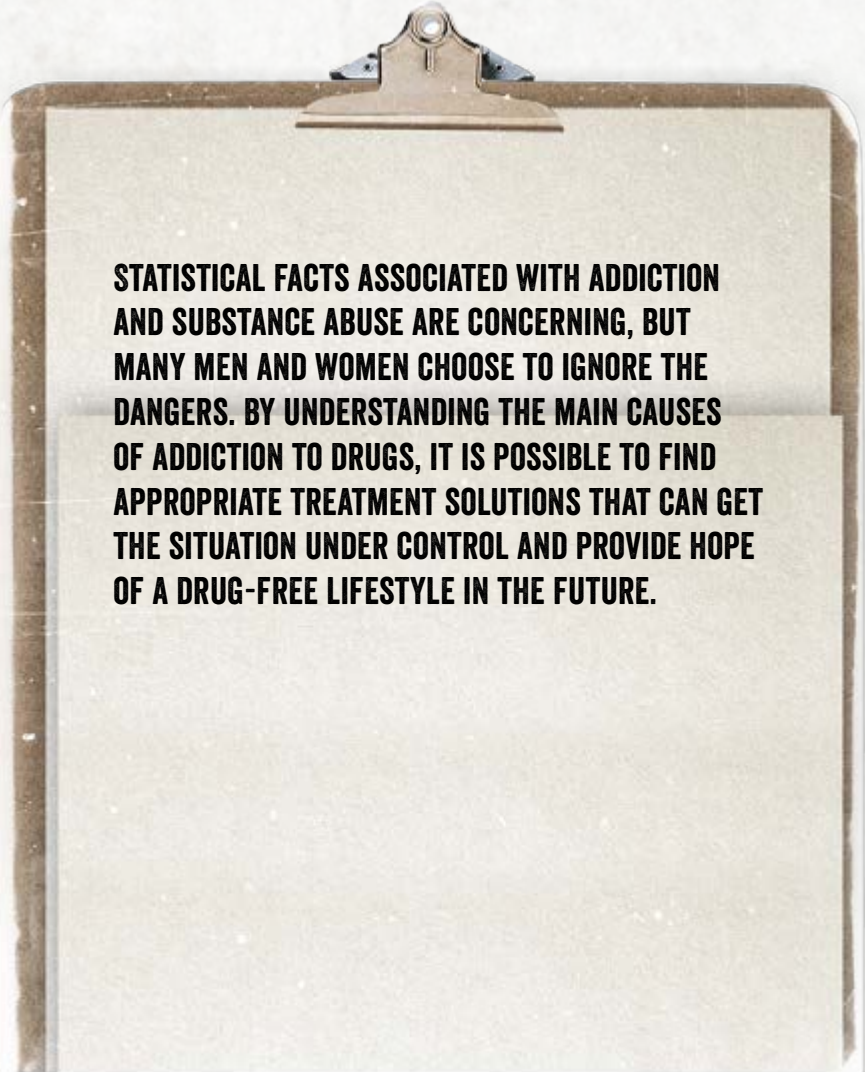


THE CAUSES

**OF DRUG
ADDICTION**



STATISTICAL FACTS ASSOCIATED WITH ADDICTION AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE ARE CONCERNING, BUT MANY MEN AND WOMEN CHOOSE TO IGNORE THE DANGERS. BY UNDERSTANDING THE MAIN CAUSES OF ADDICTION TO DRUGS, IT IS POSSIBLE TO FIND APPROPRIATE TREATMENT SOLUTIONS THAT CAN GET THE SITUATION UNDER CONTROL AND PROVIDE HOPE OF A DRUG-FREE LIFESTYLE IN THE FUTURE.

EMOTIONAL CAUSES

Emotional factors often play a role in the decision to use or abuse drugs. Depending on the specific situation, the exact nature of emotional challenges will vary. For example, an individual who was abused as a child may have a different emotional pain than an individual who is struggling with recovering from a traumatic car accident. Despite the differences, both individuals have a higher risk of developing an addiction due to that emotional trauma that impacts their state of mind.

