

Addiction is a Disorder of an Altered Cognition

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Introduction

Addiction is a condition that results when a person develops a habit to take substances like alcohol, drugs, nicotine or engages in activities like sex, gambling which continue to become a compulsive behavior over a period of time. Addiction could be of particular substance or behavior. The addiction interferes with one's responsibilities, relationships and health. In most cases, the person is not aware that his / her addiction might be causing problems to the people around them. The health status also declines faster resulting in serious psychological and physical effects. The cause of addiction largely remains obscure. However, many researchers believe that addiction is a form of cognitive impairment which comes as a result of excessive substance abuse. Brain-imaging studies in humans and neuropsychological studies in animals have shown that substance abuse could cause disruptions in the frontal cortex, which regulates cognitive activities. According to the **National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism**, most heavy long-term alcohol users will experience a mild to moderate impairment of intellectual functioning as well as a diminished brain size. A person can get addicted to almost anything but most commonly associated are the above mentioned substances or acts. The most common impairments relate to the reasoning skill as well as the ability to perceive. Frequent use of such substances over an extended period, can negatively affect many aspects of a person's health and quality of life. These substances produce their effects by modifying chemical signaling in the brain. Most importantly cognitive processes which are responsible for control of behavior, inhibition, reasoning, learning and working memory are impaired in addiction [1]. Some of the most common signs and symptoms of an

altered cognitive state are confusion, poor motor coordination, loss of short term and long term memory, identity confusion, impaired judgment and so on. Off late, researchers have construed that cognitive impairment minimizes the recall of negative effects of the addictive behavior and thus is necessary and causal to all addictions. The addict appears to act on the basis of faulty reasoning [2]. This faulty reasoning, caused by cognitive defect, makes one to act deliberately. The belief system of such person alters between the knowledge of harmful effects of their addiction and an untrue belief that the addiction will not result in such negative consequences [3]. The memory of the negative experiences because of addiction is largely ignored or does not appear to be considered in the decision to act. However, addiction is a treatable condition. Whatever the addiction, there are lots of ways one can seek help.

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