

Addiction

An addiction is a chronic dysfunction of the brain system that involves reward, motivation, and memory. It is about the way your body craves a substance or behaviour, especially if it causes a compulsive or obsessive pursuit of “reward” and lack of concern over consequences.

What causes addiction?

People with **addiction** use substances or engage in behaviours that become compulsive and often continue despite harmful consequences. Addictive substances and behaviours can create a pleasurable “high” that is physical and psychological. You will typically use more of certain substances or engage in behaviours longer to achieve the same high again. Over time, the addiction becomes difficult to stop.

Someone experiencing an addiction will:

- be unable stay away from the substance or stop the addictive behaviour
- display a lack of self-control
- have an increased desire for the substance or behaviour
- dismiss how their behaviour may be causing problems
- lack an emotional response

Over time, addictions can seriously interfere with your daily life. People experiencing addiction are also prone to cycles of relapse and remission. This means they may cycle between intense and mild use. Despite these cycles, addictions will typically worsen over time.

What are the signs?

Most signs of addiction relate to a person’s impaired ability to maintain self-control. This includes changes that are:

- social, such as seeking out situations that encourage a substance or behaviour
- behavioural, such increased secrecy
- health related, such as insomnia or memory loss
- related to personality

Someone with an addiction will not stop their behaviour, even if they recognise the problems the addiction is causing. In some cases, they will also display a lack of control, like using more than intended.

The **What is Addiction?** resource is an introduction to the topic of addiction. It covers signs and symptoms of addiction, available treatments, and other important facts.

Resources:

What is Addiction?

Coping Skills

Discussion Questions

Tips to Avoid Relapse

Relapse Prevention Plan

Addiction. What is it?

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/addiction-what-is-it/>

Talk to Frank

<https://www.talktofrank.com/>