

Substance Abuse or Addiction (of alcohol, drugs, pills) is the repeated misuse and unhealthy, compulsive desire and dependency of a legal or illegal substance, which is continued by the user with disregard to negative impact.

Addicts and alcoholics often want to quit, but find they can't. They go back to the addiction despite the harm it causes because they don't have a way to live life without it. Though some people may even be born with propensities towards alcoholism/addiction, it is patterned abuse that forms chemical dependency.

Common Characteristics

Often addicts and alcoholics can go days, weeks, even months without using; the addiction is more easily defined by repetitive binging (a "once I start, I don't/can't stop" mentality). When chemical abuse is extensive, in addition to a Christ-centered recovery program, medical detox and rehab may be necessary due to the chemical dependency formed within the body.

Addiction Assessment

If you are struggling with alcohol and drug/pill abuse, honestly answer the following questions in this addiction assessment below*. Invite a close friend to help you process these honestly and accurately:

1. Have you ever decided to stop drinking/using for a season, but only lasted for a couple of days?
2. Do people talk to you about your drinking/using?
3. Have you tried drinking/using different types of alcohol/drugs, only certain days, only certain times?
4. Have you drank/used in the morning in the past year to help get through a hangover?
5. Have you had remorse, guilt or regret due to your drinking/using or actions/words while drinking/using?
6. In the last year, has your drinking/using caused relational, work, legal, financial, health problems?
7. Do you often have six or more drinks in one night?
8. Do you ever drink/use before a party, date, event so that you'll get a head start?
9. Do you find that, most often, when you drink you get drunk?
10. Have you missed, called in sick, given excuses for missing events, parties, holidays, work after drinking/using – for being drunk/high or too hungover?
11. When you drink/use do you ever have difficulty remembering past details or the night before?
12. Have you ever tried to quit and after a season of sobriety gone back to drinking/using at the same if not worse level?

From the experience of others, answering YES to four or more questions indicates a substance abuse issue and the need for help.

Biblical Insights

God loves you and you can approach Him for mercy and grace. If you struggle with addiction, know that you are not alone. God loves you and there is hope for you because of Christ.

- *"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."
- Hebrews 4:15-16*

The Bible does not say “don’t drink,” but it does say “don’t be drunk.” If you can’t drink without getting drunk, you should strongly consider abstinence altogether. There are certain things in life that lead us into sin. Jesus says when you realize what things are access points to sin in your life, to radically do away with them in order to preserve life (we often call these your playground, playmates and pastimes).

- “If your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.” - Matthew 5:30

We think: “But other people drink!” “My doctor prescribed these pills.” “Marijuana/K2 is legal now.” God’s word informs us better than our logic.

- “All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful for me,” but I will not be dominated (mastered) by anything.” - 1 Corinthians 6:12

The Bible actually says we should be under the influence – but it’s command is to be under the influence of the Holy Spirit, not alcohol or drugs. If you’re struggling with an addiction, also read Proverbs 23:29-35.

- “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery*, but be filled with the Spirit.” - Ephesians 5:18

**Note: Debauchery is an abandoned, depraved life ruled by sensual pleasures.*

There is a simple litmus test in the Bible for whether something is ok for you to do: Does _____ bring glory to God? Or, does the way that I use _____ glorify God?

- “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” - 1 Corinthians 10:31

Next Steps

- Acknowledge your addiction to yourself; until you believe you have a problem nothing will change (1 John 1:8).
- Acknowledge your addiction to God, He cares for you and He alone can set you free from the bondage of addiction (1 John 1:9)
- Reach out to a friend and take the courageous step of being honest about your struggle. There is no shame in admitting addiction. The only shame would be if you continued in the spiral of addiction and didn’t seek help. (1 John 1:7, James 5:16, Proverbs 28:13)
- Write down some Scriptures from this issue sheet to remind yourself, meditate on, and memorize what is true about God, you and your struggle. Consider starting with these passages: Romans 6 (especially verse 21 and 23), Galatians 5 and 1 Peter 4:1-4
- Answer the **Addiction Assessment** questions to consider whether you have an addiction. What is one next step you will take today? This week?
- Get a *re:generation* Groundwork book and read the “Sober 24 Hours” lesson. Will you commit to 24-hour sobriety?

God loves you, and there is hope and healing in Christ. If you do not yet have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, you can learn more at www.regenerationrecovery.org/freedom.

Additional Resources

- For stories of hope, go to www.regenerationrecovery.org: Alonso, Amanda, Jeremy, John, Joy, Shoni
- Books: Addictions: A Banquet in the Grave – Ed Welch, Counterfeit Gods: The Empty Promises of Money, Sex, and Power, and the Only Hope that Matters - Timothy Keller, How to Defeat Harmful Habits: Freedom from Six Addictive Behaviors – June Hunt