

A STORY OF HOPE & HEALING

RESOURCE BOOKLET: UNDERSTANDING OPIOID USE DISORDER & ADDICTION

PRESENTED BY
RAKSHA INC.

TIME TO TURN THE
PAGE ON THE MYTHS!
LEARN THE FACTS,
KNOW THE RESOURCES TO HELP.

"ADDICTION ONLY
OCCURS WITH
ILLEGAL DRUGS."

"DOES NOT HAPPEN
IN GOOD,
EDUCATED 'FAMILIES.'"

"CULTURAL &
FAMILIAL TIES
PROTECT AGAINST
ADDICTION."

"WILLPOWER
IS ENOUGH."





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Disclaimer:

This booklet was created by Raksha, Inc with the sole purpose of creating awareness and offering resources for help for opioid and substance use and addiction. The story shared in this booklet is inspired by and loosely based on the real journey of a courageous individual who overcame opioid addiction, with the sole purpose of showing the face of addiction— that it can happen to anyone and that recovery is possible. The resources shared in this booklet are not meant to be utilized as a way to diagnose yourself or as a solution.

Every individual's journey with substance use and recovery is unique. What may work for one person may not be effective for another. Healing paths, including medication-assisted treatments, therapies, and medications, vary based on personal needs and circumstances. We have provided a list of resources and recommendations; however, it is ultimately the responsibility of each individual to work with healthcare professionals to find the right combination of treatments that suits them. We bear no responsibility or liability for outcomes based on the use of these resources, as the effectiveness of any treatment is highly individual. Always consult with a qualified healthcare provider for personalized medical advice.



This project is supported by Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) Office of Behavioral Health Prevention & Federal Grants (OBHPFG) & US Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and funded with a State Opioid Response Grant.

Addiction is a choice

Addiction doesn't really happen in our communities

It is all about willpower

There is no such thing as the 'Opioid Crisis'

Relapse? You probably don't really want to get over the addiction

If you raise your kids with the right values and education, they won't need to turn to drugs

Reality Check:

Addiction is NOT a choice.
Addiction can happen to anyone, regardless of background.
Recovery isn't always a straight path.



My name is Sara I'm a mom, a yoga teacher, a dancer and a person in recovery. And this is my story.



Life sure has changed over the last decade.



I was always a bright kid. My family tells me my smile lit up a room, and my parents doted on me. I had good grades, a loving family, and a warm comfortable home.



College arrived before I knew it, and I was excited to get out into the real world.



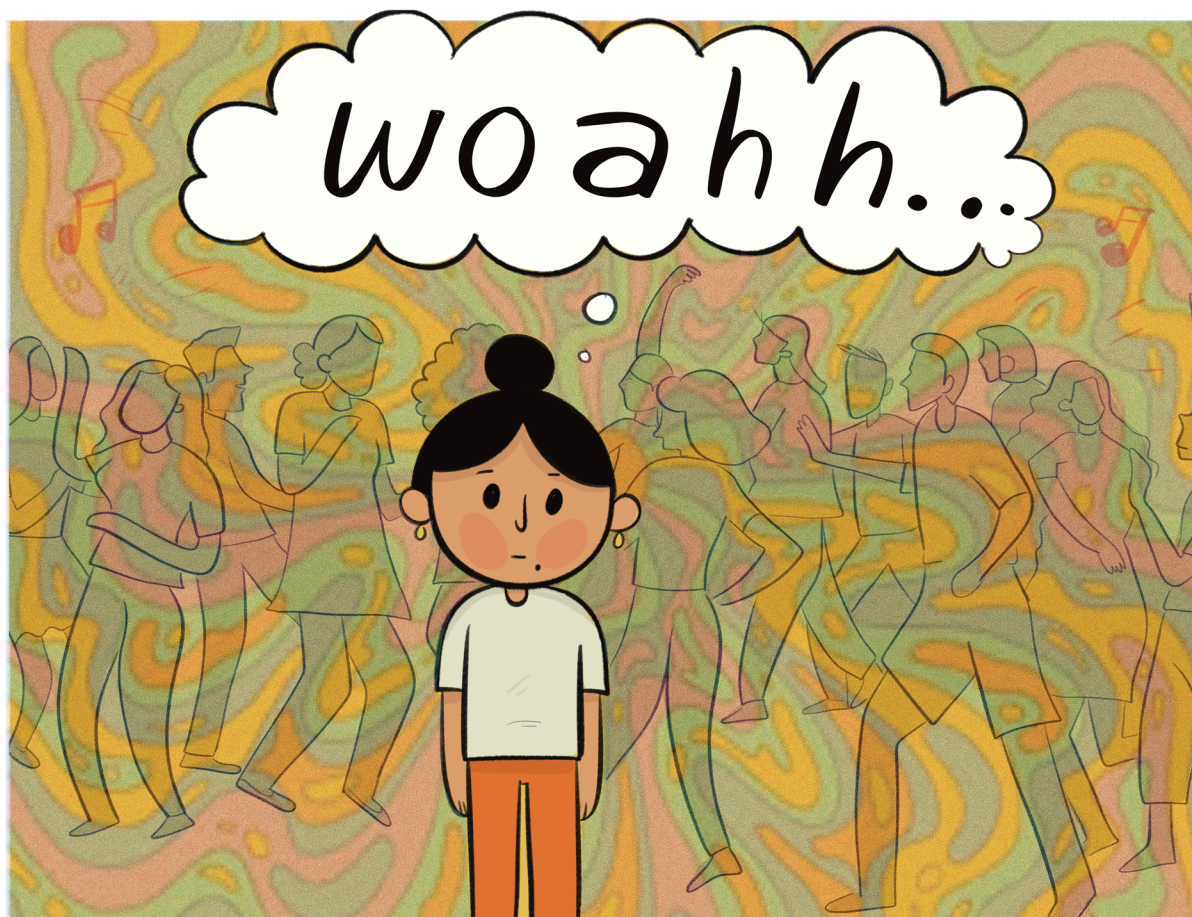
Hey, my friend from college Sammy said she scored some Oxy from her parent's medicine cabinet last night.



