

ACTIVE MINDS AT UM PRESENTS...

November Newsletter

Happy November!

Happy November everyone! I hope everyone has had a good start to the semester and your preparations for midterms are going well. With the new snow fall this year, this is your sign to step outside regardless of the chill and appreciate the new whether. Additionally, we would like to thank you guys for attending the Active Minds events held last month, the events wouldn't be successful without you guys! This months theme is addictions awareness and this newsletter will entail information regarding addictions. But first, be sure to check out our upcoming events this month, more information will be posted soon.



QR code for
resources

Upcoming events:

Mental Health Week with UMSU on November 6, 2023 (10am to 2pm) on 1st Floor UMSU University Centre

National Addictions Awareness Week

This week takes place in November from the 19th to 25th. It is a week for spreading awareness about addiction and the harms relating to drugs and alcohol. It provides an opportunity to learn about the causes, prevention, and treatments available. The details of this newsletter will contain information on risk factors, getting help, and preventative measures.



RISK FACTORS OF ADDICTION

Genetics may play a role in addiction, 40- 60 percent of an individual's vulnerability is due to a genetic role. A gene may act directly or indirectly by altering how likely an individual is of risk taking and novelty- seeking behaviors, which means seeking out new experiences with intense emotional sensations. Research suggests that there are multiple genes that contribute to the risk of mental disorders and addiction.

Epigenetics is the study of environmental factors on the expression of genes. Environmental factors such as chronic stress, trauma, or drug exposure can induce changes in gene expression which ultimately affects behavior. The epigenetic impact of environment is more sensitive during the developmental stages of an individual.

Environmental Factors such as stress, trauma, adverse childhood experiences can increase the risk of substance use disorders and mental health disorders.

Additionally, stress is a commonly known risk factor for a range of mental disorders but also, it reduces activities in parts of the brain resulting in decreased behavioral control and increased impulsive behavior which is why it's a factor to drug use.

Those who have gone through traumatic experiences may use substance in order to combat the feelings of anxiety and the consequences that follow these experiences. In addition to PTSD, other mental illnesses can increase the risk of drug use and addiction, drugs may be used as a form of self-medication but in the long run, they worsen symptoms.



SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER

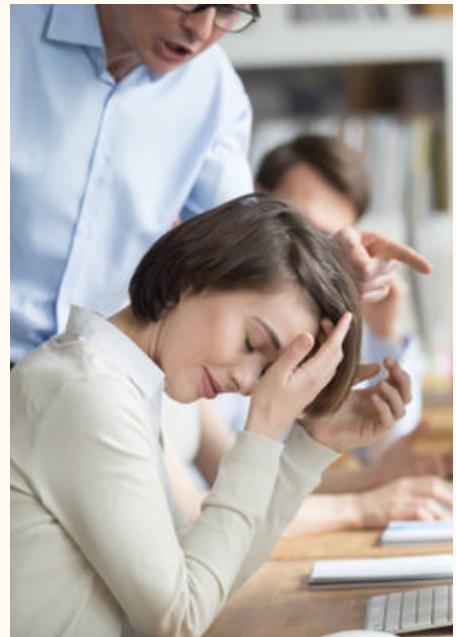
The correlation between drug use and mental illness is immense. Mental illness can lead to drug use, drug use can worsen mental illness and now research suggests that drug use can contribute to the development of mental illness. Being that certain drugs can change brain areas associated with certain illnesses. Substance use itself is a mental disorder, which is called a substance use disorder (SUD), addiction being the most severe form of this disorder. People with SUD have an intense focus on using a certain substance. Symptoms include feeling that you have to use to drug regularly, overtime, needing more of the drug to get the same effect, continuing to use the drug even when it starts to impact other areas of your life such as work and relationships, engaging in risky behavior to get the drug or doing risky things under the influence (Mayo Clinic, 2019).

RECOGNIZING UNHEALTHY DRUG USE IN FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Problems in school or work such as frequently missing school or work and a sudden drop in performance. Physical health symptoms include a lack of energy and motivation, red eyes, and neglected appearance. Lastly, changes in their behavior such as money issues like sudden requests for money or discovering that money is being stolen from you and objects are disappearing (Mayo Clinic, 2019).

HOW TO HELP A FAMILY MEMBER OR FRIEND

- Learn what you can about alcohol/ drug use and addiction
- Offer your support and let them know you are willing to help them get treatment.
- Express love and concern, you may be met with excuses so be ready to provide examples of their behavior that has you concerned.
- Don't expect them to stop without help, it is common to hear them tell you they have control over it or that they will stop on their own, it is important that they receive external support such as treatment and they learn new coping skills.
- Support them as they proceed through treatment and remain involved to help them recover long term (Psychiatry.org, 2020).



HOW TO PREVENT DRUG USE AND ADDICTION

Just as there are people who're at a higher risk of drug use and addiction, there are also people who are at a lower risk. These individuals may be better equipped to handle pressure in life, we usually turn to drugs as a way to escape from reality, so instead, a healthy coping mechanism is handy at many harsh points in life.

Additionally, we are told not to give into peer pressure, just say no. That's easier said than done and that's why it's important to surround ourselves with people who share similar goals and morals as us. Surrounding ourselves with a healthy friend group will in turn lead us to a less likelihood of being pressured by our friends to try drugs or alcohol.

Developing close family ties, this is something research suggests will decrease your risk of drug use. This is also an obvious one, during low points in life, your close relationship with family will provide you with the support you need. The same goes for having good friends that you can turn to.

This last point ties in with handling the pressures of life, however, living a generally healthy lifestyle where you maintain a healthy diet and an active lifestyle allows you to more easily handle stress and therefore handle pressure. You are less likely to turn to drugs as a way to cope (Inspire Malibu, 2013).

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