

## **The Silent Struggle: Acute Stress Effects of Living with Addiction in the Family**

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In the often chaotic and stressful environment of living with addiction in the family, family members find themselves grappling not only with the direct challenges posed by substance use but also with a profound yet often overlooked aspect of this struggle—acute stress. As a silent but pervasive companion, acute stress infiltrates the lives of those connected to an addicted family member, leaving an indelible mark on their mental and emotional well-being. The intricate web of symptoms that manifest as a result of this acute stress corrodes self-esteem, dampens the joy and vibrancy of life, and fosters a complex interplay of emotions. Shedding light on these nuanced dynamics, we aim to provide insight into the subtle injuries inflicted by living with active addiction. Family members can mediate these injuries by developing a recovery program and employing living skills that increase their resilience and reduce their stress.

### **Self-esteem Erosion:**

Living in the shadow of substance use disorder can take a toll on self-esteem. Constantly trying to rise to the challenges posed by a family member's addiction can lead to feelings of inadequacy and worthlessness.

### **Emptiness and Boredom:**

The disorder and its unpredictability often result in family members experiencing a persistent feeling of emptiness and boredom, as they grapple with the challenge of discovering meaning and purpose in their lives.

### **Overextending for Others:**

Family members may find themselves constantly taking on responsibilities for the afflicted family member that they should not be burdened with, leading to feelings of exhaustion and resentment.

### **Guilt for Self-Care:**

Taking time for self-care becomes a source of guilt, as individuals may feel selfish or neglectful for attending to their needs.

### **Abandoning Enjoyable Activities:**

Formerly enjoyable activities may fall by the wayside as individuals neglect their interests and hobbies to cope with the demands of addiction.

### **Neglecting Nurturing Relationships:**

Healthy relationships that provide support and nourishment may be overlooked, contributing to isolation and loneliness.

### **Social Withdrawal:**

Feeling unable to share the struggles at home, individuals may withdraw socially, creating a barrier that further isolates them from potential sources of support.

### **Relationship Misalignment:**

Engaging in one-sided friendships where individuals offer support to others but lack a reciprocal support system can contribute to feelings of isolation and resentment.

### **Communication Challenges:**

The stress of living with addiction can impair communication with significant others, making it difficult to express pain, anxiety, or unmet needs.

### **Avoidance of Conflict:**

The desire to maintain peace may lead individuals to avoid conflict, suppressing emotions until they reach a breaking point.

### **Ongoing Anxiety:**

Living with the constant unpredictability of substance use disorder can lead to persistent anxiety, creating a state of heightened alertness.

### **Desire to Escape:**

The overwhelming stress may foster a desire to escape through physical separation or emotional detachment.

### **Hope for Intervention:**

Individuals may find themselves hoping and praying that someone else will step in and take charge of the responsibilities they are shouldering.

### **Prioritizing Others' Needs:**

Continually putting the needs of the family member with substance use disorder before one's own can lead to a cycle of self-neglect.

### **Emotional Dependency on the Addict:**

Taking emotional cues from the mood of the person with substance use disorder can lead to a rollercoaster of emotions for family members.

### **Protective Instincts:**

Feeling compelled to shield other relationships from the negative influence of the person with an addiction can create additional stress.

### **Doubt and Self-Questioning:**

Family members may doubt their sanity and judgment, particularly when faced with anger or denial from the person afflicted with substance use disorder.

### **Hypervigilance:**

The need to constantly monitor the situation can result in hypervigilance, further heightening stress levels.

### **Compulsive Behaviors:**

Individuals may develop their own compulsive behaviors as a coping mechanism in response to the stress of addiction in the family.

### **Depression and Fatigue:**

The cumulative effects of living with addiction may manifest as depression, fatigue, and low energy levels.

### **Addiction to Excitement:**

The unpredictability of addiction can lead to an addictive pattern where individuals become accustomed to the excitement of crises.

### **Stress-Related Medical Issues:**

The toll of chronic stress may manifest in various physical ailments, further highlighting the interconnectedness of mental and physical health.

Recognizing and addressing these acute stress symptoms is crucial for family members navigating the challenging landscape of addiction within the family. Seeking support, establishing healthy boundaries, and prioritizing self-care are essential to regaining emotional well-being in such adversity. One of the most critical new behaviors to learn in recovery is to shift your focus from the person suffering from substance use disorder to your own recovery.



One valuable resource in the quest for emotional well-being amidst adversity is "Mastering Worries With Thought Stopping Techniques." This concise, Brief Lesson provides a powerful thought-stopping technique to take charge of worries and reduce anxiety. By breaking free from the cycle of worry, mind-racing, rumination, and overthinking, individuals can empower themselves to reduce stress and regain control of their mental well-being. This guide offers practical insights to live a more peaceful and fulfilled life, complementing the journey of those seeking resilience and recovery in the face of living with substance use disorder in the family and its myriad of challenges.

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