

What to do when I  
suspect a person I  
care for is  
on drugs  
/  
Wat om te doen as  
ek vermoed dat 'n  
persoon vir wie ek  
omgee op dwelms is

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Lost in this dark world. A dark world full of many others. A padded room with nowhere to run. No meaning in thoughts, no meaning in scattered conversation, no meaning in life itself. A closed group of "acquaintances" full of lies and deceit. A world in which no friend is a "true friend". A world in which you're not alone yet lonelier than ever. Nothing is exactly as it seems. And what you have today may be gone tomorrow. A world in which everyone is after you, including your closest friends and there's nowhere left to hide. And yet I still have to have it, my escape, my getaway, my dark world in which I hide when reality becomes too much.

-Tiffany Puryear (Poet)

# Outline

- Understanding drug use, abuse and addiction
- How drug abuse and addiction can develop
- Warnings, Signs and symptoms
- Getting help
- When a loved one has a problem
- “Coming clean”

# Crystal Meth

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# Understanding drug use, abuse and addiction

- People experiment for different reasons

“curiosity”

“to have a good time”

“because friends are doing it”

“improve overall performance”

“to ease other problems”

- Use does not automatically lead to abuse
- Each individual is different
- No specific level where drug abuse becomes a problem
- Drug abuse is less about the drug and amount and more about the *consequences* of drug use
- Regardless of how often and how little you use, when it causes problems in your life, you have a drug problem



# Cocaine



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# Why do some become addicted and others not?

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- Genes, mental health, psychosocial environment
- Risk factors include:
  1. Family history of addiction
  2. Abuse, neglect, or other traumatic childhood experiences
  3. Mental disorders
  4. Early use of drugs
  5. Method of administration – smoking, injecting

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# Dagga

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# Drug addiction and the brain

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- Complex disorder characterized by compulsive use.
- Each drug produces different effects, but all abused substances share one thing in common; repeated use can alter the way the brain looks and functions.

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- Surge of dopamine levels, triggering feelings of pleasure – your brain remembers this and wants it to be repeated
- If you become addicted, the substance takes on the same significance as other survival behaviours such as eating and drinking.
- These changes interfere with your ability to think clearly, exercise good judgement, control your behaviour, and feel normal without drugs

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- Regardless of which drug you are addicted to, the uncontrollable craving grow more important than anything else, including family, finances, career, personal health and happiness.
- The urge becomes so strong that the mind finds many ways to deny or rationalize the addiction. This leads to underestimation of the quantity of drugs you are taking, the impact on your life and the level of control you have

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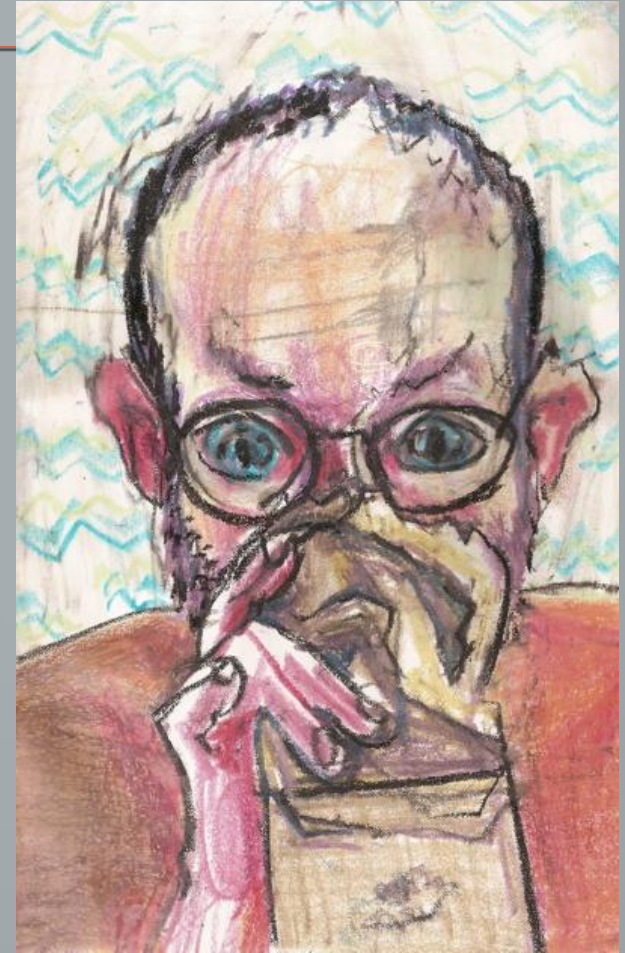
# How drug abuse and addiction can develop

