

# NEBRASKA LICENSEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

A SERVICE OF BEST CARE EAP

## *Old Habits (Addictions) Are Hard To Break*

All of us have habits, many, many habits. Most habits are good habits. They help us live our lives without having to relearn everything we do over and over again. Habits enable us to live life efficiently.

We all typically have some habits that are not so good. We might have a habit of drinking too much coffee or pop for the caffeine. We might have a habit of eating too much candy or ice cream for the enjoyable taste. We may smoke cigarettes or have another tobacco habit. We may spend too much time online on Facebook or surfing the web. With some of these types of habits, we may have to come to the realization that either the habit itself or too much of the substance or the behavior is not really good for us, or possibly for others. The habit is not really in the best interests of our health or happiness.

Ever try to change one of your bad habits? It is hard isn't it? ! A habit is an engrained behavior. Engrained after many, sometimes hundreds, even thousands of repetitions of the behavior. It is a habit after all. We can do it without even thinking (relearning). The downside of habits are that they are really difficult to undo and makeover. It can be a great challenge to our spirit, our emotions and our body to change ourselves and modify or stop the habit.

If you understand how hard it is to change a caffeine, sweets, tobacco or online habit, you can understand how very difficult it is to stop an alcohol or drug addiction. These drinking or using habits are engrained in the addict's brain and behavior, usually after years of cultural socialization, and many years of use. In some cases, prolonged use has led to the development of a physiological dependence on the alcohol or other drug. Health care professionals and others are in very difficult battles when trying to overcome their addictions. It takes structured treatment, 12-Step self-help recovery meetings, counseling and the support of family, friends, coworkers and others to help an alcoholic or drug addict beat a habit of addiction.

We all know how it feels to crave chocolate, an ice cream cone, a cup of coffee, a cigarette or an internet activity. Imagine then the intense cravings an addict has for alcohol or a drug.

Another thing, have you ever given in to one of your bad habits you had sworn off of and realized even more clearly your human weakness for the habit? Hopefully, you got back on track quickly and continued your battle against the habit. These types of lapses are slips or relapses for the alcoholic or drug addict. Craving for the long engrained habit occurs and, in human weakness, he or she drinks or uses again.

Alcoholics or drug addicts who slip or relapse usually feel very guilty, ashamed and remorseful for their failure to maintain sobriety. Slips and relapse can have very serious consequences for them. However, regardless of the consequences, those who care for, or assist, alcoholics or drug addicts, can help them return to sobriety and recovery by showing them an understanding of how difficult, really difficult, it is to change these powerful habits. We can help them pick themselves up, dust themselves off, and return to the battle against addiction with a renewed commitment to sobriety, their recovery program, and the permanent end to these destructive habits.

*If you are a licensed health or health-related service professional wanting more information about alcohol/drug abuse or addiction, please contact the NE LAP at (800) 851-2336 or (402)354-8055 or visit our web site at [www.lapne.org](http://www.lapne.org). If you would like to consult with the NE LAP, or schedule an assessment or an educational presentation, please ask for Judi Leibrock, NE LAP Coordinator or Michelle Hruska, NE LAP Counselor.*

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