

EAP Educates: Substance Abuse, an introduction.

The most important thing to realise is that no one chooses to be an addict. There are factors surrounding a person that influence whether or not they experiment with chemical substances potentially leading to abuse of those substance, but people don't wake up in the morning and decide that being an addict is the way they want to live their lives. What starts off as something small, however, can lead to dependency which may have severe implications for the addict, their families and their colleagues.

The next thing to realise is that addiction is a family disease; EVERYONE suffers as a result of the addiction.

The World Health Organisation defines dependency as follows:

A person has a dependency problem when his **total functioning** is affected negatively because of the substance he is using, or the activity he is doing.

Total functioning includes physical, emotional, social and spiritual. All of these elements make up who we are and how we are able to function in society.

Who becomes addicted?

There are four factors that influence who becomes addicted.

- Genetic factors can play a role in addiction
- Psychological vulnerability
- Availability
- Attitude of society

Substance classification

Substances are classified according to their effect on the central nervous system (CNS):

CNS Depressants – slow down body's functions; slows thoughts, blood circulation, heart rate, breathing and reaction times

- Alcohol
- Narcotics
- Sedatives
- Tranquilisers
- Analgesics
- **NON MEDICAL USES:**
 - Relieves pain and tension
 - Eliminates Worry
 - Creates an unusual elated feeling

CNS Stimulants – Speeds up everything in the body; speeds up involuntary movements, increases heart rate, blood circulation and thought processes

- Amphetamines
- Appetite suppressants
- Cocaine
- Caffeine
- **NON MEDICAL USES:**
 - Creates a false sense of elation and confidence
 - Helps to escape from reality
 - Gives strange soul and mind experiences

Hallucinogens – These affect depth perception, and you hear colours and see sounds

- Dagga
- LSD
- **NON MEDICAL USES:**
 - To escape reality

A person does not know when to go for help unless they are dealing with the consequences of their behaviour. While addiction is not curable, it is treatable and enabling the person's addiction prevents them from receiving treatment.

Enabling the addict:

- ▶ **Admission:** "Be honest with me about your drinking ..."
- ▶ **Reasoning:** "You must try to control your drinking so it doesn't affect your work"
- ▶ **Condemnation:** "I can't rely on you anymore"
- ▶ **Idle Threats:** "I'll give you one more chance"
- ▶ **Lecturing:** "You should only be drinking over the weekends"
- ▶ **Bending the rules:** "I'll cover for you again because I do not want you to lose your job"
- ▶ **Denial:** "John? No he just knows how to have a good time"

5 Steps to assisting the addict:

- ▶ **Recognition:** Recognise that a problem exists
- ▶ **Documentation:** Document all positive and negative information and experiences
- ▶ **Action:** Get assistance from professionals and community resources for yourself and your family (Tough Love; Nar-Anon; Al-Anon)
- ▶ **Referral:** Refer the Addict to resources and treatment facilities. (Use of Intervention)
- ▶ **Reintegration:** Assist the Addict when appropriate to reintegrate into normal life, social and workplace situations.



CONTACT YOUR EAP FOR FURTHER ASSISTANCE