Scan QR code to read the rest of the story online.



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After college, I moved to New York to pursue PHD. New York was everything I had dreamed of and more.



Then I got sick.



I was so tired. I didn't leave my apartment because I was scared I wouldn't be able to climb the stairs to get back in.





Heart Failure. I couldn't believe it. My doctor diagnosed me with idiopathic cardiomyopathy. This was too shocking for me to process. I was still grieving my dad's sudden death due to a heart attack six years ago.

I was started on heart medications and a defibrillator.... and prescription opioids to manage the pain that came with the process of implanting the defibrillator. This was the first time I had even thought of opioids since that one time I had experimented with Oxytocin that my friend Sammy introduced me to in college.



And then my defibrillator malfunctioned. Twice. More surgeries. More pain. Before I knew it, I couldn't do without the opioids.

Then there was only one left. And I was terrified. I NEEDED. MORE.



I was embarrassed to tell anyone. All I could think about was getting more.

All of a sudden, I couldn't imagine a life without opioids.



I tried to quit on my own for 6 months. But for every step of progress, the physical withdrawals would pull me backwards by two steps.



I really didn't want to spend the rest of my life taking a pill every day just to feel alive. It soon became clear that I couldn't do it on my own. I needed more than just willpower.



DETOX-ROOM



My doctor suggested I try a 10-day detox program to stop using opioids. At the hospital, they gave me medicine to help. The physical symptoms went away, but I wasn't prepared for the sadness and anxiety that followed.

Long-term substance use can change how the brain works. Addiction and mental health are connected. Sometimes, mental health struggles like anxiety or depression lead people to use substances. And for some individuals, opioid use can make those feelings even worse.

I was given new medications to help with my opioid addiction and manage my symptoms, but I started feeling dependent on them too.



There were so many ups and downs. Noone told me coping with withdrawals, relapses would be so hard. There were days when I almost gave up.... But I kept going on and kept trying to find my solution.



Medications may work to wean off the addiction but depending on the type of medications and how they work on you, you may have additional challenges with those medications.



A MONTH - LATER



This was a big step in my recovery. I started a new path with therapy, support groups, exercise, and medicine to help with the mental challenges of stopping opioids.

After almost a year of struggles, downs and persistence, I finally felt like I was on a path to recovery.



I'm okay now. But I still seek help when I need to.
Hope is real. Recovery is possible!
You need to be your biggest advocate and even if it takes time to find what works for you -
DON'T GIVE UP!



Because living a life free from
addiction is worth every step!!

Did you Know?

