

REFLEX THEATRE



KEY FACTS

Addiction - physiological illness, recognised as a disease by the NHS and American Medical Association. Derived from latin *addicere* ("bound to" or "enslaved by"). Addiction is marked by a change in behaviour caused by the biochemical changes in the brain after continued substance abuse. Substance use becomes the main priority of the addict, regardless of the harm they may cause to themselves or others. An addiction causes people to act irrationally when they don't have the substance they are addicted to in their system.

Dependance - a state of physically needing a certain substance. (Insulin for diabetic people). While it is possible to have a physical dependence without being addicted, addiction is more often than not right around the corner.

Addictive Personality - a personality that is more likely to become addicted to something. This can include someone becoming extremely passionate about something and developing an obsession or fixation. The underlying factors for getting carried away and overindulging in video games, food, sex, or drugs and stem from hidden anxiety, depression, and poor impulse control. Some of these behaviours can be an attempt to heal unrealised or repressed emotions. At first glance, being addicted to a video game or food can seem harmless, especially when compared to substance abuse disorders. The problem is the object of addiction can change. This means someone can have a phase of being addicted to video games, then transition into other objects—or substances—of abuse.



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Examples of Addiction

- Comfort eating/binge eating
- Using alcohol to socialise or relax
- Checking one's phone or social media too much
- Replacing sexual partners for a false sense of intimacy
- Impulse buys/excessive shopping
- Gambling
- Obsessing
- Excessive risk taking
- Drug use for coping
- Never feeling satisfied/needing more of a particular feeling
- An inability to stop using harmful chemicals
- An inability to curtail other harmful activities

The Process of Addiction

For everyone, when the brain feels something good is happening (such as a pleasure from food, sex, exercise, drugs/alcohol) it sends signals to the Limbic System in the brain. Because natural pleasures in our lives are necessary for survival (the 4 F's flight, fight, fornication, food), the limbic system creates an appetite that drives people to seek out these things. The brain's job is to keep all of our various bodily systems in balance, like blood glucose levels, body temperature and we do have one for pleasure as well called the Hedonic System. Normally, there is a "Set Point" which is like a "Pleasure Threshold". A chemical called dopamine is released when the brain is rewarded, like eating a delicious meal, winning a game or drinking alcohol, causing feelings of pleasure for a person. After a certain amount of dopamine, a "Non Addict" brain will normally feel fully satisfied and have no need for further pleasure.



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Addiction is when someone can't maintain this balance and their "Pleasure Threshold". They keep chasing a dopamine reward, which can be extremely difficult to stop. Intense feelings of pleasure is caused through using drugs and alcohol and it changes the "Pleasure Threshold". The brain essentially becomes "deaf" to pleasure and can only be satisfied through "VERY LOUD" pleasures.

For addicts in recovery, the goal over time is get their "Pleasure Threshold", their Hedonic set point back to a normal level, where instead of needing to use drugs or alcohol to release the VERY LOUD dopamine, they are able to enjoy healthier things that release dopamine. It's very difficult at the start of the journey because the brain isn't receiving the VERY LOUD dopamine or pleasure it was used to, causing feelings of hopelessness, emptiness, anxiety, stress.

Addictions & Compulsions

There are vital differences between compulsions and addictions; however, both can be influenced by the same underlying causes. For example, someone with an alcohol addiction may be trying to fill a void or temper anxiety. Someone with a compulsion may have underlying feelings of anxiety but may not have addictions or abuse substances.

The main differences between addictions and compulsions are pleasure-seeking ways and the lack of pleasure. Addictions often include and are motivated by pleasure (at least initially), while compulsions often lack pleasure. Someone who feeds their craving for an addictive substance is rewarded by dopamine, a chemical released once the brain is rewarded. Once this becomes a habit, they are now chasing a reward, which can be extremely difficult to stop. However, anybody could take any substance and become addicted immediately. Heroin is a key example.



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Key Examples of Drug Names - Both Scientific & Slang

- Diamorphine - heroin, smack, dope, black tar
- Cocaine - coke, crack
- Bufotenin - Toad skin toxin
- Lysergic acid diethylamide - LSD, acid
- MDMA - Ecstasy, molly, mandy
- Methamphetamine - crystal meth, meth, ice, glass
- Phencyclidine - angel dust, PCP
- Psilocybe mushrooms - magic mushrooms
- Amphetamine - Speed
- Cannabis - Green, Hash, Marijuana, Pot, Puff, Gas, Bud, Skunk, Weed (among others)
- Ketamine - Ketalar, Special K, Ket, Kenny, Kenneth

Legal Highs

A "Legal High" is classed as a psychoactive substance that changes nervous system function and results in alterations in perception, mood, consciousness, cognition, or behaviour. The Psychoactive Substances Act 2016 makes it an offence to produce, supply, offer to supply, possess with intent to supply, possess on custodial premises, import or export psychoactive substances; that is, any substance intended for human consumption that is capable of producing a psychoactive effect with a maximum of seven years' imprisonment. Excluded substances, such as food, alcohol, tobacco, nicotine, caffeine and medical products as well as controlled drugs, which continue to be regulated by the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971[4]. The only way possession of any drug is legal if it is medically prescribed by a certified health professional or if someone has a licence to possess the drug in question.



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The Adolescent Brain

From early adolescence through the mid-to-late 20s, the brain develops somewhat unevenly. The parts of the brain to develop first are those that control physical activity (cerebellum), emotion (amygdala) and motivation (nucleus accumbens). The prefrontal cortex, which is responsible for impulse control, more reasoned thought and good judgment, develops later. This pattern of brain development helps explain some common traits of teen behaviour: Difficulty holding back or controlling emotions, A preference for high-excitement, exploration and new activities, Inadequate planning and limited judgment, More risky, impulsive behaviours.

With the prefrontal cortex — or one’s ‘voice of reason’ — developing last, it’s easier to understand why teens are so driven by emotion, excitement and short-term reward. This leads to unpredictable — and sometimes risky — behaviour. Unfortunately, developing brains are also more susceptible than the brains of adults to damage from outside influences. This means substance use during the teen years creates a more distinct risk for immediate and lasting harm.

Sentencing for Possession of a controlled substance with intent to supply.

- Class A - Max: Life Range: High Level Community Order – 16 years
- Class B - Max: 14 years and/or unlimited fine Range: 75% weekly earnings – 10 years
- Class C - Max: 14 years and/or unlimited fine Range: 25% weekly earnings – 8 years

There are so many variations and guidelines with regards to sentencing: Risk of re-offending, danger to the public, amount of substance, role in the supply chain, welfare of the young person, were they coerced or groomed, the list goes on and on and on. Only a judge will make the final decision and it’s a complete lottery on what they’ll decide.



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INFORMATION SOURCES

<https://hebrontrust.org.uk>

<https://www.talktofrank.com>

<https://www.matthewproject.org/resources>

https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/emcdda-home-page_en

<https://drkevinmccauley.com>

<https://yaledailynews.com/blog/2013/10/22/addiction-definition-in-flux/>

<http://lancasterpana.org/Basic-Text-Fifth-Edition.pdf>

<https://www.sentencingcouncil.org.uk/offences/crown-court/item/supplying-or-offering-to-supply-a-controlled-drug-possession-of-a-controlled-drug-with-intent-to-supply-it-to-another/>

<https://www.sentencingcouncil.org.uk/overarching-guides/magistrates-court/item/sentencing-children-and-young-people/>