EMOTIONAL FACTORS

Emotional factors will vary between different individuals. In some cases, the problems are directly related to known causes while other individuals will struggle to understand why their emotional state is making them turn to drugs as a coping mechanism.

FACTORS THAT IMPACT THE EMOTIONS MAY INCLUDE:

- Traumatic experiences
- Abuse at any time of life
- Mental health conditions that cause emotional strife
- General anxiety
- Stress

Despite that wide range of possible factors that contribute to emotional responses, that feeling of pain, discomfort or worry can trigger the craving for a solution that helps reduce the feelings. When individuals turn to drugs or alcohol as a solution, it is possible that an addiction will develop.

The National Institute on Drug Abuse suggests that certain individuals are attempting to cope with the challenges in their life by turning to drugs as a solution. The warnings and science related to the substance is not enough to discourage individuals who are suffering with severe emotional pain.



FIGHTING AGAINST EMOTIONS

Although the causes and factors that contribute to negative states of mind will vary, the emotional responses will usually fall under similar categories for different individuals. According to Psychology Today, the feelings of anxiety that develop from trauma, mental health conditions and stress are ultimately triggering emotional feelings that make substance abuse seem appealing.

THE EMOTIONS THAT INDIVIDUALS ARE USUALLY FIGHTING WHEN THEIR ADDICTION IS RELATED TO CERTAIN EMOTIONAL FACTORS INCLUDE:

- Loneliness
- General sadness or depression
- Feelings of anger
- Consistent feelings of worry

Feeling sad or lonely is a natural part of life, but certain individuals struggle to develop healthy coping strategies. As a result of their inability to cope with the negative emotions that are a part of life, they reach for drugs or alcohol to relieve that feeling and start to feel better about their situation.

Coping with drugs or alcohol is very risky to human health. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, roughly 51 percent of drug-related hospital visits are the result of dangerous illicit substances like cocaine or heroin. Furthermore, about 2.5 million visits to the emergency room were related to substance abuse or misuse in 2011.

Drugs can cause individuals to spend time in the emergency room and may result in death. Using the substances as a coping strategy will only increase the risk that an addiction will develop that ultimately results in an overdose. to discourage individuals who are suffering with severe emotional pain.



ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

The environment around an individual plays a significant role in the development of personal belief systems and addictions. An addiction to drugs or alcohol can partially relate to the environment that an individual experienced from childhood. Factors like peer pressure from childhood, parents who took drugs or living in a neighborhood with substances that are readily available can make it easier to develop the belief that drugs are safe or that it is normal.

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO ADDICTION

Environmental factors relate to the type of location and surroundings that an individual grows up in or is living in at the time an addiction starts developing. According to the Mayo Clinic, the attitudes and beliefs of the family are among the factors that may impact the development of an addiction. Other factors surrounding individuals also make it easier or harder to try drugs.

THE FACTORS THAT COMMONLY RELATE TO ADDICTION DEVELOPMENT INCLUDE:

- Family beliefs that drugs are not harmful
- Peer pressure
- Ready availability in the local area
- Encouragement in the surroundings to try drugs, whether from peers or subtle messages in the area
- A lack of substance abuse education in the area

Although the risk factors are primarily associated with lax environments that suggest the drugs are safe, some individuals may try drugs as a rebellion against an overly-strict environment as well. Each individual is different and the risk of developing an addiction due to the actions of others around that person can contribute to the problem.



IDENTIFYING ENVIRONMENTAL CAUSES

A key problem with addiction is that different causes of the problem are not easy to identify. The National Institute on Drug Abuse states that some individuals take drugs to feel good rather than to run from emotional pain. In those cases, it is hard to determine if the reason the addiction developed was related to their environment growing up or if it related to a different underlying reason.

Identifying the environmental factors primarily requires counseling that questions the individual about his or her background, beliefs or ideas. Asking about a belief system will help determine if an individual grew up in a family that as a lax belief about the dangers of alcohol and drugs or if the family was overly strict, resulting in a rebellious attitude that ultimately resulted in trying a substance.

TALKING ABOUT THE PAST AND WHERE AN INDIVIDUAL GREW UP CAN ALSO HELP.

