

## Ask ERS?

Dear ERS Advisor,

**My 19-year-old daughter admits to smoking marijuana several times a week in college. When I confronted her about this she told me I was a hypocrite since she knows her father and I smoked pot in college. I think she has a point, yet I am still concerned that she doesn't see anything wrong with regular pot use. What do you think?**

**Worried Hypocrite**

Dear Worried Hypocrite,

Since she's already aware of your own history with marijuana, your daughter will probably not "buy into" any response that doesn't acknowledge your own past use. It's important to point out the damage that people do to themselves nowadays since marijuana's potency has vastly increased since you were in college.

Several studies have documented how marijuana impairs memory, attention and learning skills even after people have stopped using. There is also the fact that those who smoke marijuana are more likely to use and abuse other drugs. Your daughter should also consider the fact that marijuana impairs judgment and can make anyone much more vulnerable to being taken advantage of.

You might try saying something like, "You may be right, I do sound like a hypocrite. In retrospect, I doubt I would have smoked it then, knowing what I do today. As your parent, I want to protect you from making some of the stupid mistakes that I made as a teen." Chances are, your daughter knows someone with a drug or alcohol problem. Try using that as an opportunity for some direct and honest dialogue about making smart choices in life. It may be a discussion that brings you both closer together.

Good luck!

ERS Advisor

**Interested in submitting a question?  
Send an e-mail to [aharkleroad@ers-usa.org](mailto:aharkleroad@ers-usa.org)**

## Effective Drug Treatment

*National Institute on Drug Abuse*

### **What is drug addiction treatment?**

There are many addictive drugs, and treatments for specific drugs can differ. Treatment also varies depending on the characteristics of the patient.

Problems associated with an individual's drug addiction can vary significantly. People who are addicted to drugs come from all walks of life. Many suffer from mental health, occupational, health, or social problems that make their addictive disorders much more difficult to treat. Even if there are few associated problems, the severity of addiction itself ranges widely among people.

A variety of scientifically based approaches to drug addiction treatment exists. Drug addiction treatment can include behavioral therapy (such as counseling, cognitive therapy, or psychotherapy), medications, or their combination. Behavioral therapies offer people strategies for coping with their drug cravings, teach them ways to avoid drugs and prevent relapse, and help them deal with relapse if it occurs. When a person's drug-related behavior places him or her at higher risk for AIDS or other infectious diseases, behavioral therapies can help to reduce the risk of disease transmission. Case management and referral to other medical, psychological, and social services are crucial components of treatment for many patients. The best programs provide a combination of therapies and other services to meet the needs of the individual patient, which are shaped by such issues as age, race, culture, sexual orientation, gender, pregnancy, parenting, housing, and employment, as well as physical and sexual abuse.

Medications, such as antidepressants, mood stabilizers, or neuroleptics, may be critical for treatment success when patients have co-occurring mental disorders, such as depression, anxiety disorder, bipolar disorder, or psychosis.

Treatment can occur in a variety of settings, in many different forms, and for different lengths of time. Because drug addiction is typically a chronic disorder characterized by occasional relapses, a short-term, one-time treatment often is not sufficient. For many, treatment is a long-term

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## Effective Drug Treatment *Continued from page 1*

process that involves multiple interventions and attempts at abstinence.

### Why can't drug addicts quit on their own?

Nearly all addicted individuals believe in the beginning that they can stop using drugs on their own, and most try to stop without treatment. However, most of these attempts result in failure to achieve long-term abstinence. Research has shown that long-term drug use results in significant changes in brain function that persist long after the individual stops using drugs. These drug-induced changes in brain function may have many behavioral consequences, including the compulsion to use drugs despite adverse consequences, a defining characteristic of addiction.

**Long-term drug use results in significant changes in brain function that persist long after the individual stops using drugs.**

Understanding that addiction has such an important biological component may help explain an individual's difficulty in achieving and maintaining abstinence without treatment. Psychological stress from work or family problems, social cues (such as meeting individuals from one's drug-using past), or the environment (such as encountering streets, objects, or even smells associated with drug use) can interact with biological factors to hinder attainment of sustained abstinence and make relapse more likely. Research studies indicate that even

the most severely addicted individuals can participate actively in treatment and that active participation is essential to good outcomes.

