

A communication periodical for our clients, staff & the community at large

The Chronicle

A Paterson Counseling Center Newsletter

Special points of interest:

- PCC upgrades Office software
- Team sessions help identify process improvement opportunities
- Welcome to new counselors
- Team relishes 3 Yr CARF Accreditation

Marijuana Primer

MARIJUANA ADDICTION AND DEPENDENCE

Cannabis is nowhere near as addictive as nicotine or alcohol but it is wrong to say it is not habit-forming. This "soft" drug is one of the most widely used illegal substances in the United States. Some people report that they can use marijuana occasionally, or even regularly, without becoming addicted.

Many users compare their daily cannabis habit with dependency on caffeine (which is also an addictive substance). The UK Department of Health summed it up neatly: "Cannabis is a weakly addictive drug but does induce dependence in a significant minority of regular users."

Around 9% of users become addicted, although some studies estimate that over 50% of users have "impaired control" over their use of cannabis. Of the 70 million Americans estimated to have tried the drug, around two million use it daily.



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Tolerance

Tolerance builds up rapidly after a few doses and disappears rapidly after a couple of days of abstinence. Heavy users need as much as eight times higher doses to achieve the same psychoactive effects as regular users using smaller amounts. They still get stoned but not as powerfully.

Over time and with a high level of use, a pot smoker's brain becomes desensitized to THC (tetrahydrocannabinol), which is the active ingredient in marijuana. Tolerance also develops because THC is stored in the fat cells of the body. It can take up to several weeks for a regular weed smoker's body to be completely free of the presence of the drug.

One effect of cannabis you can't develop tolerance to is "the stimulatory effect on the appetite" or munchies.

Harsh Truths About Cocaine

Addiction to Pot

How do you know that your pot use has crossed the line into an addiction? The way you can tell whether you are in control over your pot smoking habit or if the drug is controlling you is to consider how much time and effort you are devoting to marijuana during the course of your day. When a good deal (or the majority) of your thoughts revolve around the last time you used Mary Jane, when you will be able to light up a joint again or where you will be able to buy some more weed, those are red flags that you have developed an addiction.



If you find yourself thinking about the quality of the last bag of grass you bought (whether you were happy with it or not) and wondering how the next one will stack up, you may be a marijuana addict. Spending a lot of time thinking about whether you have enough money to buy your dope and if you find you are short of cash, wondering how you are going to get the money is another sign of addiction to pot.

People who develop marijuana addictions tell themselves the same kinds of excuses that people who are addicted to nicotine, alcohol or other drugs do. If you have ever said (even to yourself) that you can quit any time you want to, but you can't seem to stay off the stuff, you are an addict. Making up excuses about why now isn't a good time to quit smoking dope, telling yourself, or telling those close to you that you will quit once some set of circumstances in your life have changed are also not good signs if you are trying to convince yourself that you are not addicted.

When your marijuana use gets to the point where you put it ahead of your work or educational pursuits, you are no longer just a recreational user. If you avoid spending time with your friends or family members so that you can get high, you are exhibiting another sign of addiction to pot.

Withdrawal Symptoms and Weed Addiction

If you are a regular cannabis smoker (every day) and you stop smoking, you will experience some of the following withdrawal symptoms: restlessness, irritability, mild agitation, insomnia, nausea, sleep disturbance, sweats, and intense dreams.

These symptoms, however, are usually mild and short-lived, lasting 2 to 4 days. Marijuana cravings are not uncommon among people who have a history of regular pot smoking. There are numerous marijuana detoxification centers, as well marijuana rehab centers offering treatment programs for those serious about moving past their dependency on pot.

The trained staff working at these facilities can help clients who are experiencing cravings to ride out this time and resist the urge to start using again.