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Remember addiction is a brain disease which impacts the entire self (mind, body and spirit). It is not anyone's fault the disease occurred but it is the addicted persons responsibility to choose to be clean and sober as well as whether to stay in recovery. Recovery is not easy to do, and the individual must come to terms with needing others to help them stay on that path. It is more than simply saying 'no' to drugs, or 'just do it'. Because the entire body is under siege, the spirit is filled with shame and guilt of wrongs committed while using, and brain is trying to get back to normal functioning

Note the withdrawal symptoms are highlighted in red below. One of the important things to also know is there are two kinds of withdrawal. The first is the acute withdrawal. It can last up to a week. It occurs when the individual stops taking all of the drugs involved in the addiction. In some cases, especially alcohol, there needs to be medical supervision. In most cases opioids and marijuana do not require 24 hour medical supervision. The individual with the latter two drug involvement will feel awful and may even think they are dying, but it is just that uncomfortable and painful. With alcohol, there is a danger of dying which is the reason for 24 hour medical supervision.

The second kind of withdrawal is called post-acute withdrawal symptoms or PAW(S). This is a tough time for folks working toward long term recovery. It is uncomfortable time and is a time where there may lead frequent relapses. It is a time when people struggling to stay on the path of recovery need a high level of external support (such as NA, AA, and or individuals knowledgeable about the process of addiction and recovery). If the individual is addicted to more than one drug (prescription and or non-prescribed such as marijuana) the symptoms are intensified. If they also have a co-occurring mental health issue (anxiety, depression, bi-polar) PAW is even more difficult. PAWS can last up to a year, although the worst time for it is in the first 2-3 months for most individuals. The idea here is for the individual to remember these are normal symptoms and they will pass.

For family and friends it is also difficult to understand what is happening. Most of us believe once the acute withdrawal is done the individual should be a lot better (and they are). We have trouble understanding while in one hour our friend or loved one is 'normal' in attitude and behavior, and in the next hour they are agitated, weepy, hostile, and or despondent. It is a very frightening roller coaster for most of us, and it is both physically and emotionally exhausting. We too can use a sounding board to help us stay focused and realize this is part of the PAW. When we recognize this for what it is, it is much easier NOT to get into a battle with the individual and simply listen and provide neutral encouragement (remind them you know how difficult this is, and that it will continue to get better). ALANON is a great resource to help us keep our sanity and fears in check.

The information below is copied from Starlight Treatment Center 6 March 2017

<http://www.starliterecovery.com/addiction/opioids/signs-symptoms-effects/>

<http://www.starliterecovery.com/addiction/marijuana/signs-symptoms-effects/>

Opioid Abuse

Recognizing the signs and symptoms of opioid abuse can be difficult because drug users will often go to great lengths to hide their addiction and many of the obvious signs are not immediately apparent. However, over time a number of signs and symptoms will emerge that may indicate that an opioid problem may exist. Some of the signs and symptoms may include:

Behavioral symptoms:

- Visiting different doctors to obtain multiple prescriptions for opioid
- Stealing or constantly borrowing money from others
- Taking someone else's medication
- Forging prescriptions
- Frequently being absent from work
- Loss of employment
- Isolating oneself from friends and family
- Failing to fulfill daily obligations
- No longer participating in activities that were once enjoyed
- Engaging in sudden, unprovoked angry outbursts
- Possessing drug paraphernalia

Physical symptoms:

- Frequent nausea
- Decreased blood pressure
- Slowed heart rate
- Disturbances in sleeping patterns
- Change in eating patterns
- Constipation and diarrhea
- Constricted pupils
- No longer caring how one looks and lacking appropriate hygiene
- Weight gain or loss
- Track or needle marks
- Drowsiness
- Dizziness

Cognitive symptoms:

- Significant memory disturbances

- Altered states of perception
- Irreversible cognitive impairment
- Concentration difficulties
- Hindered learning capabilities

Psychosocial symptoms:

