# Cross-Addiction

Facilitator Guide | 60–75 minutes

Source scope: The supplied material contained a title and reference suggestions, not a lesson. This guide is newly authored educational content, not a reconstruction of a prior handout.

Purpose: Examine problems involving multiple substances or potentially harmful behavioral patterns, distinguish a meaningful concern from an ordinary interest, and practice a nonjudgmental response plan.

Objectives: Participants will describe two uses of the informal term “cross-addiction,” identify warning signs based on consequences and impaired control, and select one protective action.

## Session outline

• 0–10 min: Welcome, confidentiality limits, and choice to pass.

• 10–25 min: Explain the terminology and distinguish substance-use disorders from behavioral habits.

• 25–40 min: Work through fictional scenarios; avoid diagnosing fictional people.

• 40–60 min: Pattern–Impact–Choice worksheet, independently or in pairs.

• 60–75 min: Discuss support options and individual action plans.

## Core teaching points

Multiple substances: Some people experience problems with more than one substance, either simultaneously or at different times. A history of one substance-use disorder can make careful assessment of other substance use important; it does not mean everyone will develop another disorder.

Shifting behaviors: People sometimes describe moving from substance use to gambling, compulsive shopping, or other activities as “cross-addiction.” The term is informal and can blur important distinctions. A hobby, exercise, work, intimacy, or enjoyment is not an addiction merely because it is rewarding or frequent.

Look for impact, not labels: Consider impaired control, continuing despite significant harm, loss of flexibility, interference with valued activities, and increasing risk. A clinician should assess possible disorders; facilitators should not diagnose from a checklist.

What supports recovery: Flexible coping, rest, meaningful activities, social connection, professional care when indicated, and noticing when a coping strategy begins to create new problems.

## Facilitator safety notes

Avoid universal claims about “addictive personalities,” dopamine substitution, or inevitable relapse. Do not assume abstinence from all rewarding activities is necessary. Do not ask participants to disclose detailed use histories or illegal acts. Offer fictional examples and private writing. If discussing gambling or spending, avoid pressuring anyone to share finances. Refer participants for assessment when patterns cause distress or impairment.

## Fictional scenarios

Case A: After stopping heavy drinking, Lee starts attending fitness classes four days a week. Lee enjoys the classes, rests when injured, and continues to meet obligations. Ask: What evidence suggests a healthy activity? What additional information would matter?

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Case B: After stopping stimulant use, Sam begins gambling online, hides losses, borrows money, and repeatedly fails to stop despite serious consequences. Ask: What harms and loss of control appear? What kind of support might help?

Case C: Pat has stopped nonmedical opioid use but begins drinking heavily to sleep. Work and relationships are affected. Ask: How can the group respond without shame or making a diagnosis?

## Group exercise — Pattern, Impact, Choice

Ask participants to select a fictional example or a low-stakes personal pattern. Explore: (1) What need is the behavior meeting? (2) What are the short-term benefits? (3) What are the costs or warning signs? (4) What is one safer alternative or boundary? (5) Who can help?

## Discussion prompts

• How can a helpful coping behavior become unhelpful without automatically being an addiction?

• What is the difference between enjoying an activity and losing control of it?

• How might shame interfere with asking for help?

• What supports make it easier to notice problems early?

• When would professional assessment be useful?

## Suggested references for editorial verification

Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation. “What Is Cross Addiction?” (2019). https://www.hazeldenbettyford.org/articles/what-is-cross-addiction

Tackett, B. (2022). “Cross-addiction: How to Avoid Replacing Alcohol with Another Addiction.” https://alcoholicsanonymous.com/addictions/cross-addiction-alcoholism/ (third-party site; not an official AA publication).

National Institute on Drug Abuse. Treatment and Recovery. https://nida.nih.gov/publications/drugs-brains-behavior-science-addiction/treatment-recovery

Note: Reference URLs were supplied by the user or are general resource pointers; live publication details and claims have not been independently verified. Educational draft; not a diagnostic tool.

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