The Relationship Between Addiction and Depression

by NEWLIFEOUTLOOK TEAM

What Addiction and Depression is Like

When someone mentions depression, you may imagine a person undergoing immense episodes of sadness, hopelessness, and even suicidal tendencies.

If an addict came to mind, you would think of a person who is emotionally and physically exhausted and controlled by substance abuse.

Now, would you even consider combining the symptoms of depression and the struggles of addiction?

The Ugly Truth of Addiction and Depression

Addiction and depression can viciously feed off one another and trigger the other into starting.

I am a person who has had both and can testify to this condition. It’s a never-ending battle of emotions and urges that rage inside you.

When I discovered alcohol and drugs as a teenager, I hit a point of not caring about what happened to me because of the insecurities I carried. I was severely bullied as a child with ADHD, feeling I was never good enough to succeed or function like a normal human being, and lacking any capability to see value in myself.

To numb the pain I carried, I started taking shots when I was stressed or felt terrible about myself.

I first retreated into simple drugs such as marijuana and crushing over-the-counter medications, but eventually, I found my way into experimenting with harder drugs.

For all the times I numbed the pain, I was frighteningly happy with the escape it brought me. To be honest, avoiding the confrontation of the uncomfortable feelings that manifested inside me was always a lot better than taking it head on.

Imagine years' worth of shame, guilt over circumstances that could not be changed, and pathetic embarrassment all piling up – I could not face those issues without a bottle or hit.

Finding Ways to Combat Addiction and Depression

Today, I have been going sober for several years, and I am not as depressed as I used to be.

I take antidepressants (without abusing them) and frequently visit a therapist to speak about my self-esteem issues.

Most importantly, I have found the appropriate methods in dealing with negative self-talk by combating it with truthful affirmations and focusing on the good things about myself.

I find it helpful to attend meetings with a tight-knit group who understands that depression and substance abuse can go hand-in-hand.

I never thought I was going to be a person who would suddenly label themselves as a drug addict or alcoholic because my issues never seemed like they would escalate into such extreme behaviors and coping mechanisms.

It just goes to show that you should never think you are immune to depression or addiction.

You should remember they can always be avoided with a healthy mindset, self-awareness, self-acceptance, and positive coping mechanisms.

The Road to Recovery

These are important things to remember if you have endured both depression and addiction or are in the process of recovery.

1. You Need to Understand That Depression and Addiction Have the Ability to Go Hand in Hand

Your emotions need to have an outlet, and the positive or negative impact of that outlet depends on your efforts.

People who are depressed need to escape their sadness and individuals with an addiction need to numb their source of stress.

With the combination of unstable emotions and desire to run away from them no matter the method – depression, and addiction are just around the corner unless you stop them.

2. Finding the Healthiest and Most Appropriate Coping Mechanisms Are Vital to Recovery and Your Overall Well-Being

There is nothing wrong if you feel the need to escape what makes you feel awful or stressed.

However, the way you escape should never be self-harming.

If there is one tip to take away from this entire article, it is that your reactions and actions are more impactful than you may realize, and you should continuously be self-aware of the consequences of them.

3. Build a Support System of People You Love and Trust

One of the worst things you can do during recovery is isolated yourself or believe you can handle it alone.

There is not one person in this world who can do everything on their own. Human beings do not work like that, no matter how many times we try to convince ourselves we are “different.”

By the support of the people you love you can:

- Hold yourself accountable to goals and expectations you set for yourself
- Turn to them for advice
- Listen to their non-judgmental opinions
- Be reminded as to why you wanted to be sober and truly happy in the first place

4. Trust Yourself to Get Through This Experience

When I went on my detox, I suffered a severe case of post acute withdrawal syndrome, which is when the body violently retaliates for not giving it drugs and alcohol.

For some, it lasts for a few days, months and even years – I endured a year. Frankly, I thought I was going to die without a drink or smoke because I had relied on them for so long.

My body would ache, nausea hit me every morning, and I would go days feeling disconnected from reality. However, this process is inevitable for everyone recovering from addiction.

While it is miserable during its happening, the aftermath is deeply rewarding, for nothing compares to the liberation and healing of sobriety.