

## Drug Addiction

Drugs are easily available, often socially endorsed and hugely underestimated.

Using a drug to fit in, to help cope with feelings or to avoid negative feelings is a recipe for trouble. If a person fails to learn how to cope with emotions without the use of drugs then a psychological dependence becomes inevitable.

Most people who are addicted or dependent on drugs started off using 'socially', which then became dependence and addiction. They usually start with a drug that is perceived as harmless, that 'everyone uses', such as Legal Highs, Cannabis or Skunk. Graduation from these kinds of drugs to Class A drugs is an easy step, and before long a person can find themselves out of control.

Drug addiction is a pernicious form of the addictive condition, because the drug world is all consuming and once someone is addicted, drugs are the priority in that person's life, to the exclusion of everything else.

There is an adrenalin rush associated with scoring drugs, the high produced by using, and an emotional and physiological 'crash' after using. The more tolerance a person has to drugs, the more they will have to use to experience the same effects; after a while, the effect will elude them, and they will use predominantly or purely to avoid withdrawal.

Drug users often feel deeply ashamed of their drug dependence and will cover up and deny how bad it has become, in order to protect themselves and their addiction. They will even convince themselves that things are not as bad as they are. When someone is addicted they are not thinking straight and will often react in an extreme and emotional way. Using drugs limits the emotional range so that eventually a person will only experience feelings such as anxiety, paranoia, anger, depression, self pity.

Drug addiction has many negative consequences ranging from poor health, depression, gnawing anxiety and paranoia to physical problems such as respiratory difficulties, physical injury, organ damage and accidental death or suicide. Most addicts start their using in a social environment and end up using alone.

The addict is extremely manipulative and will get what they want by any means, but often overlook what they need. Often driven by fear an addict suffers from very low self-esteem, even if they display arrogance.

If you are someone who cares for a drug addict you may feel as if you can do nothing right, feel out of your depth much of the time and have no idea how to help. You will instinctively disbelieve the addict but feel threatened that they will hurt themselves if you offend them in any way – addicts take hostages. Learning how to be appropriately boundaried around an addict is one of the best ways to get an addict who doesn't want help into treatment (see the support available to families).

As with other addictive behaviours, drug addiction comes down to the person rather than the drug. Drugs are chemicals that have an impact and the significance of this dimension cannot be ignored, though usually physical dependence is the easiest part to overcome – it is the psychological dependence that is difficult to give up.

Recovery is possible. The first step is to get the addict free of substances so that it is possible to reach the person and start to work on their coping mechanisms which will be poorly developed as they have used drugs to do the job. Most addicts are reluctant to give up completely as they are terrified of being vulnerable. However, step by step, many people have achieved chemical abstinence and live a happy and fulfilled life.

**If you think you or somebody you love is suffering with drug addiction then give us a call, we can help**

**Call 020 7323 4970**

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