Handout: Pain and Smoking/Alcohol Use

"I think one of the reasons why I kept drinking was because of pain. I tried to use drinking to kind of like help…"

"Because it's like, you can go along and the pain will be at one level but then you're gonna have those days where it's just gonna spike through the roof, and those are the hardest days not to smoke."

"I mean if I thought I could have a couple of drinks, and the pain would go away, I would definitely slam them. But smoking definitely helps me in the middle of the night and first thing in the morning."

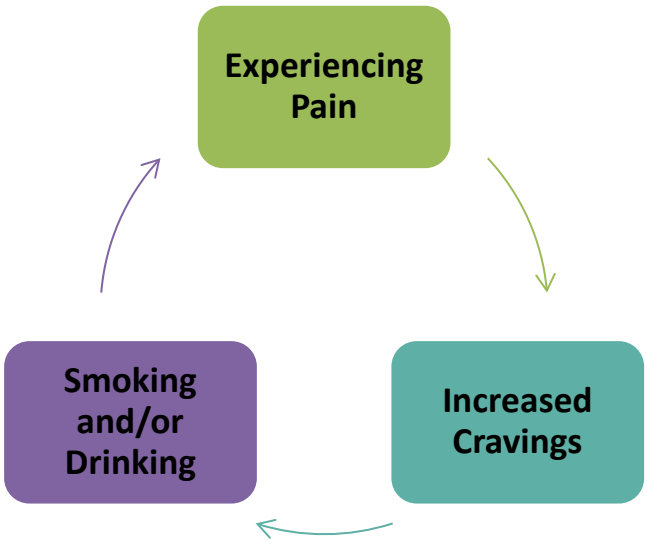
General information about smoking, alcohol use, and pain

Smoking:	Alcohol Use:

• Smoking <u>increases</u> the risk of experiencing pain, including:
  ○ Chronic back pain
  ○ Knee pain
  ○ Headaches
• Smoking is also linked to:
  ○ Greater pain intensity
  ○ More interference with daily functioning
• These effects may occur through biological pathways such as:
  ○ Increased pain sensitivity during nicotine withdrawal
  ○ Inflammation caused by smoking
	• Alcohol use <u>increases</u> the risk of experiencing pain through diagnoses such as:
	  ○ Pancreatitis
	  ○ Neuropathy
	  ○ Osteoarthritis
	• Alcohol can also:
	  ○ <u>Increase</u> pain severity
	  ○ Lead to poorer pain outcomes
	• At moderate levels of use, alcohol has been shown to mitigate pain, resulting in a curvilinear relation between alcohol consumption and chronic pain

The Pain Relief Paradox

- Both nicotine and alcohol can act as short-term pain relievers.
- This temporary relief can create a reciprocal cycle, where pain increases cravings for smoking or drinking, which may then worsen pain over time.



Pain Among Cancer Survivors

- Cancer survivors commonly experience:
  - Acute pain
  - Chronic pain
- Pain levels may fluctuate due to:
  - Ongoing or recently completed treatment
  - Changes in pain medication (e.g., tapering or stopping)
  - External factors such as weather or time of year
- Research and focus group findings show that:
  - Pain is a significant trigger for smoking and alcohol cravings
  - Pain can increase the risk of relapse

Mindfulness, Pain, and Cancer Survivorship

- Mindfulness-based interventions have been shown to:
  - Reduce pain severity among cancer survivors
- Evidence indicates benefits:
  - Across different types of cancer and treatments
  - As early as 4 weeks post-intervention