

Why People Use Drugs

If illegal drugs are known to be dangerous, why do people use them? Why even risk becoming addicted? Though the answers vary, the results can still be deadly.

Generally, people take drugs because they want to feel differently or want to change something about their lives. Here are some common reasons cited for turning to drugs:

- **To feel good.** Drugs can produce intense feelings of pleasure. This initial euphoria is followed by other effects, which differ with the type of drug used. For example, with stimulants such as cocaine, the high is followed by feelings of power, self-confidence, and increased energy. In contrast, the euphoria caused by opioids such as heroin is followed by feelings of relaxation and satisfaction.
- **To de-stress.** People who suffer from social anxiety, stress, and depression may start using drugs to feel less anxious. Stress can play a major role in starting or continuing drug use, as well as relapsing.
- **To do better.** Some people feel pressure to improve their focus in school or at work, or to enhance their performance in sports. This pressure can play a role in trying, or continuing to use, drugs such as prescription stimulants.
- **Hanging around people who use drugs.** Friends or family members who use drugs might lead others to use drugs as well. Teens are particularly at risk because peer pressure can be very strong.
- **Trouble at home.** When kids aren't well cared for, or a parent is using drugs, the chance of using drugs increases.

This story recently shared with me illustrates some of these points, and shows where drug use can lead:

“What had led me up to my use of spice? Well, it began when I was working at a job making \$9.25 an hour bringing home only \$290 a week with having to try to pay monthly expenses for example, \$400 for rent, \$140 for electric, and gas was around \$100 plus trying to feed the family as well. I was also trying to pay on a car at \$51 a week until that got repo’d. So then a “friend” came along and said let me be a roommate and help. That didn’t work. Got introduced to spice and it was all over from there. Yeah, I thought to myself this is not the best idea but at that time, it eased the stress. However, I kept using just to try to forget it all.”

Eventually, their drug use led to eviction and homelessness for nine months, whereby she and her husband slept **anywhere** they could.

“Emotionally it was heartbreaking... I have learned from all this is that it’s never a good idea to resort to drugs to get away from the stresses in life but to actually work through them until you figure them out.”

Though drug use may initially seem to help, it will ultimately complicate the user’s life. Learning to recognize the “why” use is occurring, however, can be the first step to treatment and, ultimately, recovery.

For more information, please visit our website at www.drugfreeadams.org.