

Student Name: _____

Exploration: Lived Experience Spotlight

Adair's Story: Understanding the Impact of Stigma

Student Instructions: Throughout these lessons, you'll hear real stories from people who have personal experience with substance use. These spotlights are told in their own words, giving you a genuine look into what substance use can be like and how it affects people's lives.

Read the story of Adair, who faced challenges with substance use. As you read it, think about how stigma may have shown up at different points in Adair's life, such as during childhood, teenage years, or adulthood.

Afterwards, answer the questions that follow. You may be asked to work in groups, pairs, or individually.

As you work, you may refer to the [Stigma](#), [Caregiver Substance Use](#), and [Protective and Risk Factors](#) infographics as well as explore the relevant [Substance Snapshots](#).

"I grew up in a home with two parents who had alcohol use disorder. I swore to myself that I would never live the way they lived, and I would never do to my future children what was done to me mentally and emotionally.

I hung around with an older group of people than myself. We played a lot of sports, and drinking was a big part of that. I remember how much I loved the way alcohol made me feel, and I knew from the first drink that I was dependent. The drug use didn't come along for many years later. I knew I couldn't hide alcohol use, but I thought if I was using pills, I would be able to hide it. For the first little while, I was able to use only pills, but shortly after, my alcohol use disorder came back with a vengeance.

I started out with alcohol in my late teens. When I was 17, I was prescribed a benzodiazepine for severe anxiety and became dependent on it pretty quickly. As an adult, I started using Percocet, Ritalin and Cocaine along with my benzos and alcohol. I also used Tylenol 3's, Tylenol 8's and pretty much anything with codeine in it.

When I was using it, my life was in complete chaos. I worked to pay for my habits

Student Name: _____

until my substance use had complete control over my life, and I was unable to work anymore. I lost my children, my family, my business and any friend I had at the time. I lost my home and ended up walking the streets until I found somewhere to live. I had zero self-respect, I lost the ability to make any rational decisions for myself, and I almost lost the will to live.

After months of being on my own and feeling completely defeated, I went to see my family doctor and asked for a referral to go to a treatment center. I ended up going to an inpatient treatment facility for a 28-week treatment program and a community addiction centre for a 12-step program. I continue to attend my Narcotics Anonymous program and enjoy doing service work to help others with addiction. This also helps me in my recovery. I now know that I should have reached out to get help earlier. I've reconnected with my family and friends, and they are a good support for me. I have a job and an apartment, and I am now happy with my life. I know I'll always struggle with addiction, but I feel like I'm in a much better place now, and I know who to reach out to for help."

Spotlight Questions:

1. How do you think growing up with parents who had alcohol use disorder influenced Adair's risk for substance use? How might stigma around their parent's substance use impact Adair?
2. What types of stigma do you think Adair experienced during their teen years?
Given an example of structural stigma, social stigma, and self-stigma.
 - Structural stigma:

 - Social stigma:

 - Self-stigma:

Student Name: _____

3. What types of stigma do you think Adair experienced when they were an adult?
Given an example of structural stigma, social stigma, and self-stigma.

- Structural stigma:

- Social stigma:

- Self-stigma:

4. How might experiences with stigma have affected Adair's choices, relationships, or ability to get help?

5. How might growing up with parents who had alcohol use disorder have influenced Adair's own risk for substance use? In what ways could stigma toward their parents' substance use have affected Adair's experiences or choices?

6. How might Adair's opportunities or choices look different if they didn't experience stigma?