



What is Substance Use or Abuse?

Opioids and other substances that alter how we feel, think and act have overtaken our culture, and have been declared a public health epidemic. Substance use and abuse of opioids, heroin, cannabis, stimulants, alcohol, and other is becoming far too common and can have extremely damaging effects.

Substance use disorders commonly co-occur with mental health conditions, especially serious mental illness like schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, depression, eating disorders, PTSD and other forms of trauma. People with mental illnesses often turn to drugs and alcohol to quiet their symptoms, and drugs and alcohol can adversely affect our nervous system and increase risk for mental illness.

Solutions

Prevention.

This includes school-based programs that provide youth with decision-making skills and methods of controlling their moods and impulses.

Screening.

Early identification of a problem means early intervention, before the substance use disorder becomes more firmly rooted. Today we have very good screening tools to help.

Treatment.

Families and people affected by addiction should advocate for the strong, comprehensive treatment approach they need. Effective treatment means first detecting the presence of a co-occurring mental (or physical) condition and assuring it's also treated.

Treatment for a substance use disorder should then combine:

- Cognitive therapy that focuses on reducing the triggers of relapse
- 12-Step programs like Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous
- Family education and support
- Medications

You are not alone. We can help you or someone you love cope with substance abuse.

Visit www.centermh.org/help to take a fast, confidential online screening test.

Information excerpted from Lloyd I. Sederer, MD, a psychiatrist, public health doctor and medical journalist. His new book is The Addiction Solution: Treating Our Dependence on Opioids and Other Drugs (Scribner, 2018).



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