4 Ways to Cope With an Addictive Personality

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What is an Addictive Personality?

Not everyone who tries a drug or consumes alcohol becomes addicted. But for some people, addiction is a chronic disorder affecting and changing brain chemistry.

What sets some people apart from others when it comes to addiction is an addictive personality. Having an addictive personality means you are more susceptible to addiction.

What is an Addictive Personality?

An addictive personality is a set of traits that makes addiction more likely. Addiction is not limited to just drugs or alcohol; people can become addicted to food, gambling, sex and so much more.

People who act impulsively, struggle to manage stress and who want instant gratification are most susceptible to addiction. Addicts typically rely on substances and irresponsible behaviors to manage the troubles in their daily lives.

This type of behavior eventually has a detrimental effect on their lives and personal relationships, the more dependent on substance or behavior an addict becomes.

Prevalence

Research suggests around 47% of the U.S. adult population may suffer from signs of an addictive disorder within a 12-month period. This might be due to an individual's lifestyle habits or their own personal attributes.

Personality Traits of an Addictive Personality

Research has suggested personality and behavioral traits can predispose people to addiction. One report in the journal Current Behavioral Neuroscience Reports finds that impulsivity, sensation seeking and disinhibition (lack of restraint) are all characteristics of an addictive personality.

Impulsivity means acting without considering the impact of your actions. While everyone sometimes gives into temptations, if you behave impulsively often, you may have an addictive personality.

Someone with sensation-seeking behavior is constantly seeking out new and unhealthy experiences. This may mean engaging in drugs, alcohol and dangerous activities.

Lack of restraint means a person engages in certain behaviors and activities even though these have negative consequences. Having this trait increases your risk for developing an addiction more than any other trait.

Two other traits of an addictive personality are favoring non-conformity and social isolation. Valuing non-conformity may come with a tolerance for certain behaviors. If you intentionally socially isolate yourself and have few friends and connections, it is difficult to control impulses.

Risk Factors for Addiction

Research on substance abuse shows certain risks also contribute to addiction. These risk factors do not discriminate against any specific gender, race, social status, economic level, or age. Some risks that make some people more prone to addiction are:

1. Adolescent Substance Abuse

Experimenting with drugs or alcohol as a teen can increase your risk of becoming an addict. Research shows that teens who try drugs are more likely to develop long-term addictions even if there is a gap between the first time they tried drugs or alcohol and the time when they developed an addiction later in life.

2. Genetics and Family History

Similar to health problems, research has found there is a genetic factor to addiction. Genes play a 60%-chance for developing addiction, according to the American Psychological Association.

Family history of addiction can make people vulnerable, even if they never witnessed family members using drugs or practicing other addictive behaviors.

Just because you have a parent or other family member who has addictive behaviors or have witnessed such behavior, it does not mean you are destined to become an addict. It just means your risk is increased.

3. Your Environment

What you are exposed to in your community or home affects your risk for addiction. Children raised in abusive or dysfunctional homes are more prone to addiction.

4. Mental Health Disorders

Psychological conditions, including post-traumatic stress disorder, bipolar disorder, anxiety and depression are high-risk factors for developing addiction. People with poor coping skills or the inability to manage stress are also at risk.

5. Childhood Trauma

There has been strong evidence linking neglect, abuse, or trauma in childhood and addiction, especially substance abuse, in later life.

Coping With an Addictive Personality

Having an addictive personality makes you feel at a loss for control as you try to handle everyday frustrations and urges. Here are a few ways to manage your feelings and cope better.

1. Avoid High-Risk Situations

High-risk situations usually involve people who you have conflicts with and who make you want to fulfill your addiction. They also include places you go to fulfill addictions and things and ideas reminding you of addictive behaviors.

Of course, it is not always easy to avoid these situations, but if you are aware of them, they won’t catch you off

guard.

2. Take Care of Yourself

Eat healthier and get support. You may consider joining a support group for people who have struggled with some of the same things you have.

You should also focus on the supportive and healthy relationships in your life, as these people can help you when your addictive traits take hold. Turning to your spiritual side and seeking forgiveness and guidance can also help you deal with the struggles of your addictive personality.

3. Relax

People turn to addictive behaviors to relax, reward and escape. In order words, people rely on addiction to relieve stresses.

When you feel to urge to practice addictive behavior, try something as simple as going for a walk, working out, or even meditating. These types of behavior are healthy whereas addictive behaviors are not.

4. Help Others

Helping others can help you to manage your own addictive personality by putting your focus elsewhere. It also helps to take the attention off your own problems and allows you to give attention to others.

Helping others and seeing them making progress is a reward that boosts well-being and happiness. You may enjoy it so much you will find yourself laying more emphasis on it than anything else.