

Addictive Behaviors Outside of Drugs and Alcohol



When you think of addiction, you might think about drugs or alcohol. But there are other kinds of addictions, and all of them involve your health and well-being. We will talk about all the ways you can manage them, so you feel your best.

What are addictive behaviors?

You may not know that any behavior can become an addiction. It can be looking at your phone, gambling, shopping, eating, stealing, exercise, sex, among others. Whatever it is, the symptoms and coping strategies are similar.

How do I know if something I'm doing is addictive?

There is a difference between liking an activity and feeling *addicted* to it. If you feel like you need to do something rather than want to do something, that's a sign. Here are some other questions to ask yourself:

- Do I get a quick "rush" when I do the activity?
- Do I feel like I can't control how many times I do the activity?
- Does my life revolve around the activity, making me re-arrange social, work, or school duties?
- Do I need to do the activity more often or do it more intensely to be satisfied?
- Am I restless and irritated if I do not do the activity?
- Is it causing problems between me and my loved ones?
- Do I hide the behavior from others?
- In the past, have I tried to do the activity less or stop it without much success?

If you answered "yes" to most of these questions, know that you're not alone. You've just taken an important first step of acknowledging the addiction.

What causes an addictive behavior?

Often, an addictive behavior can be related to mental health. It's not uncommon for someone with an addictive behavior to have loneliness, depression, or anxiety. Some even think that addictive behaviors can be passed down through genes.

How can I get help?

If you have an addictive behavior, know that you're not alone. There are many support networks to help you manage it and lead a healthy, fulfilling life.

- **Counseling.** A counselor can help you understand and control the addiction. In sessions, you and your counselor might talk about an underlying issue like trauma or abuse. These experiences can lead to addictive behaviors. The counselor can also help you think about ways to control impulses, be aware of emotions, and to cope.
- **Cognitive-behavioral therapy.** This kind of therapy focuses on changing behavioral patterns. It can use mindfulness techniques like breathing. It will also help you talk about your fears and worries rather than avoid them. This treatment has had high success rates with addictive behaviors.

- **Support groups.** There are support groups for any type of addiction. Connecting to others who have addictions can help you feel less alone and more in control.
- **Medicine.** Some addictions have been treated with antidepressants or other medicines. Talk to your healthcare provider about this option.

Addictive behaviors can feel overwhelming, but remember that you have many resources. Support groups and counseling can help you look into your emotions and build a community. Many people are ready to go on this journey with you.

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