

# Drug Addicts

No one starts out in life wanting to be a drug addict, but yet it happens. It is hard to understand from a stand point of a none user or an occasional user how someone can seemingly use and abuse a substance.

But the first thing to understand about addiction is that alcohol and addictive drugs are basically painkillers. They chemically kill physical or emotional pain and alter the mind's perception of reality. They make people numb. Like most individual in our society the addict is basically good. This person encounters a problem or discomfort and does not know how to deal with it. This could be problems such as difficulty "fitting in" as a child or teenager, anxiety due to peer pressure or work expectations, identity problems or divorce as an adult. It can also include physical discomfort, such as an injury or chronic pain. The person experiencing the discomfort has a real problem. He is having difficulty living with his problem. Everyone has experienced this in life to a greater or lesser degree. The difference between an addict and the non-addict is that the addict has chosen drugs or alcohol as a solution to the unwanted problem or discomfort.

Now that drugs or alcohol appear to solve his problem, he feels better. Because he now 'seems' better able to deal with life, the drugs become of value to him. Their painkilling effects become a solution to the discomfort that he feels. This release is the main reason a person uses drugs or drinks a second, third or fourth time. And soon just like an adolescent in his first love affair, he obsesses over the use of drugs or alcohol. The addicted person is now trapped. Whatever problem he was initially trying to solve by using fades from memory. At this point, all he can think about is getting and using drugs.

Ironically, the addict's ability to get "high" from the alcohol or drug gradually decreases as his body adapts to the presence of foreign chemicals (this is what is called tolerance). He must take more and more, not just to get an effect but often just to function at all. His ability to control his usage is now gone and he disregards the horrible consequences of his actions. He has crossed an invisible and intangible line. He is now addicted.

The first step in treating addiction, in any treatment program, is the withdrawal from the substance, whether by substitution, cold turkey or weaning out. And some drug treatments leave it at that (which doesn't solve the initial reason why the person got hooked), some others offer group therapy.