



Deer Valley Counseling

"Skills for Better Living"

Characteristics of Addiction

Characteristics

- **Illness.** Addiction is an illness. It has identifiable symptoms such as tolerance, withdrawal, preoccupation with use and inability to quit.
- **Chronic.** When you become addicted to a substance, you can never use that substance normally again.
- **Progressive.** Unless treated, the disease gets progressively worse. If you stop and then start again, you will pick up where you left off.
- **Social Death.** Eventually you will be removed from society—incarcerated—due to DUI, dealing, violence, homicide, possession or some other illegal activity related to using.
- **Physical Death.** If you continue to use, your use will eventually kill you. You will die due to cirrhosis of the liver, AIDS, accidents, suicide, overdose, murder or some other alcohol or drug-related cause.
- **Abstinence Is the Only Cure.** Stop using. You must find a new group of abstinent people who support your abstinence. Maintaining an abstinent lifestyle is difficult but not impossible. Many people who used to use can and do maintain abstinent lives. So can you!

Inability to Quit

If your use causes any problems in your life and you continue to use, you are addicted. When a person who is not addicted to alcohol or drugs encounters a problem in their life due to their use, they stop using. For example, if a non-addict gets arrested for a DUI or drug possession, gets a warning at work, or gets into relationship problems because of their use, a non-addict stops using. A person who is addicted, on the other hand, blames society, family, friends, co-workers, the police and the courts and keeps on using. For an addict, continuing to use is more important than family, friends, a job, staying out of jail or anything else.

Far Reaching Effects

Unfortunately, the ill effects of addiction reach far beyond the addict.

- Child abuse and neglect.
- Partner abuse.
- Family stress, shame and depression.
- Car accidents.
- Burglary, assault and robbery.
- Lost productivity.

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The original of this article can be found online at
<http://deerval.com/Articles/CharacteristicsOfAddiction.htm>.

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