



# Dependency: When Use Becomes Abuse

Chemical dependency can be described as the inability to control and/or quit the use of a substance. For those that struggle with alcohol and drug use, abuse should be a real and pressing concern. The transition from use to abuse can happen without the individual even being aware that use has crossed over the line into chemical dependency.

## Dependency Myths

There are many myths that surround alcohol and drug dependency. Frequently, those with chemical dependencies are viewed as people who can't live without their drugs, who stay high or drunk through the day, who abuse drugs every day, or who are untrustworthy, weak-willed, or simply a bad person. In truth, a person can be chemically dependent without having any outward signs of abuse. Research conducted on chemical dependency points to how the genetic makeup of an individual might impact his or her dependency. You should also remember that chemical dependency is – at its core – a physical issue. It can't be overcome by simply hoping it will go away.

## Warning Signs of Dependency

Recognizing when you or a loved one is struggling with a chemical dependency is the first step to getting help. Here are some symptoms of dependency you should look for:

- Blacking out or forgetfulness after use
- Using alone and/or hiding the use from others
- Using to cope with personal or professional problems
- Being “under the influence” while engaging in everyday activities
- Not being able to have fun or enjoy activities without use
- Neglecting responsibilities in favor of use
- People voicing concerns over your use
- Use leading to professional, social, financial, and/or legal troubles

## Dependency Problems

When someone abuses a substance, he or she risks making bad decisions. The results of these decisions can range from embarrassment to outright endangerment. A person under the influence not only risks harming himself/herself, but friends, loved ones, and other third-parties.

## Responding to Dependency

Once you've determined that a problem exists, you need to act swiftly to begin engaging in the practices that alleviate dependency and return life to a state of normalcy. Here are steps you can take to start the healing process:

- Be willing to openly acknowledge the dependency with friends and loved ones.
- Get the help of a dependency professional – a doctor or other medical professional who specializes in treating dependency-related issues.
- Commit to a rehabilitation program or counseling process if recommended by your advisor.
- Make a point to limit your interaction with those that encourage alcohol or drug use.
- Take advantage of counseling groups where interaction with recovering abusers is encouraged to help motivate recovery.
- Recognize that people recover from dependency issues every day and it is possible for you to recover.

Remember that Southwest EAP is here to help you and your household. If you or a loved one is experiencing problems with substances please feel free to reach out and see how Southwest EAP can help. Contact us confidentially anytime.