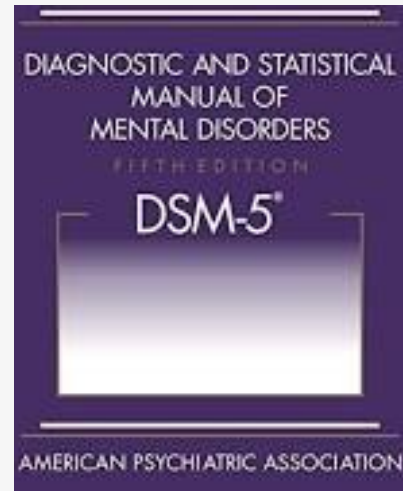


# ADDICTION EXPLAINED

According to the DSM, addiction is a mental health disorder referred to as **Substance Use Disorder (SUD)** because it is a disease of the brain. SUD is not a moral failing or lack of willpower on the part of a substance user. It is a "chronic medical condition causing functional changes to the brain".(1)

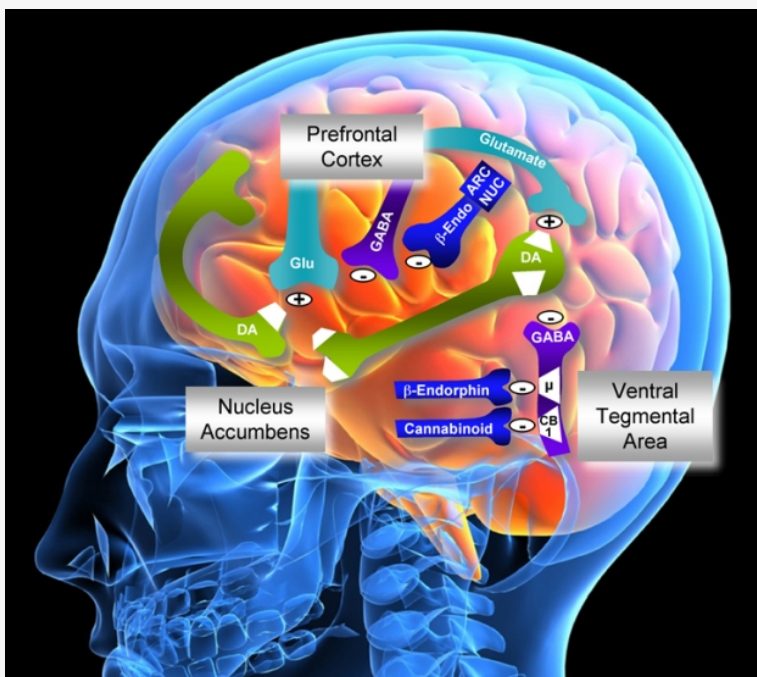
## DEFINITION

"ADDICTION is a chronic, relapsing disease characterized by **compulsive and hard to control drug seeking and use despite harmful consequences**. While initial use is a choice, over time, the brain is altered and **the decision to use is no longer a controlled choice**."



SUD is similar to other diseases . . .

- Causes harm to the functioning of a body organ.(1)
- Results in harmful effects on the body that can be lifelong and result in death. (1)
- Is treatable with medications or non-pharmacologic interventions and is preventable.(1)



**SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER:**  
Does not discriminate  
Affects people from all walks of life  
Doesn't care about age, race, wealth, or gender.

You Should Probably Know ...