- People who experiment with drugs continue to because it makes them feel good or stops them from feeling bad.
- Fine line between regular use and addiction.
- Few can recognize that they have crossed the line

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# Lighter fluid

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# The good news

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- ◉ **With the right treatment and support, you can counteract the disruptive effects of drug use and regain control of your life.**
- ◉ The first obstacle is to recognize and admit that you have a problem
- ◉ Listen to your loved ones who are often better able to see the negative effects that this habit is having on your life.

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# PCP

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# Myths

- Overcoming addiction is simply a matter of will power, stopping if you really want to.
- Addiction is a disease, there is nothing you can do about it
- Addicts have to reach rock-bottom before they can get better
- You cannot force someone to seek help
- Treatment failed previously, so there is no point in trying again

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# Cough syrup



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# Signs and symptoms of drug abuse and addiction

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- Different drugs have different effects, but the symptoms of addiction are similar

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# Drug abuse

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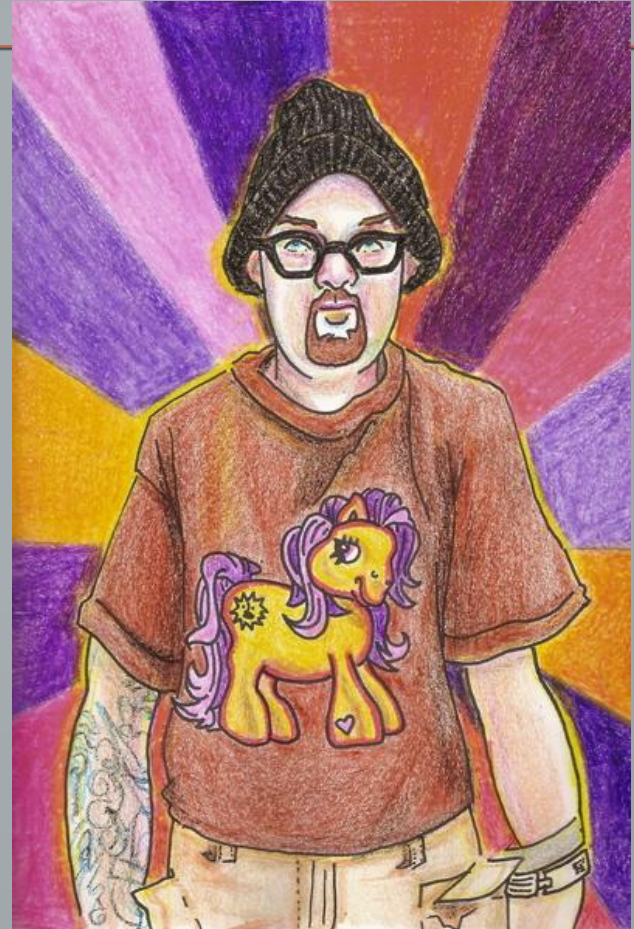
- ◉ Neglecting responsibilities
- ◉ Using drugs under dangerous conditions or taking risks while high
- ◉ Legal trouble
- ◉ Relationship problems

