

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

How does it happen?

Substance abuse/ addiction takes affect overtime, whereby the individual has become so dependent on the substance they are unable in their opinion to function efficiently without it.

There are several factors that contribute towards substance abuse/ addiction some of these being, using drugs, alcohol and nicotine affects the way you feel, both physically and mentally, these feelings can be enjoyable and create a powerful urge to use the substance again. On the flip side to this substance abuse it can be used to numb the pain or to get away from the real world.

Being addicted to something means that not having it causes the body/ brain to suffer with withdrawal symptoms, this can be a very unpleasant experience therefore many individuals continue to abuse the substance because it easier to continue rather than stop, and so the cycle continues.

What is the impact?

The impact that substance abuse can have can be catastrophic, in some serious cases the consequence could lead to death if the substance abuse is out of control. In other scenarios substance abuse can lead to damage to your work and personal life, also substance abuse can also lead to severe psychological and physical effects.

Substance abuse can also lead to financial difficulties which could lead to overspending to get a "FIX". If an individual becomes too reliant on a substance with no means of paying, they become vulnerable to committing crimes to fuel their addiction, which could lead to a criminal record and prosecution.

This creates a very dangerous cycle, which can be very difficult to break!

Top tips for keeping safe

Prevention is the best way to protect yourself, if substance abuse begins to take hold in your life, please consider the following:

Ignoring peer pressure Speak out Remain fit and active Take up new hobbies

What is Substance Abuse?

Substance Abuse also known as an "Addiction" is the continued use of substance that can be consumed, inhaled, or injected or otherwise absorbed into the body with possible dependence and other detrimental effects.

Substances that are most frequently used are Alcohol, Cannabis, Cocaine, Heroin, Opiates, Inhalants and Nicotine. This is list is not exhaustive.

What to look out for?

Often there are key things for to look out for if you are concerned about someone who may be suffering from substance abuse.

These are things to look out for:

- Financial issues due to overspending on drugs & alcohol.
- Troubled appetite, weight gain or weight loss.
- Uncontrolled falls and injuries.
- Blackouts, issues with memory loss, mood swings, irritability, difficulty to remain on task, stress, anxiety, and depression.
- Change in physical appearance, blood shot face and eyes, spots, dark circles around eyes.
- Constant denial of abusing substances.

What to do if you think you or someone you know maybe be a victim of Substance Abuse?

Substance Abuse/ Addiction can be a difficult time for that individual, and in the first instance is to reassure them, and that is OK to seek and help and advice, never be judgemental and be there to listen.

Pointing them into the direction of services available could be the catalyst they need for change, assist them through this process could be vital in them seeking help.

Contacting their local GP, brining in another expert that has their health and wellbeing as priority.

Attending appointments or sessions with them if they would like you to do so. It could be very daunting, therefore having a familiar face present could make all the difference.

Most importantly take the time to listen, don't underestimate the power of a conversation. If you believe you are suffering from substance abuse, don't be afraid to reach out!

Where can I find more information?

Here are some links to useful information:

Addiction, what is it? NHS: www.nhs.uk/live-well/addiction-support/addiction-what-is-it

Mind: www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/recreational-drugs-alcohol-and-addiction/helping-someone-with-drug-and-alcohol-problems/

Turning Point: turningpoint.co.uk

