High As A Kite

"Drugs; Human Self-Distruction"...

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Abuse Of Depressants and Stimulants: Dealing With Their Effects

The most devastating effect of drug abuse happens to the brain. The powerful and most commonly abused drugs are known to alter chemical activity in the brain. While some of these changes may be reversible, others can lead to potentially fatal disruption of crucial brain functions; they may likewise cause permanent damage to the other vital organs and systems of the body.

The most commonly abused drugs are classified into several types. Two of these types are the central nervous system (CNS) depressants and the CNS stimulants. Each of these two types has its own specific effects and long-term hazards, and dealing with them requires specific treatments as well.

CNS depressants:

These drugs are labeled as such because they work by depressing the central nervous system. Included in this type are the barbiturates and tranquilizers. The former are medically used as sedatives and antispasmodics, while the latter are used to reduce mental disturbance. On the streets, these drugs are known as "downers." When abused, they can cause slowed heart rate and breathing, lethargy, unsteady gait, slurred speech, and confusion.

Certain long-term hazards are associated with addiction to these drugs, such as tolerance, dependence, and risk of death by overdose. The likelihood of this last one occurring is especially high if the drugs are combined with alcohol. Withdrawal symptoms include sweating, jitteriness, disorientation, convulsions, delirium, and hallucinations. Untreated withdrawal can lead to death.

Treatment is by reintoxication with a substitute barbiturate, which is followed by a carefully monitored and rigidly scheduled withdrawal.

CNS stimulants:

These are the opposites of the depressants; that is, they stimulate the central nervous system. The amphetamines, cocaine and crack are the three drugs in this category. The amphetamines are clinically used to treat hyperactive children as well as the symptoms of narcolepsy.

Cocaine's medical use is as a topical anesthetic. Crack, on the other hand, is a potent form of cocaine that is used illicitly for smoking. These substances are known on the streets as "uppers." Abuse of these substances can cause loss of appetite, restlessness, faster pulse, euphoria, anxiety, and depression.

Nasal ulcers, hallucinations, psychological dependence,

paranoia and risk of heart failure are some of the long-term hazards associated with abuse of these drugs. Withdrawal symptoms include irritability, exhaustion, and severe depression.

Treatment is by group therapy or other forms of counseling, much like those used for alcohol abuse.

The other types of drugs that are commonly abused are the opiates (heroin and morphine), hallucinogens (LSD and others), and cannabis (marijuana and hashish).

Adapting To Life's Stresses Without The Use Of Drugs

Stress is a blanket term that can mean a lot of different things. Technically, it involves the physical and emotional reaction of a person to pressure from his environment or from within himself. The term "stress" often connotes bad meaning in as much as it may become an unavoidable part of life. It is possible, therefore, that when this happens, a person can become "overloaded" and suffer physically or emotionally, or both.

Within recent years, certain drugs have been developed to provide a means of calming a nervous person and tiding him over difficult periods of stress. The tranquilizers and barbiturates, collectively known as central nervous system (CNS) depressants, affect the brain in much the same way

as alcohol does.

The drugs make a person less alert, and herein lies some of the dangers. The greatest danger in using these drugs comes from their effect on the attitude of the user. With these drugs, the user becomes less aware of his problems. Having once experienced the relief the drugs give from anxiety and stress, it is only natural for the user to want this same kind of relief time after time.

Thus a person can become dependent on these drugs, less able to face life's realities and unable to break the habit. The seemingly innocent attempt at coping with life's stresses has turned into a dangerous situation - drug addiction.

If drugs are not the ideal solution, what then can a person do to adapt to his stresses and be free from anxiety?

Instead of resorting to drugs, a person has to learn to develop appropriate thought patterns and wholesome attitudes. There are effective ways to deal with stress that a person can follow. For instance, he should learn to establish a balance between work and play. Whatever his work happens to be, he should engage in some contrasting activity from which he can have personal satisfaction.

A person has to learn how to relax momentarily. If his occupation is stressful or strenuous, he should take time out for a few minutes twice each day to rest his muscles and brain. In that brief period, he should train his

thoughts at completely ignoring the usual activities of the day. Such an attitude can help replenish drained energies and allow him to start anew.

Finally, a person has to cultivate an attitude of trust. He should establish confidence both in himself and in the people he deals with every day.