- Mood swings
- Depression
- Irritability
- Anxiety
- Agitation
- Anger
- Suicidal ideation

Effects of Withdrawal and Overdose

Effects of opioid withdrawal: Symptoms that occur when opioid use is discontinued or reduced is known as opioid withdrawal. The symptoms associated with opioid withdrawal may be extremely unpleasant, but in most instances are not life threatening. Opioid withdrawal symptoms may include:

- Runny nose
- Watery eyes
- Nausea and vomiting
- Low energy
- Irritability
- Insomnia
- Sweating
- Muscle aches and pains
- Abdominal cramping
- Diarrhea
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Paranoia
- Panic attacks

Marijuana Abuse

Signs and Symptoms of Marijuana Abuse

There are a number of signs and symptoms that will eventually arise when someone is abusing marijuana. However, the exact symptoms displayed are going to vary from person to person depending upon a number of different factors. The following are examples of various symptoms that may be exhibited by someone who is abusing marijuana:

Behavioral symptoms:

- Failure to fulfill obligations at work
- No longer participating in activities that were once enjoyed
- Neglecting family or friends
- Becomes socially isolated
- Laughs for no reason or at inappropriate times
- Possessing drug paraphernalia
- Reduced motivation
- May lie and steal
- Engagement in drug seeking behaviors
- Change in peer groups

Physical symptoms:

- Red, blurry, bloodshot eyes
- Constant cough
- Dry mouth
- Hunger
- Weight gain
- Increased fatigue / drowsiness
- Poor coordination
- Slower reflexes
- Lethargic response to stimuli

Cognitive symptoms:

- Distorted perceptions
- Difficulty thinking or solving problems
- Problems with memory
- Inability to focus or concentrate
- Impaired learning capabilities
- Cognitive damage
- Impaired decision-making capabilities
- Paranoia
- Disorganized thought processes
- Experiencing altered states of perception
- Hallucinations
- Delusions

Psychosocial symptoms:

- Anxiety
- Depressed state
- Excessive irritability
- Agitation
- Feelings of fear or panic
- No longer interested in things that were once enjoyed
- Deterioration of one's overall emotional wellbeing

Effects of Marijuana Abuse

The prolonged abuse of marijuana can open the gateway for the development of many negative consequences in a person's life. In addition to many ill effects that can potentially occur, marijuana abuse in general has been associated with poorer life satisfaction. Some specific examples of some effects that can result from long-term marijuana abuse include:

- Compromised cognitive functioning
- Reduced intellectual functioning
- Hindered learning capabilities
- Difficulty meeting work obligations, which may result in job loss
- Higher rates of hospitalization
- Onset or exacerbation of mental health disorders
- Problems with personal relationships
- Interaction with the legal system
- Frequent accidents as a result of engagement in potentially dangerous behaviors
- Respiratory illness
- Weakened immune system
- Lung damage
- Development of certain types of cancer
- Tachycardia

Co-Occurring Disorders

Marijuana abuse has been known to occur alongside the presence of an additional mental health disorder. Furthermore, those who abuse marijuana have a much higher lifetime risk of using, what are referred to as more dangerous substances, than nonusers. Some examples of disorders that co-occur with marijuana abuse include:

- Additional substance use disorders
- Depression
- Anxiety disorders
- Conduct disorder
- Suicidal ideation and behaviors
- Bipolar disorder

- Obsessive compulsive disorder
- Antisocial personality disorder
- Paranoid personality disorder
- Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)

Effects of Withdrawal from Marijuana

When an individual has been using marijuana for a prolonged period of time it is likely that he or she will experience a number of withdrawal symptoms should they stop using this drug. While symptoms of marijuana withdrawal are relatively minor compared to withdrawal of other symptoms they can be quite uncomfortable. Some examples of marijuana withdrawal symptoms that may arise can include:

- Irritability
- Anger or aggression
- Nervousness
- Anxiety
- Sleep disturbances
- Weight loss
- Restlessness
- Depressed mood
- Abdominal pain
- Sweating
- Fever or chills
- Headache