



ASSISTANCE IN RECOVERY

Improving lives together

Drug Addiction

Drug addiction is scary when it lives in your home and takes over your family. Assistance in Recovery (AiR) is a national organization of counselors, professional intervention specialists, and consultants that provide fast and effective crisis management services through a proven protocol of education, action and healing. One simple phone call to AiR will put in place the proper resources to dissolve the crisis and put the family or organization and the drug addicted individual on a solid course of recovery.

“Drug addiction is a result of brain changes that, over time, get translated into behavior changes,” says the National Institute for Drug Abuse director, Alan Leshner. It is the “use of a drug or substance for a reason other than which it was intended or in a manner or in quantities other than directed. Drug and alcohol dependence is a compulsion to take use substances to produce a desired effect or prevent unpleasant effects when they are withheld. Risk factors for drug and alcohol abuse include: low self esteem, inability to deal with stress and emotional instability.”

If a person uses drugs or abuses alcohol at a high enough dose, frequently enough and for a long period of time, these substances change the way the brain functions.

George Koob, M.D., a professor of neuropharmacology at Scripps Research Institute believes that addiction is linked to the brain’s pleasure-reward system. Drug abuse and addiction reduce the brain’s ability to function normally. People who are addicted initially take a drug because it makes them feel good. Over time they take it just to return to feeling “normal.” The essence of addiction is that a person has created an artificial state and after a while the system has become so compromised that they are taking the drug to return to a normal state. In effect, the addict spends most of his/her time just trying to feel normal.

Scientists and medical experts now consider the disease of drug addiction and alcoholism to be chronic and relapsing; understanding why addicts and alcoholics are so prone to relapse is a major area of research. The phenomenon of craving can linger months or even years after an addict quits using. Scientists have discovered evidence that craving may be partly a physiological phenomenon, related to the long-term changes in brain function that addiction causes.



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What are the differences between a drug user, a drug abuser, and a drug addict — or social drinkers vs. alcoholics?

Many people assume that addiction is simply an overuse of drugs, and that the drug addict is just a drug user who chooses to use or drink too much. But research has shown that addiction, unlike casual use, is no longer a matter of free choice.

“Functionally you’ve moved into a different state, a state of compulsive drug use,” says Leshner. “People have a lot of trouble understanding that addiction is not an issue of choice or will or morality.” The National Academy of Sciences’ Institute of Medicine, the American Psychiatric Association, and the American Medical Association all define this state of driven, compulsive use as the essence of addiction. Someone who abuses drugs or alcohol may suffer negative consequences from using, as the addict does, but generally can and does stop when these consequences become too severe. The addict may be unable to stop, even after massive negative consequences, without medical and/or behavioral help. Says Steven Hyman, M.D., director of the National Institute of Mental Health, “An alcoholic taking a drink looks like anyone else engaged in that behavior, but what’s happening in his or her head is different.”

What is the difference between someone who can dabble in illicit drugs without developing dependence or many negative consequences, and someone who becomes an addict? Researchers believe that there is a great variability among individuals when it comes to their vulnerability to becoming addicted. “The more stress, the more likely it is you will get addicted,” says Leshner. Risk of addiction, however, is also driven by genetic, biological, environmental and social factors.

Call us at 800-561-8158 today and tell us about your situation, learn more about how to initiate an intervention and **what to expect** from the process.