arsenal of treatments that are helping people achieve long-term recovery.

#### THEME NO. 5:

### Employee Assistance Programs

Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) provide professional counselors who do confidential assessments and short-term counseling to employees and their families who are dealing with addiction. Participation in these programs can be a powerful turning point for getting people the help they need, and in providing long-term support for recovery.

#### THEME NO. 6:

### Insurance Discrimination

Our nation is in dire need of a healthcare system that fully addresses the medical needs and social supports for people struggling with and newly in recovery from addiction. Insurance companies typically impose higher co-payments, deductibles and more restrictive visit limits for mental health and substance use/addiction coverage than they do for other healthcare, resulting in tragic losses of life.

## Post-show Questions

- If one in four Americans has a family member who is struggling with addiction, why isn't there more public outcry in support of getting them help?
- There are millions of Americans in long-term recovery from addiction, yet you wouldn't know if from the media coverage that focuses on the horrors of addiction. Why do you think the story of the success of long-term recovery is missing from our public discourse?
- Do people in our community know where they can get help for problems with alcohol and other drugs? Is that information well publicized?
- Is your school or office supportive of people who are receiving treatment or in recovery from addiction to alcohol or other drugs?
- Are there alcohol and drug-free recreational activities for young people in your community?
- Where can families who are struggling with the addiction of a family member go for support?
- Does your doctor prescribe medications for addiction?
- Are there people in your community who are public about their own recovery from addiction?
- Should the government require health insurance companies to cover treatment and recovery services for people with addiction at the same level as they cover other illnesses?
- Should the government, through Medicaid and Medicare, provide the same level of treatment and recovery services to people with addiction as they do for other illnesses?
- What do you say to people who say that addiction is a moral issue, not a health problem?
- What can you do in your community to be an advocate for addiction and recovery?



Visit [www.AddictionAction.org](http://www.AddictionAction.org) for tips and planning guides on how to get involved in HBO's ADDICTION project.

CADCA, Faces & Voices of Recovery and Join Together are partnering to provide information about addiction, treatment and recovery. Visit [www.AddictionAction.org](http://www.AddictionAction.org) for more information on steps that you can take in your community or contact one of the partner organizations to find out how to get involved.

### **COMMUNITY ANTI-DRUG COALITIONS OF AMERICA (CADCA)**

CONTACT: **Mary E. Elliott**, [melliott@cadca.org](mailto:melliott@cadca.org)

CADCA is the only national organization representing coalitions working to make America's communities safe, healthy and drug-free. CADCA represents over 5,000 community coalitions working to support prevention, intervention, treatment and recovery services. Coalitions connect multiple sectors of the community to create comprehensive local plans that address the root causes of alcohol and other drug addiction and their community impact. Founded in 1992, CADCA provides training and technical assistance, public policy and advocacy, communications strategies, conferences and special events.

[www.cadca.org](http://www.cadca.org)

### **FACES & VOICES OF RECOVERY**

CONTACT: **Tom Coderre**, [tomcoderre@yahoo.com](mailto:tomcoderre@yahoo.com)

Faces & Voices is a national campaign founded by the recovery community in 2001. The organization is committed to mobilizing and organizing the millions of Americans in long-term recovery from alcohol and other drug addiction, our families, friends and allies to change public perceptions of recovery, end discrimination and keep a focus on the fact that recovery works and is making life better for millions of Americans.

[www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org](http://www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org)

### **JOIN TOGETHER**

CONTACT: **Roberta Leis**, [roberta@jointogether.org](mailto:roberta@jointogether.org)

Since 1991, Join Together, a program of the Boston University School of Public Health, has been the nation's leading provider of information, strategic assistance, and leadership development for community-based efforts to advance effective alcohol and drug policy, prevention, and treatment. Through extensive online information resources and national policy panels, Join Together helps community leaders understand and use the most current scientifically valid prevention and treatment approaches.

[www.jointogether.org](http://www.jointogether.org)