

Cross-Dependency: The Hidden Danger

Perhaps you know someone who is recovering from a destructive relationship with alcohol or other drugs. If so, you probably know that it is extremely dangerous for that person to take even the smallest amount of the former drug "of choice." What you may not know is that it is also dangerous for that person to take many other substances, including some prescriptions drugs and over-the-counter remedies. A recovering person is at high risk for **cross-dependency**. A new substance or non-drug activity may become a new addiction or contribute to a relapse into the old one. Knowing about cross-dependency can help prevent new addictions and relapses for a recovering person.

How It Happens

Often, people originally begin taking drugs as a way of dealing with unpleasant emotions. Fear, anxiety, anger, depression, low self-esteem and loneliness can all be characteristics of a basic feeling of spiritual emptiness or incompleteness. A chemically dependent person may have gotten into the habit of "filling" the emptiness with the effects of the drug. A recovering person comes face-to-face with all the feelings that were covered up, and may believe there is no danger in "taking a little something" to calm or comfort oneself.

Unfortunately, the danger is great. Dependency on one drug often creates a **cross-dependency** for similar drugs. A high dose of the new drug is needed to produce the same effects that new, nondependent user would get from a small dose. This means that a strong new addiction can be created much more quickly than the original, as the user tries to use the new drug to duplicate the pleasant effects of the old one. Even if cross-dependency is not present, the effects of a new drug sometimes weaken a recovering person's resolve not to take the

One intention of this newsletter is to help employers and employees navigate the consequences of addiction while pursuing holistic health solutions.

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original substance, leading to a relapse into the old addiction. People can even become cross-dependent on activities, such as compulsive eating, prolonged exercise, or unhealthy relationships. These are also dangerous to good health and the recovery process.

People recovering from one chemical dependency are at high risk for developing addictions to other substances, including various prescription drugs, other-the-counter remedies, and other suppressants.

Prevention

If you know someone who is chemically dependent and recovering:

- Avoid giving them alcohol, drugs, appetite suppressants, or over-the-counter remedies.
- Ask them if they know about cross-dependency, or give them a copy of this article.

If you are chemically dependent:

- Be sure to tell your doctor that you are chemically dependent before accepting any prescription.
- Avoid using appetite suppressants, decongestants, sleeping pills or cough syrups.
- Abstain from using alcohol or so called “recreational drugs” including, beer, wine, marijuana, and cocaine, and be moderate about eating and exercise. If you have difficulty with this, your employee assistance program can help by referring you to health professionals who are knowledgeable about dependency issues, treatment programs or local 12 step programs.
- Spend time with others who are recovering from chemical dependencies, and follow the spiritual path of your choice.

Recovering Families

When someone in the family has a chemical dependency, everyone changes under the strain. As the chemically dependent family member begins to recover, the rest of the family needs to recover, too. To help the dependent person stay sober, family members need to develop patience, reasonable expectations, and better communication skills.

When will everything be ok?

Life with a chemically dependent parent, spouse or child can be difficult. People often feel hurt and angry about the hard times, blaming it all on the chemically dependent person, or drug itself. They may think that all the problems would go away if the dependent person would stay off drugs. But getting sober is only the start of recovery. In order to have a healthy and happy family, everyone has to work at it.

There are no magic steps to recovery. The recovering person needs to concentrate on permanently changing his or her behavior. This is not an easy task, and the whole family has to know it. Otherwise, they're likely to hope for too much,

and be angry and disappointed when their hopes aren't met. On the other hand, it helps everyone if each family member learns to appreciate the small, day-to-day changes.

Having someone outside the family to talk to can also help, since anger and disappointment tend to grow if they're locked inside. Seek help from counselors who deal with chemical dependencies, or members of 12-step programs such as Al-Anon and Nar-Anon. Besides talking about your feelings at 12-step meetings, you'll have the chance to laugh, enjoy yourself and make friends with people who really understand.

