

Am I an Addict?

Only you can answer this question.

This may not be an easy thing to do. All through our using, we told ourselves, "I can handle it." Even if this was true in the beginning, it is not so now. The drugs handled us. We lived to use and used to live. Very simply, an addict is a person whose life is controlled by drugs.

Perhaps you admit you have a problem with drugs, but you don't consider yourself an addict. All of us have preconceived ideas about what an addict is. There is nothing shameful about being an addict once you begin to take positive action. If you can identify with our problems, you may be able to identify with our solution. The following questions were written by recovering addicts in Narcotics Anonymous. If you have doubts about whether or not you're an addict, take a few moments to read the questions below and answer them as honestly as you can.

1. Do you ever use alone? Yes No
2. Have you ever substituted one drug for another, thinking that one particular drug was the problem? Yes No
3. Have you ever manipulated or lied to a doctor to obtain prescription drugs? Yes No
4. Have you ever stolen drugs or stolen to obtain drugs? Yes No
5. Do you regularly use a drug when you wake up or when you go to bed? Yes No
6. Have you ever taken one drug to overcome the effects of another? Yes No
7. Do you avoid people or places that do not approve of you using drugs? Yes No

8. Have you ever used a drug without knowing what it was or what it would do to you? Yes No
9. Has your job or school performance ever suffered from the effects of your drug use? Yes No
10. Have you ever been arrested as a result of using drugs? Yes No
11. Have you ever lied about what or how much you use? Yes No
12. Do you put the purchase of drugs ahead of your financial responsibilities? Yes No
13. Have you ever tried to stop or control your using? Yes No
14. Have you ever been in a jail, hospital or drug rehabilitation centre because of your using? Yes No
15. Does using interfere with your sleeping or eating? Yes No
16. Does the thought of running out of drugs terrify you? Yes No
17. Do you feel it is impossible for you to live without drugs? Yes No
18. Do you ever question your own sanity? Yes No
19. Is your drug use making life at home unhappy? Yes No
20. Have you ever thought you couldn't fit in or have a good time without drugs? Yes No
21. Have you ever felt defensive, guilty or ashamed about your using? Yes No
22. Do you think a lot about drugs? Yes No
23. Have you had irrational or indefinable fears? Yes No

24. Has using affected your sexual relationship? Yes No
25. Have you ever taken drugs you didn't prefer? Yes No
26. Have you ever used drugs because of emotional pain or stress? Yes No
27. Have you ever overdosed on any drugs? Yes No
28. Do you continue to use despite negative consequences? Yes No
29. Do you think that you have a drug problem? Yes No

"Am I an addict?" This is a question only you can answer. We found that we all answered different numbers of these questions "yes." The actual number of "yes" responses wasn't as important as how we felt inside and how addiction had affected our lives.

Some of these questions don't even mention drugs. This is because addiction is an insidious disease that affects all areas of our lives – even those areas which seem at first to have little to do with drugs. The different drugs we used were not as important as why we used them and what they did to us.

When we first read these questions, it was frightening for us to think we might be addicts. Some of us tried to dismiss these thoughts by saying:

"Oh, those questions don't make sense,"

Or:

"I'm different. I know I take drugs, but I'm not an addict. I have real emotional/family/job problems."

Or:

"I'm just having a tough time getting it together right now".

Or:

“I’ll be able to stop when I find the right person/get the right job, etc.”

If you are an addict you must first admit that you have a problem with drugs before any progress can be made toward recovery. These questions, when honestly approached, may help to show you how using drugs has made your life unmanageable. Addiction is a disease which, without recovery, ends in jails, institutions and death. Many of us came to Narcotics Anonymous because drugs had stopped doing what we needed them to do. Addiction takes our pride, self-esteem, family, loved ones, and even our desire to live. If you have not reached this point in your addiction, you don’t have to. We have found that our own private hell was within us. If you want help, you can find it in the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous.

“We were searching for an answer when we reached out and found Narcotics Anonymous. We came to our first NA meeting in defeat and didn’t know what to expect. After sitting in a meeting, or several meetings, we began to feel that people cared and were willing to help. Although our minds told us we would never make it, the people in the Fellowship gave us hope by insisting that we could recover. Surrounded by fellow addicts, we realised that we were not alone anymore. Recovery is what happens in our meetings. Our lives are at stake. We found that by putting recovery first, the programme works. We faced three disturbing realisations:

1. We are powerless over addiction and our lives are unmanageable;
2. Although we are not responsible for our disease, we are responsible for our recovery;

3. We can no longer blame people, places and things for our addiction. We must face our problems and our feelings.

The ultimate weapon for recovery is the recovering addict.”*

* Basic Text, *Narcotics Anonymous*,

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