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# Ativan

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# Drug addiction

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- ◉ Drug tolerance
- ◉ Taking drugs to avoid or relieve withdrawal symptoms
- ◉ Losing control over drug use
- ◉ Life revolves around drug use
- ◉ Activities once enjoyed are abandoned
- ◉ Continuous uses, in spite of the knowledge that this is causing harm

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# Warning signs: physical signs

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- Bloodshot eyes, abnormal pupils
- Altered sleep patterns and appetite changes
- Deterioration in physical appearance / grooming
- Unusual smells on breath, body or clothing
- Tremors, slurred speech, impaired coordination

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# Behavioural signs

- Drop in attendance and performance at school or work
- Unexplained need for money, financial problems, borrowing or even stealing
- Secretive and suspicious behaviour
- Sudden change in friends, favourite hangouts and hobbies
- Getting into trouble
- Demanding more privacy, avoiding eye contact, locking doors, sneaking around

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# Psychological signs

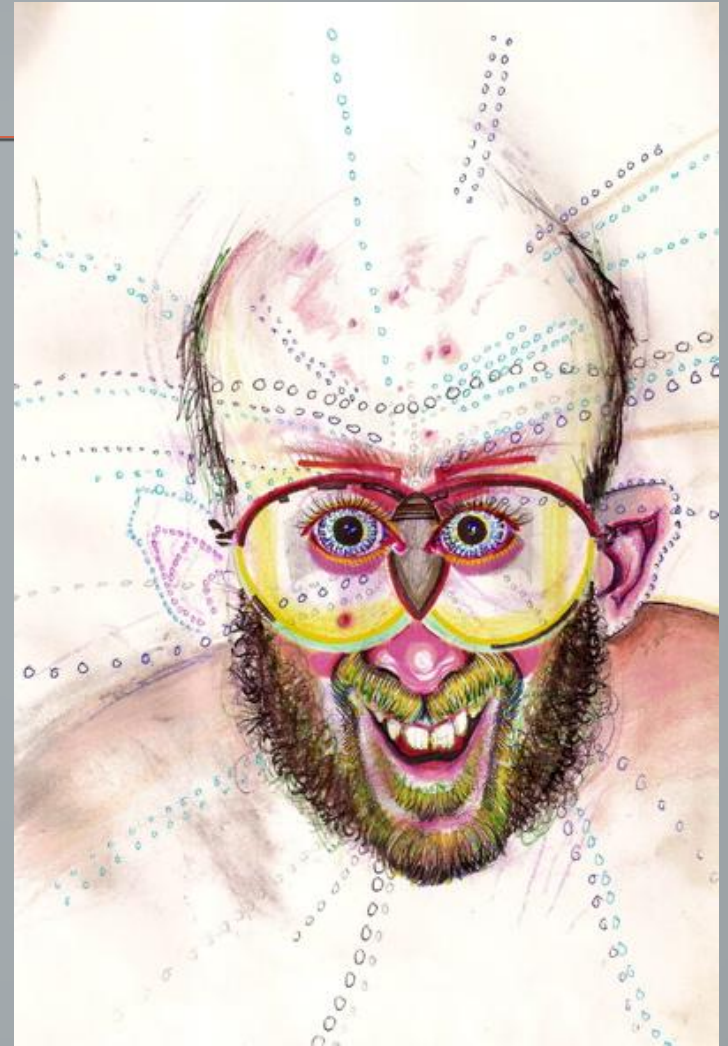
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- Unexplained change in personality or attitude
- Mood swings, irritability, angry outbursts
- Hyperactivity, agitation, giddiness
- Lack of motivation, lethargic
- “Spaced out”
- Fearful, anxious, paranoid
- Withdrawn, depressed

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# Mushrooms

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# Warning signs of specific drugs

## **Marijuana / dagga**

glassy red eyes, loud talking, inappropriate laughter, followed by sleepiness, loss of interest, motivation, weight loss or gain



# Depressants/sedatives

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- Contracted pupils, drunk like, difficulty concentrating, clumsiness poor judgement, slurred speech, sleepiness

