

A communication periodical for our clients, staff & the community at large

The Chronicle

A Paterson Counseling Center Newsletter

Understanding Drug Dependence

Drug dependence means that a person needs a drug to function normally. Abruptly stopping the drug leads to withdrawal symptoms. Drug addiction is the compulsive use of a substance, despite its negative or dangerous effects.

A person may have a physical dependence on a substance without having an addiction. For example, certain blood pressure medications do not cause addiction but they can cause physical dependence. Other drugs, such as cocaine, cause addiction without leading to physical dependence.

Tolerance to a drug (needing a higher dose to attain the same effect) is usually part of addiction.

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Causes

People who are more likely to abuse or become dependent on drugs include those who:

- Have depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety disorders, and schizophrenia
- Have easy access to drugs
- Have low self-esteem, or problems with relationships
- Live a stressful lifestyle, economic or emotional
- Live in a culture where there is a high social acceptance of drug use



Hallucinogens include LSD, mescaline, psilocybin ("mushrooms"), and phencyclidine (PCP or "angel dust"). hashish.

There are several stages of drug use that may lead to dependence. Young people seem to move more quickly through the stages than do adults.

- Experimental use -- typically involves peers, done for recreational use; the user may enjoy defying parents or other authority figures.
- Regular use -- the user misses more and more school or work; worries

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about losing drug source; uses drugs to "fix" negative feelings; begins to stay away from friends and family; may change friends to those who are regular users; shows increased tolerance and ability to "handle" the drug.

- Daily preoccupation -- the user loses any motivation; does not care about school and work; has obvious behavior changes; thinking about drug use is more important than all other interests, including relationships; the user becomes secretive; may begin dealing drugs to help support habit; use of other, harder drugs may increase; legal problems may increase.

Dependence -- cannot face daily life without drugs; denies problem; physical condition gets worse; loss of "control" over use; may become suicidal; financial and legal problems get worse; may have broken ties with family members or friends.

Symptoms

Some of the symptoms and behaviors of drug dependence include:

- Confusion
- Continuing to use drugs even when health, work, or family are being harmed
- Episodes of violence
- Hostility when confronted about drug dependence
- Lack of control over drug abuse - being unable to stop or reduce alcohol intake
- Making excuses to use drugs
- Missing work or school, or a decrease in performance
- Need for daily or regular drug use to function
- Neglecting to eat
- Not caring for physical appearance
- No longer taking part in activities because of drug abuse
- Secretive behavior to hide drug use
- Using drugs even when alone from your drug supply and are at risk of withdrawal. Most employers also offer referral services for their employees with substance abuse problems.



Employees should take advantage of these services in support of recovery and sustainability of employment before you are faced with multiple challenges that will certainly hinder recovery. Paterson Counseling Center counselors are available to explore options with you.