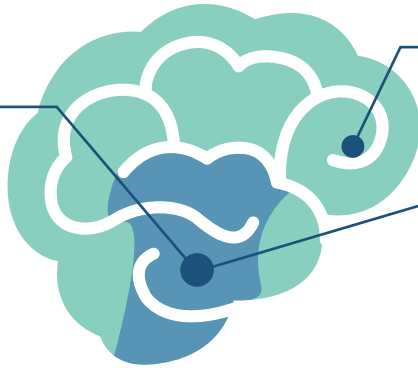


ADDICTION & THE BRAIN

Addiction is the most severe form of substance use disorder caused by repeated drug use that hijacks key functions of the brain.

The limbic system is responsible for our basic survival instincts:

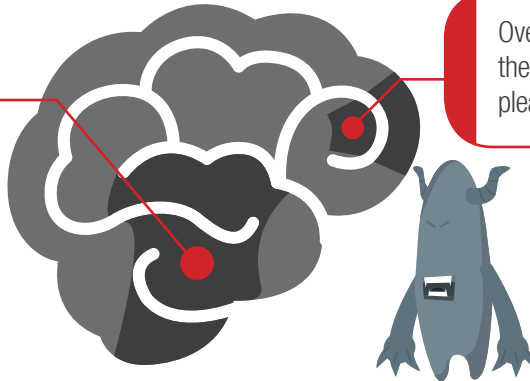
-  Eating
-  Drinking
-  Finding shelter
-  Building relationships
-  Caring for our young



The prefrontal cortex is where decision-making and impulse control live. This is what separates us from other animals.

When we do these things, the brain releases dopamine — our reward for surviving. The brain remembers this feeling of pleasure and seeks it again.

When a drug or alcohol is used, it activates the same dopamine process. And when use is repeated, it can hijack the brain, making it think that it needs the substance in order to survive.



Over time, the hijacker needs more of the substance to get the same feeling of pleasure — causing increased brain damage.

The Good News: Addiction is preventable and treatable!

Brain scans show that once in recovery, the brain can get better.

Advancements have been made in assessments, treatment programs, recovery supports and medications to treat addiction.



Delaying substance use until the brain reaches maturity (early twenties) is the most important step in preventing addiction.