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# Stimulants

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- ◉ Dilated pupils, hyperactivity, euphoria, irritability, excessive talking followed by depression or sleepiness, long periods without eating or sleeping, weight loss, dry mouth and nose

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# Inhalants

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- Watery eyes, impaired vision, memory and thought
- Secretions from the nose or rashes around the mouth
- Headache, nausea
- Appearance of intoxication
- Drowsiness, poor muscle control
- Appetite changes, anxiety,
- Lots of cans or aerosols in the trash

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# Hallucinogens

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- ◉ Dilated pupils
- ◉ Bizarre and irrational behaviour, aggression
- ◉ Mood swings, hallucinations
- ◉ Detachment from people
- ◉ Slurred speech, confusion

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# Heroin

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- ◉ Small pupils, with absent light response
- ◉ Needle marks
- ◉ Sleeping at unusual times
- ◉ Sweating, vomiting, coughing
- ◉ Sniffing, twitching
- ◉ Loss of appetite

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# When you suspect a problem

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- ◉ Speak up
- ◉ Take care of yourself
- ◉ Avoid self blame

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# Do not...

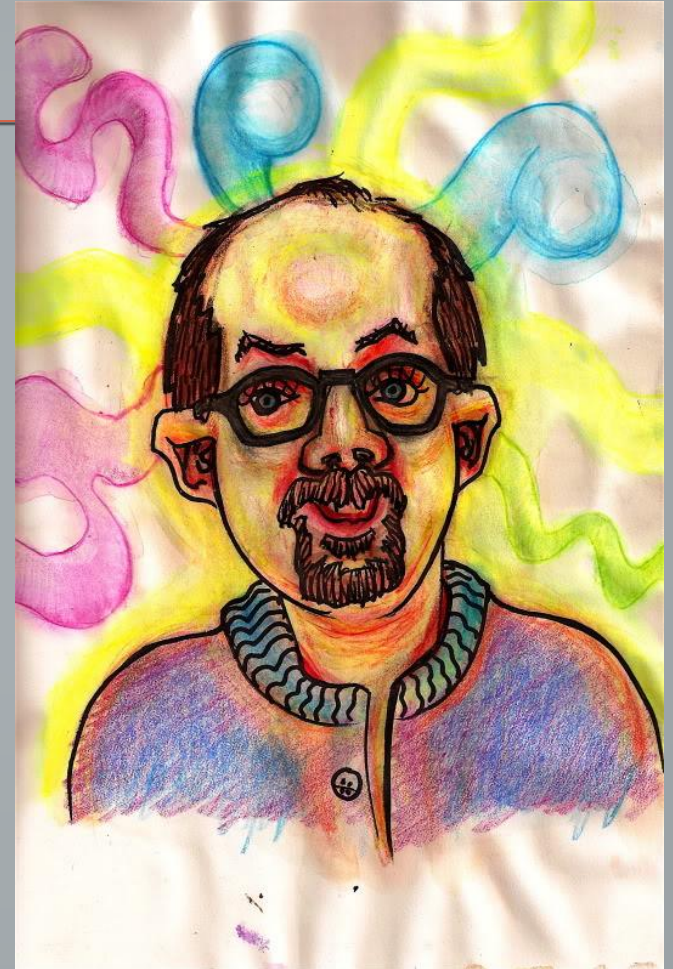
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- Punish, threaten, bribe or preach
- Be a martyr with emotional appeals
- Cover up or make excuses for the drug user
- Shield them from negative consequences
- Take over their responsibilities
- Hide or throw out the drugs
- Argue when they are high
- Take drugs with the user
- Feel guilty or responsible for another's behaviour

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# Dagga

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# “Coming clean”

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- Acute withdrawal stage
  - potentially dangerous
  - various pharmacological strategies, depending on the drugs involved
- Rehabilitation

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# In Bloemfontein

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- ◉ Aurora
- ◉ State sector
- ◉ Support organizations: NA, churches

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