

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

STUDENT COUNSELLING UNIT

Mental Health Awareness Series

September 2021

SIGNS OF ADDICTION

Social & Occupational Problems

- Not fulfilling obligations at university, work, or home.
- Social problems caused by continual use of substances.
- Decreasing or giving up important social or occupational activities.

Loss of Control Over Substance Use

- Using more of the substance than intended.
- Difficulty reducing substance use.
- Significant time spent on obtaining, using or recovering from substances.
- Having cravings.

Risky Use

- Using substances in situations where it is physically dangerous.
- Physical or psychological problems caused by continued use of the substance

Physical Effects

- Building tolerance and needing more of the substance to achieve the desired effect.
- Experiencing withdrawal, such as physical or psychological symptoms when not using the substance.



WHAT IS SUBSTANCE ABUSE?

The use of illegal drugs or the use of prescription or over-the-counter drugs or alcohol for purposes other than those for which they are meant to be used, or in excessive amounts. Substance abuse may lead to social, physical, emotional, and academic related problems.

COPING SKILLS

Social Support

- **Daily social Support** - Try to strengthen your relationships, attend support groups and build new friendships.
- **Crisis Social Support** - When in crisis, have a person you could count on for support, make a list of people who you can contact during these difficult times.

Diversions

- **Cravings are challenging** - In the middle of a craving it may feel there is no escape however, if you resist, the cravings begin to fade. Most cravings end within one hour of starting.
- Go for a walk or run.
- Watch a movie, listen to music draw or paint.
- Read a book, take a bath, play with a pet or even rearrange a room.

Prevention

- **Avoid Triggers and Risky Situations** - Create a list of people, places and things that could lead to substance abuse.
- **Healthy Lifestyle** - A healthy lifestyle may lead to more resilience when faced with obstacles.

What is Healthy Coping?

- Exercise.
- Talking to someone about your challenges.
- Healthy eating.
- Relaxation techniques such as deep breathing.
- Using social support.
- Problem-solving techniques: what has worked before?
- Seeking professional help.

TIPS FOR AVOIDING RELAPSE

- If you are feeling the urge to use, try to wait it out.
- Focus on replacing your past substance use with new positive activities.
- Do not try do this alone, share your goals with friends or family, they can offer a kind ear when you are struggling.
- Remind yourself that cravings will pass.
- Have a plan for when things get bad, develop a plan to get through major life challenges - without the use of substances.
- If you do relapse do not give up

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