

Addictive Personality Encyclopedia Article

Addictive Personality

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Addictive Personality

Many alcoholics and other substance abusers have similar personality features. They are often **impulsive** and immature—like children, they are dependent, with constant needs. They also tend to have a low tolerance for frustration and are frequently anxious and depressed. These features have been grouped under the term "addictive personality." However, when the alcoholic or substance abuser stops using drugs and/or alcohol for long periods of time (periods called **abstinence**), many of these personality characteristics disappear. Thus it may be that the drug abuse itself, or the life that goes along with it, produces these characteristics rather than the individual's actual personality.

Addictive personality has also been used to refer to similar characteristics in a person before he or she began using drugs. Some researchers have thought that certain personality traits might, then, predict when a person has a higher risk of becoming an addict.

Studies of addictive personality in alcoholics have shown that these individuals tend to display certain characteristics more strongly than others. Some alcoholics seem to drink to escape the pain of frustration, while other alcoholics seem to need to drink in order to satisfy childish needs. Some alcoholics appear to drink to reduce guilt and anxiety, and other alcoholics appear to use alcohol as a way to escape from life's disappointments. Socially isolated individuals find a kind of alternate life through drinking. Similar patterns of behavior have been observed in the personalities of other types of drug abusers.

Psychometric studies of addictive personality have helped researchers identify some of the common mental disturbances that accompany alcohol or drug abuse, such as **antisocial personality disorder** and **depression**.

See Also

Antisocial Personality; Childhood Behavior and Later Drug Use; Personality Disorder; Risk Factors for Substance Abuse.