... It can Happen To Anyone

## **ADDICTION IS**

**A chronic, complex disease;**

**A chronic disease where the brain is altered over time and the decision to use is no longer a choice;**

**A non-discriminatory, societal issue**

## **ADDICTION IS NOT**

**A moral failing or lack of will-power;**

**A bad habit someone can stop whenever they want;**

**Only a problem affecting low-income areas, and uneducated populations.**

# HOW DOES ADDICTION "HAPPEN"?

# 1

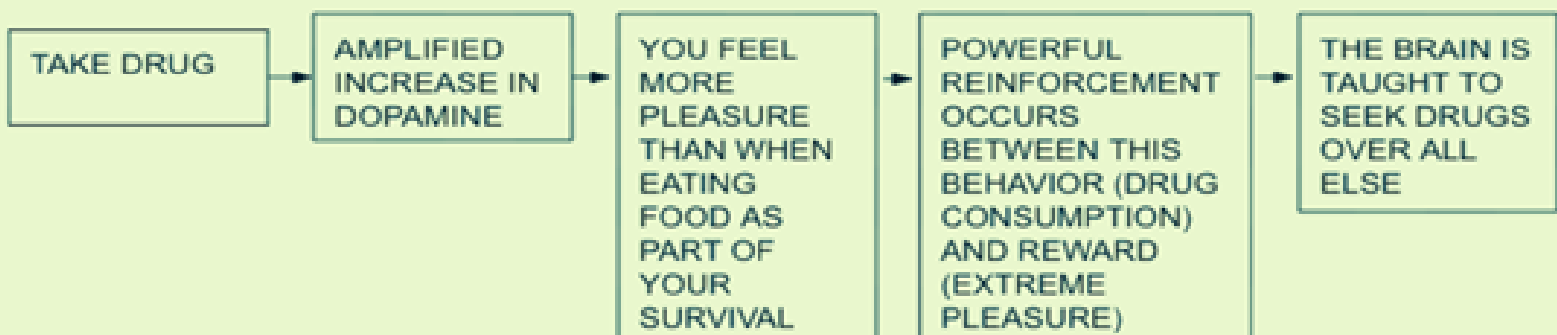
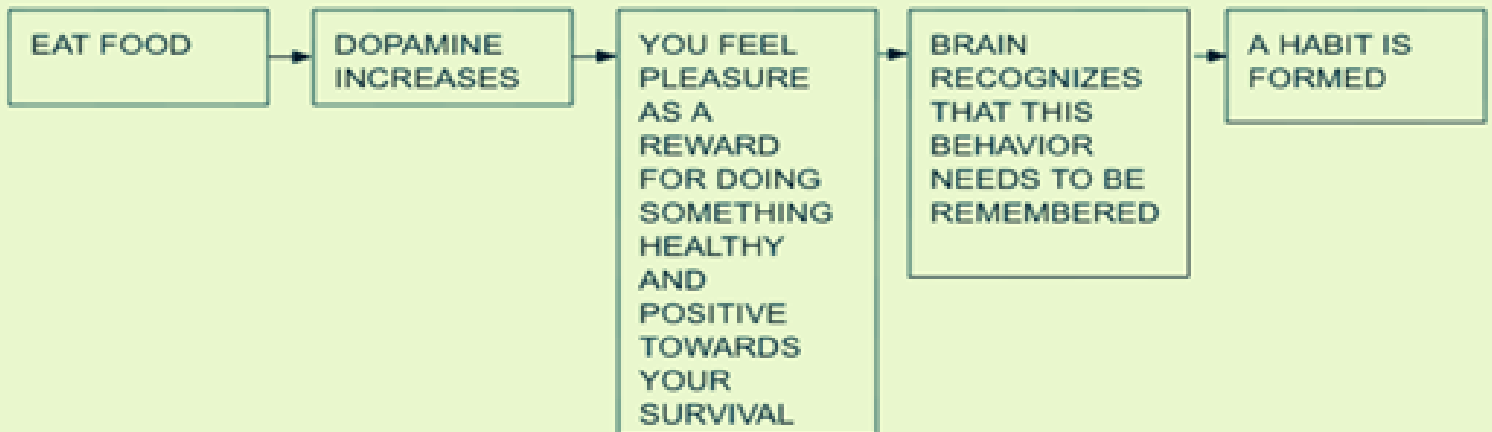
With addiction, the part of the brain that controls positive motivation is "hijacked" by drugs, fooling this system into thinking it needs it to survive and become more important than actual survival behaviors, such as eating food.(2)

# 2

Over time, the dopamine produced when taking drugs reduces the ability to experience pleasure naturally. At this point an individual has to keep taking drugs often at larger doses to experience even a normal level of pleasure.(2)

# 3

As drugs cause disarray in certain parts of the brain,, people develop reduced impulse control resulting in compulsive drug seeking behavior, despite negative consequences (2)



# RECOGNIZING ADDICTION

## CRITERIA FOR SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS



**Cravings or intense desires to use the substance are occurring at any time.**



**Wanting to reduce or stop substance use but attempts to do so are unsuccessful.**



**Taking larger amounts of the substance than intended, or for a longer time than intended.**



**Neglecting other parts of your life because of substance use (work, school, home obligations)**



**Using substances even when it puts you in danger.**



**Continuing to use even when it causes problems in relationships.**



Modified from VeryWellMind(3)

## IMPORTANT NOTE:

It is not the job of a supervisor or employee to diagnose SUD. These are observations focused on the goal of safe and productive workplace performance. The underlying issue of poor or unsafe performance is where experts will focus.

## Signs & Symptoms

- Calling in sick frequently
- Unexplained absences
- Frequent trips to the restroom
- Decline in quality of work
- Withdrawal from co-workers
- Irritability, drastic mood changes
- Lying, making excuses for mistakes
- Change in appearance (weight loss, hygiene)
- Nodding off, lack of concentration