



Substance Use Disorders

What is a substance use disorder?

Regrettably many people in our communities have used substances in an effort to relieve the feelings that come around with grief and loss, despair and even dispossession. Substances such as Yandi, Speed even petrol has caused many problems in our communities. Unfortunately overuse of these substances can lead to many people in our communities to develop substance use problems.

Using alcohol and drugs does not mean that a person has a substance use disorder; a substance use disorder can however include the following:

- When a person uses drugs and / or alcohol and this leads to problems in day to day life like problems at work or at home, or even getting picked up by the cops for being drunk
- Becoming dependent on alcohol or another drug
- When someone is using so much alcohol or drugs that it starts to cause damage to their health; including physical or mental health problems

What are some symptoms of a substance use disorder?

There are a number of symptoms that we can look out for of someone having a substance use disorder and these can include:

- No matter what sickness the person may have they continue to use the drug of choice or continue to drink alcohol
- The person may need to have a greater amount of the substance, as there normal amount does not have any affect on them, meaning they have gained a tolerance
- The person starts to say 'NO' to social outings or gatherings as their substance use becomes a priority
- The person may have problems cutting down the amount of substance they are using and they start to use for longer periods of time

What may cause a substance use disorder?

We must remember that there are many different substances and all these substances can affect the brain in many different ways. We know that people use substances because of their

emotional effects. However some substances cause dependence and this is where it starts to become harder to stop.

Unfortunately substance use can typically start when a person is in their teenage years or as a young adult, and regrettably some of these young people will develop a substance use disorder. It is also believed that if a person has not started to use a particular substance until they are about 30 years of age, then they may have less chance of developing a disorder

Therefore some possible causes of substance use disorders could be:

- Sensitivity to drugs
- What you see and what you learn (Family Environment)
- Availability of the drug and / or alcohol
- Social factors (Peer groups)
- And other mental health / mental illness factors

Where can I go for help?

Sometimes we face events in our lives that we are unable to handle ourselves or with help of family and friends and sometimes there are situations in our lives that might be too much for us to cope with. In these cases, there are options out there for you to take.

Some of these options can include:

- Counselling (Someone to yarn too)
- Behavioural and Lifestyle changes (Health Choices)
- See a doctor who might give you medication that can help

If you just want to have a yarn or if you would like to find out more information contact any of your local Community Mental Health or other services listed below.

The Aboriginal Social & Emotional Wellbeing Fact Sheet Series was designed by the Aboriginal Social & Emotional Wellbeing workers David Freeman & Brenda Freeman based at Campbelltown Community Mental Health Service
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