Drug Addiction Treatment

Drug addiction is a complex illness. It is characterized by compulsive, and at times uncontrollable, drug craving, seeking, and use that persists even in the face of extremely negative consequences. For some people, drug addiction becomes chronic, with relapse possible even after long periods of abstinence.

The path to drug addiction begins with the act of taking drugs. Over time, a person’s ability to choose not to take drugs can be compromised. Drug seeking becomes compulsive, in large part as a result of the effects of prolonged drug use on brain functioning and, thus, on behavior.

Addiction often involves not only compulsive drug taking, but also a wide range of dysfunctional behaviors that can interfere with normal functioning in the family, the workplace, and the broader community. Therefore, treatment for drug addiction is never simple and often requires sustained and repeated treatment episodes to achieve the ultimate goal of long-term abstinence. There are many addictive drugs, and treatments for specific drugs can differ. Treatment can occur in a variety of settings, in many different forms, and for different lengths of time. Involvement of a family member in an addict’s treatment program can strengthen and extend the benefits of the program. Drug addiction treatment facilities often employ certified drug abuse counselors, physicians, psychologists, nurses, and social workers. Treatment is delivered in outpatient, inpatient, and residential settings. It is highly structured, with activities designed to help addicts examine damaging beliefs, self-concepts, and destructive patterns of behavior. In many programs, group counseling is emphasized.

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Principles of Effective Treatment

- **No single treatment is appropriate for all individuals.** Matching treatment settings, interventions, and services to each individual’s particular problems and needs is critical to his or her ultimate success in returning to productive functioning in the family, workplace and society.

- **Treatment needs to be readily available.** Because individuals who are addicted to drugs may be uncertain about entering treatment, taking advantage of opportunities when they are ready for treatment is crucial. Therefore, an identified treatment facility should be immediately available and accessible.

- **Effective treatment attends to multiple needs of the individual, not just his or her drug use.** To be effective, treatment must address the individual’s drug use and any associated medical, psychological, social, vocational, and legal problems.

- **An individual’s treatment and services plan must be addressed continually and modified as necessary to ensure that the plan meets the person’s changing needs.** A patient may require varying combinations of services and treatment components during the course of treatment and recovery. In addition to counseling/psychotherapy, a patient at times may require medication, other medical services, family therapy, parenting instructions, vocational rehabilitation, and social and legal services. It is critical that the treatment be appropriate to the individual’s age, gender, ethnicity, and culture.

- **Remaining in treatment for an adequate period of time is critical for treatment effectiveness.** The appropriate duration of treatment for an individual depends on his or her problem and needs. Research indicates that for most patients, the threshold of significant improvement is reached at about three months in treatment.

- **Counseling (Individual and/or Group) and other behavioral therapies are critical components of effective treatment for addiction.** In therapy, patients address issues of motivation, build skills to resist drug use, replace drug-using activities with other constructive and rewarding nondrug-using activities, and improve problem-solving abilities. Behavioral therapy also facilitates interpersonal relationships and the individual’s ability to function in the family and community.
• Drug addicted individuals with coexisting mental disorders should have both disorders treated in an integrated way. Because addictive disorders and mental disorders often occur in the same individual, patients presenting for either condition should be assessed and treated for the co-occurrence of the other type of disorder.

• Medical detoxification is only the first stage of addiction treatment and by itself does little to change long-term drug use. Medical detoxification safely manages the acute physical symptoms of withdrawal associated with stopping drug use. While detoxification alone is very rarely sufficient to help addicts achieve long-term abstinence, for many individuals it is a strongly indicated precursor to effective drug addiction treatment.

• Treatment does not need to be voluntary to be effective. Strong personal motivation usually facilitates the treatment process. However, sanctions or enticements in the family, employment setting, or criminal justice system can increase significantly both treatment entry and retention rates and the success of drug treatment interventions.

• Possible drug use during treatment must be monitored continuously. Lapses to drug use can occur during treatment. The monitoring of a patient’s drug and alcohol use during treatment, such as through urinalysis or other tests, can help the patient withstand urges to use drugs. Such monitoring also can provide early evidence of drug use so that the individual’s treatment plan can be adjusted. Feedback to patients who test positive for drug use is an important element of monitoring.

• Drug treatment programs should provide assessment for HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis B and C, Tuberculosis and other infectious diseases. Counseling can help patients avoid high-risk behavior. Counseling can also help those who are already infected manage their illness.

• Recovery from drug addiction can be a long-term process and require multiple episodes of treatment. As with other chronic illnesses, relapses to drug use can occur after successful treatment. Addicted individuals may require prolonged treatment and multiple episodes of treatment to achieve long-term abstinence and fully restore functioning. Participation in self-help support programs during and following treatment often is helpful in maintaining abstinence.

Source: “Principles of Drug Addiction Treatment: A Research-Based Guide”
National Institute on Drug Abuse, National Institutes of Health
Helpful Hints to Aid in Recovery from Alcohol or Drug Abuse:

- **EAT HEALTHY**...3 meals each day with plenty of fruits and vegetables
- **EXERCISE**...walk as much as possible, especially if feeling urges to use
- **SLEEP**...6-8 hours of sleep per night with a set bedtime
- **KEEP A WRITTEN LOG**...of your feelings/emotions regarding your recovery
- **TELL FRIENDS & FAMILY**...try to spend time with those who encourage you
- **“FRIENDS”...true friends (and family)** actively support your recovery
- **REWARD YOURSELF**...with a good meal, new clothes, a movie etc.
- **DRINK PLENTY OF WATER**...at least 6-8 glasses of water per day
- **AVOID STARTING OTHER NEGATIVE ADDICTIONS**...gambling, etc.
- **SPIRITUALITY, FOR SOME, CAN BE AN AID**...preacher, priest, rabbi, etc.
- **IDENTIFY RELAPSE RISKS**...such as events, places, people, times of the year
- **H.A.L.T. (Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired)...**all can be relapse triggers
- **DON’T SIT AT HOME ALL ALONE**...plan free-time/weekend activities
- **CIGARETTE SMOKING**...usually, we’ll deal with this issue at a later time
- **TIME IS A ONE-WAY STREET**...we can only change the future... start today
- **THINK POSITIVE**...your addiction is very curable. It’s your choice, your life!

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**RESOURCES**

**KSU Counseling Services**
English/Counseling Services - 2nd Floor
Phone: 532-6927

**KSU Alcohol & Other Drug Education Service**
Director: Bill Arck
214 English/Counseling Services Bldg.
Phone: 532-6927

**Alcoholics Anonymous**
Noon Meeting (Mon.-Sat.)
Blue Valley United Methodist Church
835 Church Ave.
Phone: 537-9260

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