Improving Family Counseling

More than anything else, most recovering families need to improve the ways they communicate with each other. Here are some suggestions:

- Whenever possible, start your sentences with "I" instead of "you". For example, say, "I feel hurt about that," instead of, "you're always so mean." Be as honest as you can about your feelings without blaming.
- Don't talk to one family member about how another member is behaving. Instead, talk to the person whose behavior you don't like.
- Avoid asking questions that start with "why." The answers don't usually help and often distract you from the real issues.
- Practice listening to each other, and try to see each other's points of view. Try asking if you've understood correctly, by repeating what you think the other person has said, using slightly different words.
- Take time to be with just your spouse in low-key, pleasant surroundings on a regular basis. Make sure you won't be interrupted, and don't use the time for TV or sex. Instead, use it as a chance to get to know each other again, bit by bit, and share the good parts of your recovery with each other.
- Have family meetings to plan good times together. Make sure everyone gets a chance to speak and no one gets interrupted or put down. Meetings can also be used to negotiate chores and privileges or practice solving problems together. You all might write out a "family contract" over several meetings about responsibilities, privileges, and consequences of not taking responsibility. An agreed-on contract, signed by everyone and updated about every six months, can really help to keep the family peace by making sure that everyone knows what's expected and gets reward for doing their part.

For more help with your family's recovery: "33 years of reliable EAP Services"

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Solutions for Common Stress: Your New JOB

Visualization is helpful before starting a new job

You have finally landed the job of your dreams and now aren't quite sure if it's for you. You find your heart racing as you approach the office and feel anxious. You want to be happy again. Why are you feeling this way and what are some solutions for stabilizing your work life?

What the New Job Means

If this is your first job, you feel like the new kid on the block. You are meeting new people, trying to remember who they are and wondering if the job skills you are bringing are good enough. The confidence and calm of everyone else may be unnerving.

If you are being promoted to a job you have worked hard to get, the success can sometimes be bittersweet. You have trouble with or even have twinges of guilt toward co-workers who also applied for your job. If you have moved to management, you may feel like a duck out of water. You don't feel "equal" to your old bosses but don't really fit with the co-workers in your old job. You may even be supervising your old co-workers, which has its own challenges.

Solutions

With an entry level or new job, prepare yourself the night before by using a technique called visualization. Close your eyes and rehearse what your day will be like. See yourself as calm and confident. If you make a mistake such as dropping your coffee cup, see yourself gracefully smiling, and others responding with understanding, as you calmly clean it up. Visualization can help you face your worst fears. When you actually go the first day it seems like the second day because of your rehearsal.

It will also feel better if you try and learn as much about your company, co-workers, and job as possible. Write down names and titles and learn them. Remember, there is the formal organizational chart but there is also the informal one. With time you will learn about where the power really is and who is trustworthy. Select mentors and role models.

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Watch a lot and hold back strong opinions of what you think is wrong with the way things are run. Avoid putting others on the defensive. Just sit back, take some deep breaths and try to be an observer in your new world. There will be plenty of time to make startling and helpful observations when people know you and trust your opinion.

In any new job, you can expect to feel some lack of confidence in the beginning. The job is new and it will be different than your former job. You will have many things to learn and you will temporarily need to put in more time and energy at work to increase your confidence. Try and make your personal life less demanding until you are established at work.

By breaking your job into smaller tasks and seeing short-range and long-range goals for yourself, you won't feel so overwhelmed. Seek help from other co-workers to learn tricks of the trade.

If you have received a promotion, time will show that you deserved it. Former co-workers will eventually accept the change, even though they may not like it. Your relationships may be changed forever and that may be a loss you will have to face. By focusing on the challenge in the new job and making new friends, you can again be happy.

When to Seek Help

If you are having any major adjustment problems after two or three months, you will want to talk to your supervisor.

If your new job problems continue to disrupt your life, professional counseling is in order. You want to make your new job a challenge that you were able to meet.

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