Amphetamine Addiction: How To Deal With Cases Of Amphetamine Poisoning

The various types of amphetamines are all synthetic stimulants. Included here are Dexedrine, Benzedrine, and Methedrine. At one time, these drugs were often prescribed to reduce appetite and weight and to combat fatigue and depression. Today, amphetamines are used mostly to treat hyperactivity in children and the sleep disorder known as narcolepsy.

Amphetamine is related to such other potent drugs as dextroamphetamine and methamphetamine, which are classified as psychostimulant drugs; they act by increasing levels of dopamine and norepinephrine in the brain. Such action can induce euphoria in the user.

Amphetamines are commonly involved in drug addiction under such street names as "speed" or "pep pills." They can cause loss of appetite, faster pulse, and unnecessary excitement.

Their long-term hazards include tolerance, psychological dependence, and paranoia.

Withdrawal symptoms include disorientation, severe depression, irritability, nervous exhaustion, apathy, and violent behavior that can lead to suicidal tendencies. Overdosage of the drugs can cause other more serious symptoms, such as convulsions, strokes, coma, and possible death.

There is a series of steps that should be followed when dealing with a victim of amphetamine poisoning. The first is by diluting the drug (which by then has become poison) in the victim's stomach by having him drink milk. The next is by emptying his stomach by inducing vomiting. And the last is by giving him activated charcoal to absorb the poison that remains in his stomach.

Procedure for inducing vomiting:

*** Have the patient take the proper dose of syrup of ipecacuanha (an emetic and expectorant drug); 30 milliliters for an adult and half of that dose for a child.**

*** Follow this by two glasses of milk or water (more if needed).**

*** If the patient does not vomit within fifteen minutes, the person providing first aid should insert his finger and**

gently tickle the back of the patient's throat.

It is important to induce vomiting even if several hours had already passed since the amphetamine poisoning became apparent. While vomiting is being induced, the patient should not be in a reclining position to prevent choking.

Use of activated charcoal as a decontaminant:

After successfully inducing vomiting, activated charcoal should be administered to absorb what remains of the "poison." Stir about two tablespoonfuls of powdered activated charcoal (PAC) into a glass of water for the patient to drink. If he vomits again, give him another dose of the preparation.

Note that activated charcoal is harmless and is quite effective as a decontaminant for most cases of poisoning, including those from amphetamine overdose.

Butabarbital Facts: Safe Use, Addiction and Overdosage

Butabarbital is one of the drugs that may be prescribed for convulsions or epileptic seizures. It may be prescribed as a sleeping medication (hypnotic) or as a daytime sedative (anticonvulsive).

Like other barbiturates, butabarbital appears to work by interfering with nerve impulses to the brain. By itself, butabarbital may not be quite effective in dealing with epileptic seizures; but when used in conjunction with other anticonvulsive agents, the result can be dramatic.

Butabarbital is such a potent drug with potential for abuse; it must be used only upon a doctor's prescription. The drug may slow down the user's physical and mental reflexes, so he must be extremely careful when operating complex machinery, driving a car, or performing other potentially dangerous tasks.

Abusers of the drug manifest nervousness and confusion. The drug is neutralized in the liver and eliminated from the body through the kidneys. Therefore, those who have liver or kidney disorders (such as in having difficulty in forming or eliminating urine) are particularly at risk. The drug can cause skin rash, breathing difficulty, and general allergic reactions, including scratchy throat, runny nose and watery eyes.

Long-term or unsupervised use of butabarbital may lead to addiction. Addiction to the drug can cause lethargy, drowsiness, nausea, dizziness, and vomiting. More severe symptoms include anemia and jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes). The sedative effect of the drug is increased once it's taken with alcohol or tranquilizers.

Also note that those who have previously been addicted to sedatives, have known allergies to barbiturates, or suffer from a disease affecting the respiratory system are advised against taking butabarbital.

The usual dose of butabarbital doctors prescribe to adults is 15 to 30 milligrams three times per day (as a daytime sedative) and 50 to 100 milligrams at bedtime (as hypnotic for sleep). For children, the recommended dose is 7 to 30 milligrams, as determined by the child's weight and age.

Using butabarbital for purposes other than what doctors would otherwise prescribe it for can lead to dangerous symptoms, such as fluid buildup in the lungs, lowered body temperature (which progresses to fever as time passes), decrease in size of the pupils of the eyes, difficulty in breathing, and eventually coma.

Severe overdose of butabarbital can be fatal. In fact, the drug has been used a number of times in suicide attempts. A person suspected of illicitly using the drug or having taken an overdose of it must be taken to a hospital for immediate care.

