

## Common Characteristics of Addictive Behaviors

According to W.R. Miller, in *The Addictive Behaviors*, an individual can become dependent, addicted, or compulsively obsessed with any activity, substance, object, or behavior that gives him or her pleasure. What are addictive behaviors? There are similarities between physical addiction to alcohol and other chemicals, and a psychological dependence that occurs with such activities as compulsive gambling, sex, and eating disorders. Many individuals with addictive disorders report a blackout for the time they were engaging in the behavior and don't remember how much or what they bought, etc. Endorphins are released in the brain during an addicting activity and a feeling of well-being and euphoria results, which can lead to some people getting into an addictive cycle.

The behaviors of the addicted person may progress into negative health and/or social consequences because the person becomes obsessed and will seek out the substance or activity at the detriment of work or interpersonal relationships. He or she will compulsively engage in the activity even if there is no desire to do so, when not engaging in the activity withdrawal symptoms will often occur, like irritability, craving, and restlessness. The individual may not feel that a problem exists because of the addictive behaviors, and deny that it is affecting them and their livelihood, even when confronted by concerned friends and family members. He or she may feel that it's just a bad habit, they have total control of the situation, and that they can control how often they engage in the behavior, which is in direct opposition of the term compulsion.

Depression is common in individuals with addictive behaviors, as is low self esteem, and they usually come from psychologically or physically abusive families. According to professional literature, there is no common consensus as to the etiology, prevention, and treatment of addictive disorders. Many people consider these behaviors diseases while others consider them to be behaviors resulting from a combination of heredity and environmental factors. Some people disagree that addictive behaviors are diseases simply because there is no definite cause and course of treatment used by all practitioners. This lack of agreement among researchers and health care professionals causes problems with prevention and treatment approaches, because no one approach works for every addict and his or her addiction. All this aside, there are various types of therapy that do work, and continue to be a successful for treatment of addictive behaviors.