### Principles of Effective Treatment

- 1. 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.
- 2. 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. Potential treatment applicants can be lost if treatment is not immediately available or is not readily accessible.
- 3. 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.
- 4. An individual's treatment and services plan must be assessed 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 or psychotherapy, a patient at times may require medication, other medical services, family therapy, parenting instruction, vocational rehabilitation, and social and legal services. It is critical that the treatment approach be appropriate to the individual's age, gender, ethnicity, and culture.
- 5. Remaining in treatment for an adequate period of time is critical for treatment effectiveness.** The appropriate duration for an individual depends on his or her problems and needs. Research indicates that for most patients, the threshold of significant improvement is reached at about 3 months in treatment. After this threshold is reached, additional treatment can produce further progress toward recovery. Because people often leave treatment prematurely, programs should include strategies to engage and keep patients in treatment.
- 6. Counseling (individual and/or group) and other behavioral therapies are critical components of effective treatment for addiction.** In therapy, patients



*"The greatest discovery of my generation is that a human being can alter his life by altering his attitudes of mind."*

– William James

address issues of motivation, build skills to resist drug use, replace drug-using activities with constructive and rewarding non-drug-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.

**7. Medications are an important element of treatment for many patients, especially when combined with counseling and other behavioral therapies.**

Methadone and levo-alpha-acetylmethadol (LAAM) are very effective in helping individuals addicted to heroin or other opiates stabilize their lives and reduce their illicit drug use. Naltrexone is also an effective medication for some opiate addicts and some patients with co-occurring alcohol dependence. For patients with mental disorders, both behavioral treatments and medications can be critically important.

**8. Addicted or drug-abusing individuals with co-existing 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.

**9. 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 rarely sufficient to help addicts achieve long-term abstinence, for some individuals it is a strongly indicated precursor to effective drug addiction treatment.

**10. Treatment does not need to be voluntary to be effective.** Strong motivation can facilitate the treatment process. 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.

**11. Possible drug use during treatment must be monitored continuously.** Lapses to drug use can occur during treatment. The objective 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 illicit drug use is an important element of monitoring.

**12. Treatment programs should provide assessment for HIV/AIDS, hepatitis B and C, tuberculosis and other infectious diseases, and counseling to help patients modify or change behaviors that place themselves or others at risk of infection.**

Counseling can help patients avoid high-risk behavior. Counseling also can help people who are already infected manage their illness.

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

For more information about substance abuse and addiction, or for an evaluation, call the Employee Assistance Program 1-800-292-2780 to schedule an appointment.

## just the FACTS.

- Among individuals with substance use disorders, 30 to 60 percent meet the criteria for co-morbid Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). *National Institute on Drug Abuse*
- Those diagnosed with Antisocial Personality disorders and those experiencing Manic episodes have the highest risk for developing substance abuse problems, among those persons diagnosed with a psychiatric disorder. *Mental Health America*
- The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) states that 500 million workdays are lost annually due to alcoholism.

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## Sites to See



**<http://www.nida.nih.gov/>**

For the latest information on drug use and abuse trends, the various drugs of abuse, and clinical trials, as well as lots of related links to other sites, visit the National Institute on Drug Abuse's website for all of the facts.

**[http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org/en\\_is\\_aa\\_for\\_you.cfm?PageID=71](http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org/en_is_aa_for_you.cfm?PageID=71)**

"Alcoholics Anonymous® is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking." To see if you might benefit from the group support of Alcoholics Anonymous, follow this link and answer their 12 questions on whether or not AA is for you.

**<http://www.drugabuse.gov/StressAlert/StressAlert.html>**

In the National Institute on Drug Abuse's Community Drug Alert Bulletin, they discuss the connection between stress and substance abuse. "Children exposed to severe stress may be more vulnerable to drug abuse. A number of clinical and epidemiological studies show a strong association between psychosocial stressors early in life (e.g., parental loss, child abuse) and an increased risk for depression, anxiety, impulsive behavior, and substance abuse in adulthood."

**Are you wondering if you might have an alcohol or drug problem? Maybe a family member could use some help getting clean and sober? Call us, your Employee/Member Assistance Program for free and confidential help.**

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