## Overcoming Drug and Alcohol Abuse



**Substance use** typically refers to the misuse of drugs such as alcohol, amphetamines, caffeine, marijuana, cocaine, hallucinogens, inhalants, nicotine, pain relievers, and sedatives. People who are addicted to a particular drug need to use increasing amounts of the drug, experience withdrawal, and have difficulty cutting down on use of the drug. Over time, daily occupations can be negatively affected by substance use, impacting relationships, work performance, and daily routines that support health and effective coping.

People who suffer from substance abuse disorders typically need medical treatment in an inpatient or outpatient setting. However, intervention is increasingly

occurring in an outpatient setting integrated with other community-based health services. In many cases, people with substance abuse disorders also have other physical and mental disorders, such as clinical depression, chronic pain, and HIV. Medication, counseling, rehabilitation, and self-help groups are most commonly used to treat these disorders. Occupational therapy intervention differs from traditional drug treatment counseling by teaching the skills necessary for each individual to reestablish roles such as worker, spouse, parent, child, or friend without using drugs. People with addictions may learn effective coping strategies to balance responsibilities, manage money, effectively communicate with others, and cope with stressful situations.

## What can an occupational therapist do?

- Evaluate a person's ability to function on a daily basis
- **Help** the person set both short-term and long-term goals in the recovery process.
- Implement ways in which the person can gain control of his or her life, such as through learning effective coping skills, developing money management strategies, completing household chores, taking care of other family members, getting and keeping a job, and learning how to socialize in situations that do not include the use of drugs or alcohol.
- **Evaluate** the likelihood of relapse and devise strategies to prevent a relapse.

## What can families do?

- Collaborate with the occupational therapist and other health professionals to learn more about drug and alcohol abuse.
- **Support** a friend or family member with a substance abuse problem so that he or she does not have a relapse and can engage in healthy alternative activities to enhance their quality of life.
- **Help** the recovering addict with developing and maintaining relationships that encourage an alcoholand drug-free environment.
- **Attend** self-help groups, such as Al-Anon, to receive ongoing support and education.

## **Need more information?**

A person with a substance use disorder and his or her family likely will need long-term assistance. If you would like to consult an occupational therapist, practitioners are available through most hospitals, medical centers, and clinics.

Occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants are trained in helping adults and children with a

broad range of issues, such as arthritis, stroke, and mood disorders. Practitioners also offer clients wellness techniques that may prevent injury and disease.

Also contact the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) at www.samhsa.gov for more information.



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