Opioid Use Disorder continues to be a major public health concern in the United States, with synthetic opioids like Fentanyl and Xylazine? In 2023, Fentanyl-laced drugs caused more overdose deaths than prescription drugs, heroin or any other substance.

Flip the page to read about resources to learn more and find support!

Resources

Terms to Know

1.1 What are substances?

The term substances includes:

- Alcohol
- Tobacco
- Medications & Drugs: Prescription and Over-the-Counter (OTC) Medicine, Opioid pain relievers, anxiety and sleep medicines, stimulant medications used to treat ADHD (amphetamines)
- Illegal substances that are prohibited by law but used recreationally
- Opioids, Opiates (narcotics)
- Pain relieving or psychotropic substances that show milder effects, such as Marijuana

1.2 Table: Understanding the difference between Substance Use, Misuse, Abuse, Addiction

	Substance Use	Substance Misuse	Substance Abuse	Addiction/ Substance use disorder
Definition	General act of consuming a substance, intended or unintended	Using a substance contrary to its intended purpose	Continued or excessive use of harmful or hazardous use of a substance	A state of dependance; chronic, relapsing disorder, compulsive drug seeking and use despite consequences
Examples	Taking medication as prescribed, drinking coffee, using an inhaler for asthma	Sharing medication with someone else, taking extra doses, using for non-medical reasons	Regular use of illegal drugs, developing tolerance and increasing doses, neglecting responsibilities	Pattern of misuse and abuse of substances Visible effects on physical and mental health, functional changes to the brain such as low dopamine levels, impulse control, can disrupt normal, healthy functioning of organs, overdose risks leading to death
Impacts	Neutral	Improper or harmful use. Examples include: taking medications for recreational purposes	Negative consequences and impairment, that impact health, relationships, work performance, overall wellness and lifestyle	Severe changes that may last a long time after a person has stopped taking drugs left untreated, they can last a lifetime and may lead to death.

Severity	Varies	Can range in severity	Generally severe with significant impacts	Severe changes that may last a long time after a person has stopped taking drugs left untreated, they can last a lifetime and may lead to death.
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1.3 Glossary of Terms

1) Drug Tolerance: Over time, individuals may develop drug tolerance with continued use. Drug tolerance may often turn into compulsive drug seeking or substance use disorder

2) Physical dependance: shows in the form of withdrawal symptoms. We say someone is physically dependent when a person is not able to discontinue use after a period of time and has to continue to prevent withdrawal symptoms. The time it takes for someone to get physically dependent varies from person to person.

3) Withdrawal:

A sudden stoppage in any long-term use of substances is likely to cause withdrawal. When a person stops taking drugs that their body is used to, the body needs time to recover.

Did you Know?

You could experience withdrawal symptoms from some medications prescribed to you for recovering from opioid use disorder/ addiction? Many individuals in recovery may turn to legally and easily available substances to compensate - such as alcohol or cigarettes?

Withdrawal symptoms range from person to person but can include:

Early symptoms:

Agitation
Anxiety
Muscle aches
Increased tearing
Insomnia
Runny nose
Sweating
Yawning

Late symptoms:

Abdominal cramping
Diarrhea
Dilated pupils
Goosebumps
Nausea
Vomiting
Depression
Anxiety

Source: Opiate and opioid withdrawal: MedlinePlus Medical EncyclopediaLock

https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000949.htm?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=share&utm_campaign=mplus_share

4) Detoxification (Detox):

A process or period of time in which someone abstains from or rids the body of toxic or addictive substances, usually under medical supervision.

5) Broad classifications of medications used to treat addiction:

Agonist Medications:

These drugs activate opioid receptors in the brain to provide relief from withdrawal symptoms and cravings without causing the intense high associated with opioid misuse. They are used in medication-assisted treatment (MAT) for opioid addiction.

Examples:

Methadone: A full opioid agonist that reduces cravings and withdrawal symptoms by activating opioid receptors in the brain.

Buprenorphine (Suboxone, Subutex): A partial opioid agonist that activates opioid receptors but produces a less intense effect compared to full agonists like heroin or morphine.

Antagonist Medications:

These drugs block opioid receptors, preventing the effects of opioids like euphoria or pain relief. They are often used to prevent relapse by stopping the "high" feeling if opioids are used.

Examples:

Naltrexone (Vivitrol): An opioid antagonist that blocks the effects of opioids. It is used to prevent relapse in opioid-dependent individuals who have already gone through detox.

