

Drug addiction is classified as a physical or psychological dependence on a drug. It can be both. Addiction can occur with drugs as common as aspirin or as insidious as amphetamines, cocaine or heroin. Some people are genetically wired for addiction, while others need several exposures to a substance to become addicted. Very few substances are considered non-addictive, because psychological dependency can occur at any time. For some people, drug addiction is a way of life that will never stop. For others, they have the potential of quitting at any time.

Psychological dependency occurs when the user becomes emotionally attached to the substance. Without it, they may feel strong "comfort cravings", which do not alleviate any pains and provide little, if any physical pleasure.

Physical dependency, on the other hand, happens when the body itself becomes dependent on the drug. After habitual use, body systems become dependent on the drug being in the person's system in order to function correctly. The brain changes its' chemical balance to the point that an abrupt stop of the drug use can cause severe discomfort or even death.

Narcotics are among the most widely abused drug today, bringing with their use both physical and psychological dependencies. Used to create extra endorphins, narcotic drug addiction creates an effect of dependence because, after habitual use, the body no longer produces enough dopamine to satisfy the user's comfort. Whereas "clean" people would be perfectly content without the narcotic, the drug user can plummet into a deep depression when deprived of the drug.

Stimulants such as amphetamines can be equally addictive, although some people say stimulants are the lesser of two evils. The withdrawal symptoms are quite similar, with the exception of the moods produced by each drug. Instead of sinking into deep depression, some people may go into a violent rage.

In any case of drug addiction, treatment is needed. The methods of "kicking the habit" vary widely, as do people's opinions and professional advice on how it should be done. Going "cold turkey" is the immediate cessation of drug use, without being "weaned" off the substance. This is not always the best choice, because without a replacement substance to help the body adjust, body systems can shut down. Most professionals agree that rehabilitation and detoxification programs stand the best chance of success in cases of drug addiction.

Detoxification programs aim to flush the body systems of the drug in a gradual schedule of "drying out". The drug addiction patient is prescribed drugs which mimic the addictive substance, without the physical and psychological dependency factors.

Rehabilitation programs are more focused on emotional causes of drug addiction, attempting to reveal the emotional sources of the drug addiction, falling more into the classification of therapy versus physical dependence.

Drug addiction is rampant in today's society, for a variety of reasons. If you or someone you know needs help, it's there for the asking.