

Understanding Substance Use and Addiction



KEY POINTS ABOUT ADDICTION

- Addiction can become out of control and cause problems
- People with addiction want to change how they feel
- Drugs and certain behaviours can help do that
- Substances only change our emotions temporarily
- Treatment and counselling involves learning to manage emotions
- It's important to identify and express emotions in a healthy way



WHY DO PEOPLE GET ADDICTED?

- Our brain controls the way we feel
- Substances affect our brain and can make us feel good but can also make us feel bad
- Over time, the brain needs more of the substance to feel good
- When someone stops using substances, they feel bad because their brain is used to having them

Trauma is the cause of addictions. Opiates and other substances are a short-term pain reliever to the psychological pain, they are never the solution.

Trauma and addiction often go hand in hand, and your therapist will work with you to figure out which one to tackle first.



Our brains react to stress. When someone goes through abuse, trauma, bullying, or grief, they may turn to addictive behaviours to cope and avoid the issues causing their pain.



Clients Lead Their Own Treatment

CLIENT-LED COUNSELLING AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE

- Safety first - Always!
- Exploring readiness and goals
- Talking about why someone uses substances
- Creating a plan with your therapist
- Developing tools to cope with trauma and pain

**RESOURCES & SUPPORT
ON THE OTHER SIDE**

Changing addiction is hard because it affects the brain. Harm reduction helps people use substances more safely if they can't stop right away. This approach encourages kindness to oneself and setting personal goals. It focuses on reducing harm and finding support in the community to heal and get better.

Resources for Substance Use and Addiction

SAFE USE, SAFE INJECTION SITES ETC.

- Insite
- Pulse Safe Injection Site
- Vancouver Coastal Health's Safe Injection Sites
- BC Centre for Disease Control
- YouthSafe

PEER SUPPORT AND SUPPORT GROUPS

- Harm Reduction Coalition of BC
- BC Association of People Who Use Drugs
- Smart Recovery
- YouthSafe
- Reach Youth Society

DRUG TESTING

- Pacific Harm Reduction Services
- Vancouver Coastal Health's Drug Testing Program
- YouthSafe
- Reach Youth Society

DETOX REHAB CENTRES

- BC Mental Health & Substance Use Services
- Vancouver Coastal Health Addiction Medicine
- Polaris House
- Pacific Treatment Centre

“
THE OUTREACH STAFF ARE REALLY OPEN AND UNDERSTANDING. THE COUNSELLORS ARE REALLY HELPFUL. EVERYTHING GOT BETTER HERE AS THE WEEKS WENT BY.
”

- Former Dan's Legacy Client



*Dan's Legacy provides trauma-informed and culturally sensitive counselling and life-skills intervention programs. You can refer yourself at any time for **free counselling and wrap-around services** to help support you!*

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