Certain areas have a higher risk of substance abuse due to the availability of drugs than other locations. When the area that an individual grew up in had a high rate of substance abuse when compared to national averages, it is likely that the environment contributed or directly caused the addiction to develop.

Although it is less likely that an addiction will develop as a result of environmental factors after reaching adulthood, some young adults may still succumb to substance abuse while trying to fit in when they move to a new location or if their environment has a higher rate of substance abuse. Even adults who grew up in a stable home with a belief system that using drugs is wrong can be influenced by peers or their surroundings after moving out.



ADDICTION CAUSED BY THE SUBSTANCE

Concerns about rising rates of prescription drug abuse have reiterated that some cases of addiction are directly related to the substance rather than underlying emotional challenges or environmental factors that make the substance tempting.

THE STATISTICS

Teenagers and young adults are more likely to abuse prescription pain relievers than older adults. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, roughly 13 percent of men and women between 18 and 25 have taken prescription pain relievers for recreational or non-medical reasons. Another 7 percent of children between 12 and 17 have used prescriptions in a way that deviates from the direction of a doctor.

Furthermore, the rate of prescription medication overdoses has increased steadily since 1999. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, the number of overdose cases related to prescription drug abuse increased 250 percent in 2010 when compared to 1999. The number of emergency room visits each year is increasing and many cases are directly related to taking prescriptions.

Although the statistics are directly related to medical emergencies and the increased rate of substance abuse, some of the cases of addiction develop on accident or directly from the substance rather than emotional trauma or environmental factors.



ADDICTIVE QUALITY OF THE DRUGS

Although the prescription drug abuse rates illustrate the growing problem with addictions that develop directly from the substance, other drugs are known to have highly addictive qualities.

MOST ADDICTIVE SUBSTANCES



Even though certain substances are provided by doctors for legitimate medical reasons, the addictive nature of the substance can make it hard to break away from the habit of using the substance in the future.

Drugs that are highly addictive can cause dependence to develop at a rapid pace. In some cases, it is even possible to become addicted after the first one or two times the drug is used because the substance causes a reaction in the brain that craves the drug.

ACCIDENTAL ADDICTIONS

Since addictions to certain substances are directly related to the drug, it is possible to develop an accidental addiction to certain medications that were provided for a legitimate medical reason. Some cases of prescription drug abuse develop after a medical emergency, accident or injury that requires medication.

COMMON REASONS THAT DOCTORS PROVIDE ADDICTIVE SUBSTANCES TO TREAT PATIENTS INCLUDE:

- Major injuries that cause severe pain to individuals in a hospital
- Chronic pain from a health condition
- Chronic pain with no obvious cause
- Major surgery that will continue causing pain until the body recovers
- Treating a health condition, whether it is mental or physical health

In those situations, a doctor gives his or her patients medication to help reduce the feelings of pain and discomfort or to alleviate symptoms of a health problem. The purpose of the medication is directly related to legitimate medical needs, but the addictive quality of the drug can lead to an addiction if measures are not taken to prevent a physical dependence from developing.

Most medical doctors will start providing prescription drugs in a low dose to help reduce the risk of addiction. When the medication is no longer necessary, doctors will often gradually reduce the dosage so that withdrawal symptoms do not develop and it is possible to give up the substance without facing the worst of the symptoms.



The downside is that some individuals will develop an addiction, even if medical professionals take precautions to limit the risks. Once an addiction develops, appropriate treatment is necessary to help fight against the problem.

Regardless of whether the drug was taken for recreational purposes or for a legitimate medical reason, the cause of an addiction may directly relate to the drug rather than emotional factors or the environment around an individual. Many substances that are abused are highly addictive and can result in the development of physical dependence.

Understanding the cause of an addiction to drugs or alcohol can help identify appropriate treatment approaches when a loved one is struggling to fight against the drugs. Substance abuse is not always about feeling good and the reasons for an addiction differ with each individual. Fighting against the addiction is possible once the underlying causes and reasons for the initial substance abuse are identified because treating an addiction that developed as a result of emotional trauma is different than an addiction that developed accidentally.

