

THE RECOVERY DESK

PREMIUM GUIDED WORKBOOK

Talking With Children About a Parent's Addiction

A caregiver guide to honest, age-sensitive conversations, reassurance, and reliable support.

Five topic-specific chapters, worked examples, guided exercises, reusable planning pages and source notes.

PRACTICAL TOOLS FOR RECOVERY

Educational resource • Choose what fits • Seek professional support when needed

START HERE

How to use this resource

Choose one page that matches your circumstances. You can skip questions, take breaks, work privately, or invite a trusted support person. These exercises are for education and planning; they cannot diagnose, provide individualized treatment, or guarantee an outcome.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

If there is an immediate medical or personal safety emergency, contact emergency services (911 in Canada). For suicide-crisis support in Canada, call or text 988. Withdrawal from some substances can require urgent medical care; ask a qualified professional rather than using a workbook to decide what is safe.

YOUR CHOICES

You may change your mind about an exercise, leave a question blank, and ask for assistance. Sharing personal experiences is optional; confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in group or shared living settings.

MAKE THE RESULT USABLE

At the end of each chapter, keep one specific next step: who, what, where, when, and your backup if the preferred option is unavailable.

CHAPTER 1 / 5

Start from what the child has noticed

Children may notice changes in mood, routines, reliability, or household tension. Use simple, accurate language responsive to their questions, without graphic details or promises you cannot keep. Tell them clearly that adult substance use is not their fault and is not their responsibility to fix.

FICTIONAL EXAMPLE

A seven-year-old asks why Dad missed pickup. Their caregiver says, "Dad is having a health problem that affects his choices. Adults are working on a safer plan. You did not cause this."

GUIDED REFLECTION

1. What has the child already seen or asked?
2. Which truthful words can you use without overwhelming them?
3. Which adult can provide steady, age-appropriate support?

YOUR PRACTICAL NEXT STEP

Write a two- or three-sentence opening appropriate to this child.

WORK IT THROUGH

Start from what the child has noticed

Keep answers specific to your circumstances. Write a few words, draw a plan, or discuss the prompts with a trusted person. You do not need to fill every line.

1 What has the child already seen or asked?

2 Which truthful words can you use without overwhelming them?

3 Which adult can provide steady, age-appropriate support?

PRACTICE / TAKE-HOME ACTION

Write a two- or three-sentence opening appropriate to this child.

My next action, who can help, and when I will review it

CHAPTER 2 / 5

Adapt to developmental stage

A younger child often needs short explanations and predictable routines; an older child may ask detailed questions about trust, treatment, or privacy. Ask what the child wants to know rather than giving all information at once. Do not ask a child to keep unsafe secrets.

FICTIONAL EXAMPLE

A teenager asks whether a parent has relapsed. The caregiver answers what is known, acknowledges uncertainty, and offers a trusted person outside the home to talk to.

GUIDED REFLECTION

1. What words might confuse this child?
2. What questions should you answer now versus later?
3. How can you invite a follow-up without forcing disclosure?

YOUR PRACTICAL NEXT STEP

Create short responses for a younger child and a teen.