



## **How A Parent's Substance Use Disorder Impacts Children**

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IlluminArt understands that a substance use disorder (SUD) is an illness that impacts the entire family. Children are particularly vulnerable when confronted by a parent struggling with this disease. Much like a spouse or partner, children are also exposed to a chaotic world where a parent's substance use has made them emotionally unavailable. These disturbances in the child-parent relationship can have a profound psychological impact on the child for the rest of their lives.

It is important for families to understand some of the psychological repercussions of growing up with a parent with an SUD.

- According to [SAMHSA](#), 1 in 8 children (8.7 million) aged 17 or younger lived in households with at least one parent who had a past year SUD.
- The rate of 1 in 8 children having at least one parent with an SUD was consistent across four age groups ranging from younger than 3 years to adolescents aged 12 to 17.
- Only 7.6 percent of adults with SUD received substance use treatment in the past year.

### **Stunted Emotional Growth**

What a child witnesses in their homes becomes reflected in their personalities as adults. An emotionally underdeveloped child will usually end up coping with issues by exhibiting a lack of remorse or empathy where it should be applied. This may potentially cause poor decision-making abilities.

### **Depression & Anxiety**

Children of parents with an SUD are more likely to experience symptoms of depression and other mental illnesses due to growing up in an unstable home environment. Taking on the "adult" role in their homes can also heavily affect the anxiety and stress that these kids will carry on into adulthood due to the trauma from exposure to drug-related incidents.

## Highly Critical

Unfortunately, domestic violence is common in homes of people with an SUD. Once the communication between a parent and a child is broken down and the roles are blurred, chances of physical and sexual abuse significantly increase. Children forced to grow up in these environments will develop low self-esteem and self-critical behaviors. This leaves a permanent mark on the personalities of these children who tend to ultimately lose trust in other relationships.

## Fear

Home is supposed to be a place where children feel safe. However, children of people with SUD live in a constant state of fear. They know that things are bad at home. This prompts them to believe it is only a matter of time when the outside world also becomes cruel and unforgiving. Fearing this, these children may instinctively keep friends away from their current living environment or refuse to develop social relationships with peers entirely.

## More Likely to Develop Addiction

Approximately 12 percent of children in the U.S. lived with at least one parent who was dependent on or misused alcohol or an illicit drug last year, according to a report from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). ***Research shows that children of people with a substance use disorder are twice as likely to become dependent on a substance and develop emotional or behavioral problems as other children.***

It is evident from these points that a parent's drug dependence will leave severe life spanning effects on children. Their personalities are damaged due to constant behavioral problems which eventually also take a toll on their relationships. If they choose to experiment with drugs or alcohol, there is a significant chance that the next generation of your family might continue on the path of substance misuse. ***It is crucial for kids to receive emotional support as their parents work to overcome the effects of thier SUD effectively and IlluminArt Productions can help.***

## IlluminArt Arts Empowerment Program

Since 2010, IlluminArt Productions has been empowering young people through theater as a tool to write and perform plays that illuminate critical social issues, creating conversations for positive change. Through our latest Arts Empowerment Project, IlluminArt will continue to harness the power of the arts to help children in grades K-12 who have been impacted by a caregiver's substance use. Children of parents with substance use disorders are more than twice as likely to have an alcohol and/or drug use disorder themselves by young adulthood as compared with their peers. IlluminArt's unique programming will help these young people develop invaluable social emotional skills including problem solving, increased self-esteem, conflict resolution and leadership through artistic expression. Free classes will begin soon at Historic Richmond Town including theater, play writing, dance, music and visual arts. In-school workshops are also available. For information and registration contact Keith Taylor, Program Manager [keith.illuminart@gmail.com](mailto:keith.illuminart@gmail.com) 347-829-2703.