Naloxone (Narcan): An opioid antagonist used in emergency situations to rapidly reverse opioid overdose by displacing opioids from the receptors.

6) Relapse:

The return to substance use after an attempt to stop. Relapse is considered part of the recovery process but can lead to further health complications.

7) Support Groups:

Organized groups that provide emotional and social support to individuals battling substance abuse. These groups often operate on a peer-to-peer model.

8) MAT (Medication-Assisted Treatment):

The use of medications, in combination with counseling and behavioral therapies, to treat substance use disorders.

9) Harm Reduction:

Strategies designed to reduce the negative consequences of drug use, including safer use, managed use, and abstinence.

10) Therapy:

A treatment method to address the psychological aspects of addiction. This can include individual counseling, group therapy, or behavioral therapy.

Title: What are Opioids? What is the Opioid Crisis?

Opiates are chemical compounds that are extracted or refined from natural plant matter (poppy sap and fibers).

Examples of opiates:

Opium

Morphine

Dextromethorphan (available in the U.S. without prescription as, e.g., NyQuil, Robitussin, TheraFlu, Vicks)

Dextropropoxyphene (e.g., Darvocet-N, Darvon)

Loperamide (e.g., Imodium)

Hydrocodone (e.g., Vicodin)

Oxycodone (e.g., Oxycontin, Percocet)

Oxymorphone (e.g., Opana)

Meperidine (e.g., Demerol)

Methadone (e.g., Dolophine)

Opioids are synthetically manufactured drugs that have the same effect and use as opiates. Most opioids are "made in the lab". Both Opioids or Opiates, sometimes referred to as "Narcotics", are drugs/ medications used to treat pain.

Synthetic opioids: though most opioids are technically "synthetic", some like Fentanyl or Xylazine are 50 times potent than Opiates even in miniscule amounts, undetectable and can increase risk of overdose significantly.

What is the Opioid Crisis?

The Opioid Crisis refers to the ongoing epidemic of opioid misuse, addiction, and overdose deaths that has been devastating communities across the United States. The crisis has its roots in the over-prescription of opioid pain relievers starting in the late 1990s, that led to widespread use of opioids for pain management, followed by a sharp rise in addiction, overdoses, and deaths.

In recent years, the crisis has worsened with the influx of synthetic opioids like fentanyl, which are far more potent and dangerous.

Key facts about the Opioid Crisis:

Drug overdoses have killed nearly a million people since 1999, with overdose deaths increasing by 30% year-over-year. In 2021, drug overdoses surpassed the combined number of deaths from vehicle crashes and firearm-related incidents.

70% of overdose deaths are caused by opioids. In the U.S., opioids kill more than 136 Americans every day.

The introduction of synthetic opioids like fentanyl has dramatically worsened the crisis. In 2023, fentanyl-laced opioids caused more overdose deaths than prescription opioids, heroin, or any other substance.

The Dangers of Opioids:

Higher Addiction Potential: Opioids, especially those that are synthetic, have a much higher potential for addiction compared to other substances. Even prescribed use can quickly lead to dependence.

Misuse of any opioids is dangerous. However, the extreme potency of synthetic opioids, even in small amounts, combined with their difficulty to detect, makes them far deadlier in terms of risk of overdose and fatal consequences.

Easy Access Through Prescriptions: Prescription opioids are often easily accessible, which has contributed to the rise of misuse and addiction. However in recent years, easy availability of synthetic opioids like Fentanyl and Xylazine has compounded the dangers of accidental overdose and deaths from overdose.

National Resources:

Knowing what you can do to help involves these steps:

(Scan QR Code below or visit

<https://www.raksha.org/opioidsuicideawareness> for detailed information).



1. Learn the Risk Factors that put individuals at risk
2. Learn to identify Signs of Overdose
3. Having Naloxone/ Narcan kits at hand and learning to administer them can be life saving!
4. Know that the Good Samaritan Law (Georgia) grants state-level legal protections and limited immunity to individuals experiencing an overdose or reporting one by calling 911 if they remain at the scene with the victim and act in good faith to save a life. Naloxone/ Narcan can save lives!!
5. See resources below for finding help & support

- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Helpline
1-800-662-HELP (4357)

Confidential, free, 24/7 helpline for individuals and families facing substance abuse disorders.

