

Addiction

Obj. 3.1: Identify the risk factors for addiction and reasons people may try drugs.



Why do you think people become addicted to drugs?

List ALL of the factors you think might cause or influence addiction in the box below:

DISCUSS

Think about how addiction has been portrayed in the media. Perhaps it has even affected you personally, through family or friends. With a partner, discuss your perception of addiction based on what you have seen or heard. Consider questions such as:

1. When you think of an addict, what characteristics comes to mind?
2. Is there a certain type of personality or other characteristics that make someone more likely to become addicted to drugs?
3. What impact does addiction have on people's lives?
4. What are the challenges faced by someone who has a substance abuse problem?

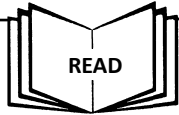
NEW INFO

What is Addiction?

Addiction can be defined as: "Being enslaved to a practice or a substance that is psychologically or physically habit-forming"

The National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA) defines addiction as, "a chronic, relapsing brain disease that is characterized by compulsive drug seeking and use, despite harmful consequences."

People can be addicted to controlled substances, food, sex, shopping, gambling, and many other behaviors. Anyone can develop an addiction. Risk factors of addiction can include genetic, mental, social, and environmental factors.



Read the following information from the National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA):

Why do people take drugs?

In general, people begin taking drugs for a variety of reasons:

- **To feel good.** Most abused drugs produce intense feelings of pleasure. This initial sensation of euphoria is followed by other effects, which differ with the type of drug used. For example, with stimulants such as cocaine, the "high" is followed by feelings of power, self-confidence, and increased energy. In contrast, the euphoria caused by opiates such as heroin is followed by feelings of relaxation and satisfaction.
- **To feel better.** Some people who suffer from social anxiety, stress-related disorders, and depression begin abusing drugs in an attempt to lessen feelings of distress. Stress can play a major role in beginning drug use, continuing drug abuse, or relapse in patients recovering from addiction.
- **To do better.** The increasing pressure that some individuals feel to chemically enhance or improve their athletic or cognitive performance can similarly play a role in initial experimentation and continued drug abuse.
- **Curiosity and "because others are doing it."** In this respect adolescents are particularly vulnerable because of the strong influence of peer pressure; they are more likely, for example, to engage in "thrilling" and "daring" behaviors.

If taking drugs makes people feel good or better, what's the problem?

At first, people may perceive what seem to be positive effects with drug use. They also may believe that they can control their use; however, drugs can quickly take over their lives. Consider how a social drinker can become intoxicated, put himself behind a wheel and quickly turn a pleasurable activity into a tragedy for him and others. Over time, if drug use continues, pleasurable activities become less pleasurable, and drug abuse becomes necessary for abusers to simply feel "normal." Drug abusers reach a point where they seek and take drugs, despite the tremendous problems caused for themselves and their loved ones. Some individuals may start to feel the need to take higher or more frequent doses, even in the early stages of their drug use.

Why do some people become addicted to drugs, while others do not?

As with any other disease, vulnerability to addiction differs from person to person. In general, the more risk factors an individual has, the greater the chance that taking drugs will lead to abuse and addiction. "Protective" factors reduce a person's risk of developing addiction.

Examples Of Risk And Protective Factors

Risk Factors	Domain	Protective Factors
Early Aggressive Behavior	Individual	Self-Control
Poor Social Skills	Individual	Positive Relationships
Lack of Parental Supervision	Family	Parental Monitoring and Support
Substance Abuse	Peer	Academic Competence
Drug Availability	School	Anti-Drug Use Policies
Poverty	Community	Strong Neighborhood Attachment



In the following scenario, list all of the risk factors for addiction in the character's life (see table on previous page) and any reasons they may have begun taking drugs.

1. Mike is a 19-year-old freshmen in college who always feels like he sticks out in a crowd like a sore thumb. Others would describe him as lacking in social skills. Mike meets new friends in college and begins to become more comfortable in a crowd, but he begins drinking large amounts of alcohol in social settings to make it easier. Getting access to alcohol is simple in his college dorm; it seems like everyone knows a "buyer" who is 21-years-old.

Risk Factors	Reasons for Trying Drug

2. Theresa is a sixteen-year-old self-proclaimed "popular girl" who has recently transferred high schools when her family moved. She has two brothers and is raised by a single mother who works night shifts as a nurse and has to leave the house by 6pm. By the time Theresa gets home from her extra-curricular activities or hanging out with friends, her mom is usually already gone. The new group of friends Theresa has begun to hang out with all smoke e-cigarettes. Theresa begins trying it and soon becomes addicted. She is able to easily conceal her habit from her mom because she doesn't smell like smoke, doesn't have to carry around packs of cigarettes, and her mom is not home that often to begin with anyway.

Risk Factors	Reasons for Trying Drug

3. Jack grew up in a poor rural community where poverty was a way of life. His father raised him and his brothers to be "tough" and Jack often got in fights in school. His teachers usually wrote "aggressive" in the comments section of his report card. Jack struggled to finish high school and did not attempt to apply to college. He has worked at the same gas station for seven consecutive years following high school. But now he is at risk of losing his job because of missed work days and showing up late because of a substance abuse addiction. Jack's long-term addiction to drugs is starting to take over his life. He started using three years ago after a bad breakup with a long-term girlfriend. He felt so awful that he needed to turn to someone or something. That something became cocaine.

Risk Factors	Reasons for Trying Drug



Write your own scenario about a character who is facing a substance abuse issue. In the story, include at least two risk factors for addiction in the character's life and one explicit reason that they may have began taking drugs. Before you begin writing, list your risk factors and reasons for trying the drug in the table below:

Risk Factors	Reasons for Trying Drug

Scenario:



Drugs change the chemistry of the brain. Go to www.drugabuse.gov (Click "Publications" and then click "Addiction Science" then "Understanding Drug Abuse and Addiction"). Read about how drugs work in the brain. Write an explanation of what happens in the brain when a person uses drugs. Use your own words!

Full URL: <http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/understanding-drug-abuse-addiction>