

# Barriers to Change

Obj. 3.2: Identify barriers to behavior change.

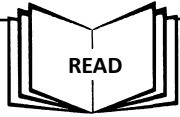


1. List one behavior you/a family member/a friend does that you/he/she would like to change? This might be a bad habit, an addictive behavior, or just something that could cause you physical or emotional harm.
2. Have you/he/she ever tried to stop these behaviors? Why or why not?
3. How do you think you/he/she could successfully stop these behaviors?
4. What things might stand in the way of behavior change?

## DISCUSS

**With a partner, discuss the following questions:**

1. How do addictions form?
2. Why is it so difficult for people to stop using a drug they are addicted to? (List all the reasons you can think of!)



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

**How do drugs work in the brain to produce pleasure?**

Nearly all drugs of abuse directly or indirectly target the brain's reward system by flooding the circuit with dopamine. Dopamine is a neurotransmitter present in regions of the brain that regulate movement, emotion, cognition, motivation, and feelings of pleasure. The overstimulation of this system, which rewards our natural behaviors, produces the euphoric effects sought by people who abuse drugs and teaches them to repeat the behavior.

**Is drug abuse a voluntary behavior?**

The initial decision to take drugs is mostly voluntary. However, when addiction takes over, a person's ability to exert self-control can become seriously impaired. Brain-imaging studies from drug-addicted individuals show physical changes in areas of the brain that are critical for judgment, decision making, learning and memory, and behavior control. Scientists believe that these changes alter the way the brain works and may help explain the compulsive and destructive behaviors of an addicted person.

**Can addiction be treated successfully?**

Yes. Addiction is a treatable, chronic disease that can be managed successfully. Research shows that combining behavioral therapy with medications, where available, is the best way to ensure success for most patients. Treatment approaches must be tailored to address each patient's drug abuse patterns and drug-related medical, psychiatric, and social problems.

Source: <http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/media-guide/science-drug-abuse-addiction>



Often, a person who is using drugs will be confronted by family, friends, medical professionals, employers, clergy, or others at some point during their addiction. No two people with substance abuse problems may respond the same way, yet there are some common reactions that can occur when faced with the prospect of change. The person who is addicted to drugs may experience denial, disbelief, or refusal. The table below summarizes these three barriers.

Barrier	Description	Believes there is a problem	Believes they can change their behavior
Denial	The individual does not believe there is a problem.		
Disbelief	The individual knows there is a problem but does not think it can be changed.		
Refusal	The individual knows there is a problem but has no desire to change it.		

Make an "X" in the columns at the right corresponding to each definition.



For each of the scenarios below, state whether the person has an addiction and the barrier to change he/she is facing. Be prepared to use evidence to support your answers!

1. Ashley has been making small cuts on her inner arms and thighs for the past 6 months. She does not feel like she can stop this behavior, though she knows she has fallen into an unhealthy behavioral pattern. She doesn't believe she can change the way she was born, wanting to cut herself.
  - a. Does Ashley have an addiction?
  - b. What is Ashley's barrier to behavior change?
  
2. Jackson loves video games and is currently working on beating Batman: Arkham City. He plays for hours, breaking only when he absolutely has to. He sometimes goes without showering for days and has not seen his friends to hang out in ages. He occasionally misses school to stay home and play. Jackson doesn't see anything wrong with his behavior; in fact, he feels a sense of achievement with each game he beats.
  - a. Does Jackson have an addiction?
  - b. What is Jackson's barrier to behavior change?
  
3. Monica tried cigarettes in fifth grade and has smoked ever since. Her awesome health teachers teach her all the facts about tobacco, so she knows her habit is unhealthy and she should change, but she thinks smoking looks so glam so she doesn't want to.
  - a. Does Monica have an addiction?
  - b. What is Monica's barrier to behavior change?



Write a scenario for each barrier (3 scenarios total). First choose who your character will be. Then choose the behavior he/she is trying to change. Your scenario should allow someone else to guess the barrier that is assigned to the case.

*How to write the scenarios:*

Barrier	Character:	Habit or behavior that he/she is trying to change.	Scenario
<i>Example: Denial</i>	<i>Jamie</i>	<i>Smoking</i>	<i>Jamie has been smoking for three years and has increased from a pack a day to four packs a day and now has lung cancer. <u>Her parents are worried and she says it's not a problem &amp; she'll be fine.</u></i>