

Introduction to Substance Abuse

Matthew D. Bennett, Psy.D.

Rick McNeese, Ph.D.

First Step Recovery, Inc.



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a faith-based and community initiative...

Matthew D. Bennett, Psy.D.
Rick McNeese, Ph.D.
First Step Recovery, Inc.
Lincoln, NE

Part I: Overview

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Defining our terms

In this presentation we'll be using some technical jargon you should get used to. The purpose of the jargon is not to throw you off, but to help make sure we're all talking about the same things!


First we'll review these concepts:

1. What is the “substance” in substance abuse?
2. What is “tolerance?”
3. What's the difference between “abuse” and “dependence”?
5. What is “addiction”?
6. Where does “alcoholism” fit in?

1. What is a “substance?”

When we use the word “substance” in such as “substance abuse” or “substance dependence,” we are talking about **drugs of abuse**. Drugs of abuse are any chemical agents (natural or artificial) that affect the mind and are known to be used in an abusive manner.

- ✓ Alcohol
- ✓ Illegal street drugs (such as marijuana or cocaine)
- ✓ Addictive prescription drugs (like Xanax or Rohypnol)
- ✓ Over the counter drugs (like Dramamine or even mouthwash)
- ✓ Other mind altering substances (like model glue)



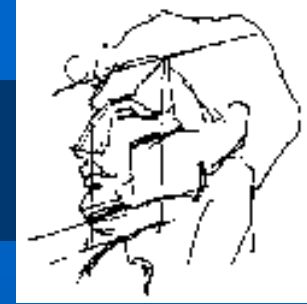
Clinical File

DXM, a powerful mind-altering drug, is very addictive. It is found in many cough preparations such as cough syrup.

Science guy says:

Cough syrup abusers can obtain their drug from their doctors by making up cold symptoms. Examples of cough preparations include Robitussin AC, Dectuss, Phensedyl, Drixoral Cough Liquid Caps, and Pherazine with Codeine. ⁽¹⁾

2. What is “tolerance?”



Tolerance is a word describing certain changes in the way an addict reacts to a drug.

A person who develops **tolerance** needs more and more of the drug to get the same effect as before.

For example, a person might be able to get a “buzz” after just a couple of beers in the beginning. But when dependence develops, the person is likely to need to drink more and more to get that buzz.

3. Substance Abuse vs. Substance Dependence

Substance Abuse basically means that a person's use of substances is causing problems in life ("failure to fulfill major role obligations at work, school, or home"). For example, "alcohol abuse" would describe any use of alcohol that causes harm.

The substance abuser may show lapses in parenting skills, job functioning, or even legal charges (such as DUI) because of using the substance.

A person diagnosed with **substance abuse** is not considered to be **addicted** or dependent (otherwise the diagnosis would be substance dependence). ⁽²⁾

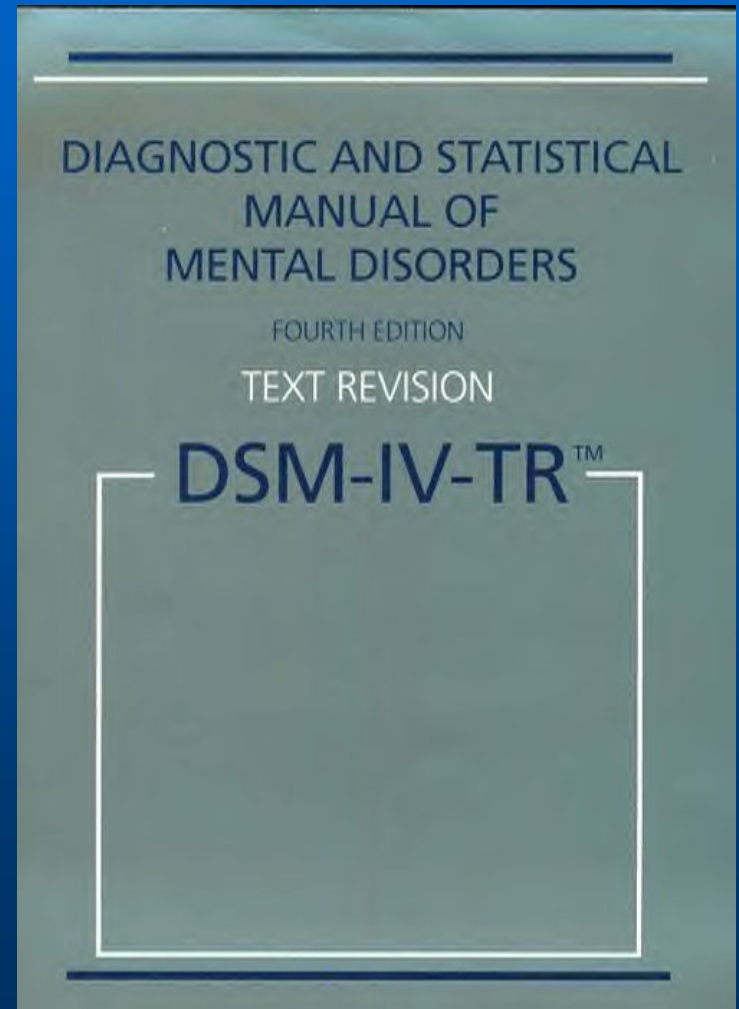
3. Substance Abuse vs. Substance Dependence (continued)

Substance Dependence is a more advanced problem, accompanied by certain changes in the way the person relates to the substance. Signs of dependence include **all the signs of abuse** plus some additional problems:

- ✓ Experiences withdrawal when not using
- ✓ Seems unable to stop
- ✓ Devotes a lot of time and energy to getting and using
- ✓ Needs more and more to get the same effect (tolerance)
- ✓ Gives up things that used to be important in order to use
- ✓ Compulsions or cravings to keep using

Spotlight: DSM-IV

Formal diagnosis of substance abuse or dependence is made by professionals based on standards set by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM). The current version of the DSM is the DSM-IV⁽³⁾.



4. What is “addiction?”

Addiction is another way of saying “dependence.” When a person is addicted to a drug, say for example alcohol, we refer to the condition as “alcohol dependence.”

As we have just learned, **addiction** (or dependence) is a syndrome including withdrawal symptoms, tolerance, inability to quit or cut back, and other problems.



Science guy says:

Addiction seems to have both a psychological and a physiological component. More on this later.

5. Where does alcoholism fit in?

Alcoholism is another way of saying “alcohol dependence.” A person diagnosed with alcoholism is therefore addicted to alcohol.

Remember: **addiction** (or dependence) is a syndrome including withdrawal symptoms, tolerance, inability to quit or cut back, and other problems.

So an alcoholic would show signs of withdrawal when not drinking, would show increased tolerance to alcohol, would be unable to control the amount of drinking, and so on.