Caffeine Addiction: A Common Legitimate Form Of Drug Addiction

Coffee is a popular drink in many countries. Apart from its

flavorful aroma and taste, it gives that familiar morning jolt and seems to hone the drinker's mental edge. But consuming too much coffee has its many downsides and may, in fact, be hazardous to one's health.

A cup of regular brewed coffee contains approximately 103 milligrams of caffeine, a drug familiar to the physician for its being an old-time stimulant. Caffeine stimulates primarily the brain. It may likewise stimulate the heart, increasing the blood pressure and quickening the pulse.

But more than just being a stimulant, caffeine is also considered a "poison", especially when a person becomes heavily dependent on it. The fatal dose of caffeine is listed as 10 grams (1/3 ounce) . There certainly is something wrong when a person willingly takes small doses of a poison in order to experience that deceiving lift which the caffeine in coffee provides.

But it shouldn't be difficult to understand this, given the fact that small doses of caffeine serve to conceal fatigue. Fatigue, as we know, is that signal that tells us our body needs to rest. While caffeine eclipses this signal, it doesn't refill the drained energy of the weary person. Hence, the initial lift experienced from a cup of coffee is soon followed by a letdown.

Several studies have sought to prove that caffeine can cause certain health problems. One of the symptoms associated with caffeine addiction is occasional skipped heart beats. The person seems to hear his heart thump when a beat is

missed. Once coffee drinking is discontinued, the skipped beat disappears. However, there are cases in which the symptom is related to actual heart disease. In such a case, it will continue even though the person stops drinking coffee.

A person who's hooked on caffeine and wants to cut down should do so gradually. Stopping abruptly can trigger extremely severe headache that can last for days. Caffeine withdrawal, in some people, can also cause nausea, vomiting, sluggishness, depression, and anxiety. These symptoms typically occur within twenty-four to thirty-six hours of the last caffeine intake, lasting for several days to a week.

The same set of withdrawal symptoms may likewise be experienced if a person takes certain drugs that contain caffeine for several days and then abruptly stops. Included in these drugs are Midol (a drug used to treat menstrual cramping) and Anacin (a medication indicated for pain and headaches).

Children Using Inhalants: A Form Of Drug Addiction

There have been many reported cases of parents having problems with their children because of the latter's using of inhalants. And what exactly are inhalants? These are a broad range of substances in the forms of solvents, aerosols or gases that, when breathed in, cause certain effects on

some of the body organs and their functions.

Some of the inhalants involved in such problems include chemical products that may be found in homes or for industrial uses. Examples of these are household cleaning fluids, glue, nail polish removers, paint thinners, kerosene, the various aerosol products (such as aerosol air fresheners, hair sprays, and deodorant sprays), and some gases (butane or propane, for example). The latter are breathed in directly from canisters.

There really are inhalant drugs that are used for medical purposes, such as the "laughing gas" which is used as a dental anesthetic. But obviously, the products enumerated above are not intended to be "inhaled" or used for medical purposes.

Using such products for their intoxicating effect may be considered a form of drug addiction. These products are particularly dangerous because they are both inexpensive and easy to obtain; they are the "drugs" that children, aged seven to sixteen, are most likely to use or abuse. This is especially true in places where access to other drugs may be restricted.

Inhalants can cause intoxication (similar to that caused by alcohol), flushed face, dizziness, confusion, euphoria, and hallucinations. The sudden change in behavior of the user makes him liable to injury, not unlike the possible fate a person may end up with when driving a car while under the influence of liquor.

Long-term hazards include risk of damage to the brain, kidney or liver, and possible death from heart failure, pneumonia, or hypoxia (a condition in which the body is deprived of adequate oxygen supply).

Perhaps the most life-threatening form of this type of drug addiction is that in which solvents are sniffed; the danger becomes even greater, with the added risk of hypoxia, when a plastic bag containing the solvent is held close to the face, such that the user is not breathing enough fresh air. Sniffing solvents can cause severe physical and mental damage. Cases of death among teenagers from sniffing solvents are recorded every year.

Long-term users of inhalants may experience headaches and insomnia after use of the substances ends. Treatment of victims of this form of drug addiction includes counseling, education, and support. Cooperation is likewise expected of the different manufacturers to come up with harmless substitutes for their products which are being illicitly used as inhalants.

Chronic Alcoholism May Be A Form Of Drug Addiction

Drugs are defined as substances that, once introduced into the body, modify the activity of the body organs otherwise than by augmenting the supply of available energy. Using this definition, can it then be said that alcohol qualifies

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