

## Understanding Addiction

An **addiction** (the need to use a substance or perform a behavior repeatedly) usually develops over time. So it's easy not to notice at first. But as your problem grows, your chances of losing everything important to you multiply. No one plans to be addicted and no one plans to lose his or her family, friends, job, health, and self-respect—but it can happen.

### Addictive Substances Include:

Illegal drugs such as cocaine

Legal drugs such as cigarettes, alcohol, and prescription medications

Activities of daily life such as working, eating, and having sex

Leisure activities such as gambling, watching television, and playing computer games

### The Cycle of Addiction

#### You try it

When you first try an addictive substance or behavior, it's often just for fun or just by chance. Your first reaction: you feel good, more relaxed, and perhaps more popular.

#### You try it again

The next time you try an addictive substance or behavior, it may seem more familiar this time—like a friend who makes you feel more relaxed, comfortable, and liked.

#### You plan to do it

Soon you start making plans to use the substance or do the behavior. You think about it even when it's not around. And you may become attracted to people who want to do it too.

#### You do it more and more

When you become addicted, you take the substance or do the behavior more and more—often secretly, often alone. Now it consumes your time and energy—and interferes with your life.

### The Impact on Your life

An addiction can affect your relationships, your work, and your health. In other words, your entire life.

**Your relationships with family and friends** change as your habit becomes your priority. You may seek out people who share your addiction. Or you may grow distrustful of people, preferring the "company" of your addiction over that of people you know. This behavior hurts everyone around you.

**Your job and relationships with coworkers** are threatened when you become addicted. You may become unreliable and careless, increasing the odds of work-related accidents. Your health is likely to decline as your problem grows. You may become increasingly confused or tired. Your self-esteem may be threatened. And, over time, your addiction could lead to serious, even fatal, illness.

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## About Perspectives...

We are a private outpatient group practice offering individual, couple, family & group counseling services. Our goal is to provide clients with affordable treatment in a sensitive and understanding manner, tailoring the treatment to their individualized needs.

Our counselors have been providing services since 1981 and are committed to providing clients with the highest quality personalized treatment services possible. Experienced and caring clinicians will work with you to determine the nature of your problems and develop a treatment plan to assist you in their resolution.

For a complete listing of our office locations and a directory of our staff, please see page 2 of the newsletter. You can also visit us online at [www.perspectives-counseling.com](http://www.perspectives-counseling.com) for more information.

## To Contact Us:

Contact our Intake Coordinators at 866/296-5262 to set up an appointment with one of our staff.

For information you might find useful in your every day life, visit us on the web at:

[www.perspectives-counseling.com](http://www.perspectives-counseling.com).

If you no longer want to receive this newsletter, please call 312/558-1569, or email to [klee@perspectivesltd.com](mailto:klee@perspectivesltd.com). List "Please remove" in the subject line.

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# Dependency: When Use Becomes Abuse

Chemical dependency can be described as the inability to control and/or quit the use of a substance. For those that struggle with alcohol and drug use, abuse should be a real and pressing concern. The transition from use to abuse can happen without the individual even being aware that use has crossed over the line into chemical dependency.

## Dependency Myths

There are many myths that surround alcohol and drug dependency. Frequently, those with chemical dependencies are viewed as people who can't live without their drugs, who stay high or drunk through the day, who abuse drugs every day, or who are untrustworthy, weak-willed, or simply a bad person. In truth, a person can be chemically dependent without having any outward signs of abuse. Research conducted on chemical dependency points to how the genetic makeup of an individual might impact his or her dependency. You should also remember that chemical dependency is – at its core – a physical issue. It can't be overcome by simply hoping it will go away.

## Warning Signs of Dependency

Recognizing when you or a loved one is struggling with a chemical dependency is the first step to getting help. Here are some symptoms of dependency you should look for:

- Blacking out or forgetfulness after use
- Using alone and/or hiding the use from others
- Using to cope with personal or professional problems
- Being “under the influence” while engaging in everyday activities
- Not being able to have fun or enjoy activities without use
- Neglecting responsibilities in favor of use
- People voicing concerns over your use
- Use leading to professional, social, financial, and/or legal troubles

## Dependency Problems

When someone abuses a substance, he or she risks making bad decisions. The results of these decisions can range from embarrassment to outright endangerment. A person under the influence not only risks harming himself/herself, but friends, loved ones, and other third-parties.

## Responding to Dependency

Once you've determined that a problem exists, you need to act swiftly to begin engaging in the practices that alleviate dependency and return life to a state of normalcy. Here are steps you can take to start the healing process:

- Be willing to openly acknowledge the dependency with friends and loved ones.
- Get the help of a dependency professional – a doctor or other medical professional who specializes in treating dependency-related issues.
- Commit to a rehabilitation program or counseling process if recommended by your advisor.
- Make a point to limit your interaction with those that encourage alcohol or drug use.
- Take advantage of counseling groups where interaction with recovering abusers is encouraged to help motivate recovery.
- Recognize that people recover from dependency issues every day and it is possible for you to recover.

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