

## **Addiction – Kiss Your Body Goodbye**

Your body and brain are dependent upon each other to keep you alive and healthy. When you use drugs, your drug of choice gets between your Central Nervous System and the chemistry of your brain functions. The cells in your brain communicate with each other through neurotransmitters like dopamine and serotonin. For example, when there is a lack of serotonin, you will be depressed. This chemical depletion is common in the brains of alcoholics and addicts and the damage is permanent.

If you are abusing alcohol and/or drugs it is a certainty that you have chemical imbalances in your brain, whether or not you are aware of the symptoms. One of the sneaky little deceptions of your brain on drugs is that your disease, alcoholism or addiction, won't tell you that you have serious neurotransmitter depletion. You will think that you are just fine, better, in fact, than you have ever been.

Some of the brain damage is irreversible. The permanent damage from alcohol or drug abuse is usually in the thinking and acting areas. This is particularly important for you to know when you are trying to recover because recovery processes produce a lot of stress. There is a link between altered brain chemistry, stress and relapse, which is fueled by that altered brain chemistry. To your brain, stress is stress. It doesn't matter if you are sober, trying to recover or relapsing. The same imbalance that kept you believing that you were okay, when, in fact, you were not, is unable to directly address that stress that will make relapse look pretty good to you.

Recovery has many irritants to your mind, body and behavior. These stresses have been gathered together in what is called PAWS (Post Acute Withdrawal Syndrome). They can strike at any time, even a few years after the addict actually stopped using drugs. Usually, the addict or alcoholic thinks they are going crazy. The urge to relapse is stronger than ever.

### **Post Acute Withdrawal Symptoms:**

- Difficulty concentrating
- Confusion
- Memory loss
- Anxiety
- Body aches
- Inability to walk normally

If the addict can remain sober and avoid old drug behaviors and thinking processes, the stress and anxiety caused by the startling appearance of PAWS will disappear as the recovery processes take over again. One

personal thinking process that helps a lot in recovery is when the addict stops being a victim and takes responsibility for his own recovery. It's the addict's and the alcoholic's path to walk. Addiction and the resultant brain damage was a long process for the user and recovery will not be instantaneous.

### **Specific Signs And Symptoms Of Addiction:**

**Alcohol:** Odor on the breath, difficulty focusing, glazed eyes, abnormal behavior (passive, aggressive, argumentative), accidents, unexplained bruises, irritability, loss of memory (blackouts), intoxication, absenteeism, lack of concern about personal hygiene, alienation from family, friends

**Marijuana:** Loud talking, unexpected bursts of laughter, forgetfulness, inflammation in the whites of the eyes, odor similar to burnt rope, distorted sense of time, sleepy, tendency to drive slowly, possession of roach clips, packs of rolling papers, etc.

**Stimulants (Cocaine, Crack, Meth):** dilated pupils, dry mouth and nose, bad breath, lip licking, difficulty sitting still, hyperactive, not hungry or sleepy, nervous, argumentative, irritable, talkative (constantly changing subjects), runny nose, nose bleeds, possession of small spoons, razor blades, mirror, little bottles of white powder, straws.

**Depressants:** seems drunk with no alcohol odor on breath, lack of facial expression, slurred speech, muscle weakness, inability to maintain a conversation (wanders off mentally), everything is slowed down, sleepy.

**Narcotics/Prescription Drugs/Opium/Heroin/Codeine/OxyContin:** Lethargy, constricted pupils fail to respond to light, red and raw nostrils, needle puncture scars on inner arms or other parts of the body, inability to think or converse clearly, possesses bent spoons, bottle caps, eye droppers, rubber tubing, syringes, cotton and needles.

**Inhalants:** Substance odor on breath and clothes, runny nose, watering eyes, poor muscle control, sleepy or unconscious, slurred speech, impaired coordination, nausea, vomiting, slowed breathing, sores on the mouth or nose, possesses bags or rags with dry plastic cement or other solvent, discarded whipped cream cans or spray paint.

- **Street Names For Inhalants:** Poppers, snappers, pearlers, laughing gas, whippets, nitrous, locker room, bolt, bullet, rush, climax, red gold
- **LSD, Hallucinogens:** extremely dilated pupils, warm skin, body odor, excessive perspiration, describing vivid and colorful "visions"

- **PCP:** Unpredictable behavior, mood swings for no apparent reason, intoxication, disorientation, agitation, violence, fear, terror, rigid muscles, strange gait, deadened sensory perception (may injure themselves and not notice), pupils dilated, frozen facial appearance
- **Ecstasy:** Confusion, depression, headaches, dizziness (from hangover/after effects), muscle tension, panic attacks, paranoia, possession of pacifiers (used to stop jaw clenching), lollipops, candy necklaces, mentholated vapor rub, severe anxiety, sore jaw (from clenching teeth after effects), vomiting or nausea (from hangover/after effects), blurred vision and:
- Rapid eye movement, pupil dilation, chills or sweating, high body temperature, sweating profusely, dehydrated, confusion, faintness, paranoia or severe anxiety, trance-like state, transfixed on sights and sounds, unconscious clenching of the jaw, grinding teeth, very affectionate.

### **Body Damage From Addiction:**

- **Skin and Hair:** Removes the nutrients for healthy hair and skin
- **Heart and Circulation:** Loss of muscle due to lack of protein, increase of fatty deposits and high blood pressure
- **Liver:** Reduced vitamin and mineral storage for body's use, liver swells preventing bile production and filtering, poor appetite
- **Pancreas** - Irritation causes swelling which may block flow of enzymes into stomach resulting in digestive difficulties and diabetes
- **Kidneys** - Inflammation, frequent infections, increased water output resulting in excess nutrient loss
- **Central Nervous System & Hypothalamus** - Alcohol and drugs irritate sedate and aggravate nervous system, increase poor memory, inability to think clearly, poor coordination. Alcohol kills brain cells that are not regenerated. The appetite control center sends confused messages about hunger and thirst.
- **Mucous Membranes** - Irritates and sedates membranes, including esophagus, stomach & rectum
- **Stomach** - Irritates stomach – increasing risk of ulcers, gastric distress

- **Intestines** - Slows down or speeds up transit time, increasing risk of poor absorption and certain types of cancer
- **Rectum** - Poor elimination or diarrhea may result in hemorrhoids
- **Blood Measurements** - Blood levels of many nutrients are affected by drugs and alcohol. Cholesterol levels may appear normal while not accurately measuring cholesterol intake

It should be obvious by now that addiction to any drug or alcohol will waste your entire being...mind, body and personality.

If you can successfully recover from a long addiction, you can recover some of your old self. Make sure you eat good food, full of vitamins, minerals, fiber on a regular basis...protein, fruits, vegetables, breads, milk. The success of your recovery is dependent on what you do now. You have to replace what you threw away with your addiction and that will take a focused attention to eating right.

If you do not take the necessary actions to recover, rewrite the headline at the top of this page to read:

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