<https://www.samhsa.gov/find-support> to locate treatment facilities or providers

<https://findtreatment.gov/> Find confidential and anonymous resource for persons seeking treatment for mental and substance use disorders

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:

Call or text 988 or chat 988lifeline.org for support with mental health, drug, alcohol issues, for anyone in crisis or those supporting someone struggling with addiction or suicidal thoughts.

- National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)

Website: <https://nida.nih.gov/>

Educational resources on the science of addiction and treatment options.

- The Recovery Village

Website: <https://www.therecoveryvillage.com/>

Resources and information on various addiction treatments and mental health services.

Local Resources (Metro Atlanta and Georgia):

- Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD)

Website: dbhdd.georgia.gov

Provides access to mental health, developmental disability, and substance use disorder services, including treatment programs and recovery resources across the state of Georgia.

- Georgia Crisis Access Line (GCAL): Telephonic crisis intervention, clinical triage, & referral for Georgians in need

Call, Text, Chat on 24/7 toll-free: 1-800-715-4225

www.georgiacollaborative.com

Download App: myGCAL

- Nichols Center

Website: nicholscenter.org

A recovery-focused organization offering counseling, support, and resources for individuals battling opioid addiction and other substance use disorders in Georgia.

- Georgia Council on Substance Abuse

Website: <https://gasubstanceabuse.org/>

Advocacy and support for individuals seeking recovery and those in recovery, including peer support resources.

- Atlanta Recovery Center

Website: atlantarecoverycenter.com

Inpatient and outpatient recovery services for opioid addiction and substance use treatment.

- Guide, Inc.

Website: <https://guideinc.org/>

Specializing in substance abuse prevention and mental health promotion, offering resources for youth and families in Georgia.

- Summit Counseling Center

Website: <https://summitcounseling.org/>

Provides a wide range of mental health and substance abuse counseling services, including support for individuals and families affected by addiction.

Support Groups:

- Narcotics Anonymous (NA)

Peer support for those recovering from substance abuse, offering meetings and recovery resources.

Website: <https://na.org/>

- Georgia Council for Recovery

This organization offers support services, including virtual All Recovery Meetings for those dealing with substance use. While not South Asian-specific, these meetings are open to individuals from all backgrounds, including immigrants and minority communities.

Website: <https://www.gc4recovery.org/>

- Mental Health America of Georgia

MHA Georgia provides a directory of substance use recovery services, including culturally sensitive support options. Though not specific to South Asians, they work to ensure access to appropriate resources for Georgia's diverse populations.

Website: <https://www.mhageorgia.org/>

- Live Another Day – Asian American Recovery Resources

This platform offers support groups and resources tailored for the Asian American community, including South Asians, providing information on addiction recovery and mental health services.

Website: <https://liveanotherday.org/>

Overdose Prevention Training & Distribution (Georgia):

- Overdose Prevention Training & Distribution (Georgia)

GEORGIA HARM REDUCTION COALITION (GHRC)

- Call (404) 817-9994 or email ghrcemail@ghrc-ga.org

Georgia Overdose Prevention (GOP) <https://georgiaoverdoseprevention.org/>

- Free Naloxone kits and trainings

Georgia Substance Abuse Board: <https://gc4recovery.org/>

- Find a Community Service Board that serves your county:

<https://dbhdd.georgia.gov/locations/community-service-board>

- You could have a naloxone kit mailed to you: <https://nextdistro.org/>

- The SAFE Project: <https://www.safeproject.us/>

(Overdose Prevention Trainings, Safety Planning and other resources)

- Fentanyl Testing Strips: Can be purchased at local pharmacies.

Disclaimer: This list of resources and programs is not exhaustive and may not include every available option. It is intended to serve as a starting point for individuals seeking information on opioid addiction recovery and educational resources. For a comprehensive list or personalized support, please consult healthcare professionals or local support organizations.



DISCLAIMER

This booklet is based on the true story of an individual who bravely battled opioid addiction and found their path to recovery. While this story is a testament to hope and healing, it's important to remember that recovery looks different for everyone. What works for one person may not work for another, and the journey to sobriety or freedom from addiction is often non-linear. Continued healing, self-care, and following the recovery methods that work for you are essential. Even after recovery, individuals who have struggled with addiction may remain at higher risk for health issues such as cardiac disease, tuberculosis, and respiratory illness. Always seek professional support and take care of your mind and body along the way.

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