

How Can Substance Abuse Lead To Mental Illness?

By The Professionals At Robert Alexander Center

Every time you take drugs, there is a chemical reaction that takes place within your body. It is important you are aware of the possible side effects that can happen every time you ingest a painkiller or recreational drug.

What Happens To Your Body?

First of all, it is important to consider what is going on with your body when you are taking opioids. This is an important factor as it can determine the overall effect that opioids will have on you. If you are taking painkillers for chronic pain, there is a good chance that they will relieve the pain and you can function normally. However, if you are not in pain, you will feel a sense of euphoria or "high". However, this does not change what happens in your body. Opioids flood certain parts of the brain and affect body systems. For example, your heart rate and breathing can slow.

What Happens To Your Brain?

As you take an opioid, it binds to proteins in the brain that cause pain. The areas which are affected are the cerebral cortex, the limbic system, and the brainstem. Each of these areas is in charge of a different function. For example, the limbic system is home to the hippocampus and amygdala. The hippocampus is responsible for learning and memory. The amygdala is responsible for determining threat and activation of threat responses. The brainstem is

responsible for your senses. As opioids attach themselves to the proteins in these areas, they can dull the responses to each of them. Opioids also affect the reward center and every time you take some, your brain will reward you with a rush of dopamine.

What Are The Long-Term Effects?

As you can imagine, every time you take some opioids, your brain function is affected. For short-term use, they may help with chronic pain from surgery until you have healed. However, long-term use can cause a significant change to the brain structure. The prefrontal cortex and medial temporal lobe can be permanently altered. The prefrontal cortex is responsible for impulse control and attention span. The medial temporal lobe is responsible for memories related to facts and events. As there are so many areas of the brain which can be affected, it isn't surprising that your behavior can be affected in many different ways.

How Does This Affect Your Mental Health?

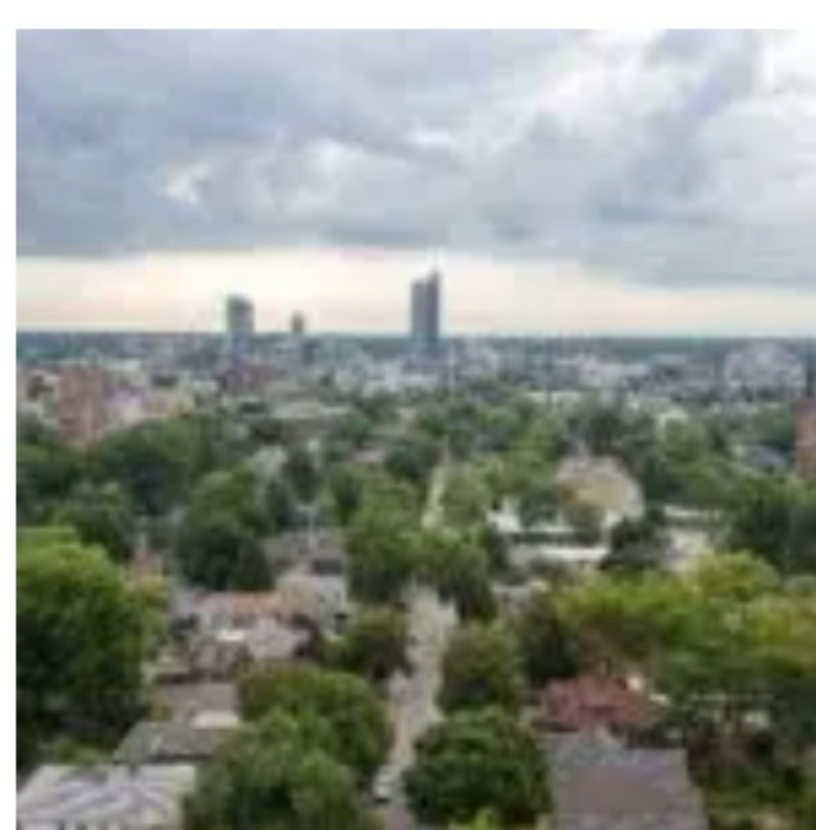
It stands to reason that the changes in your brain can affect many different aspects of your personality. These personality changes can affect how people treat you. You may discover that people who were once very friendly to you have become cold and no longer want to speak to you. These types of relationship breakdowns can have a negative impact on our mental health. As you go through recovery, you may discover that relationships that you took for granted have changed. Social changes along with the withdrawal from opioids can cause depression and suicidal thoughts. This is why when you quit opioids, you will need a support network.

How Can My Mental Health Be Supported?

There are many ways in which your mental health can be supported throughout your recovery process. As an in-patient at our facility, you will be supported by a robust mental health team who can help you work through those first few days of withdrawal. As your body detoxes and you adjust to having no opioids in your system, we will help you put a support plan in place. These can be reaching out to friends and family who can support you after you leave us, to helping you find your local Narcotics Anonymous group. It will help to have people around you who can support you and have been through the same thing as you. These support systems are necessary for many different reasons including supporting your mental health and ensuring that you have the support if you feel like using opioids again. This plan should help you for many years to come, whether it has been five days since you last used it or five years.

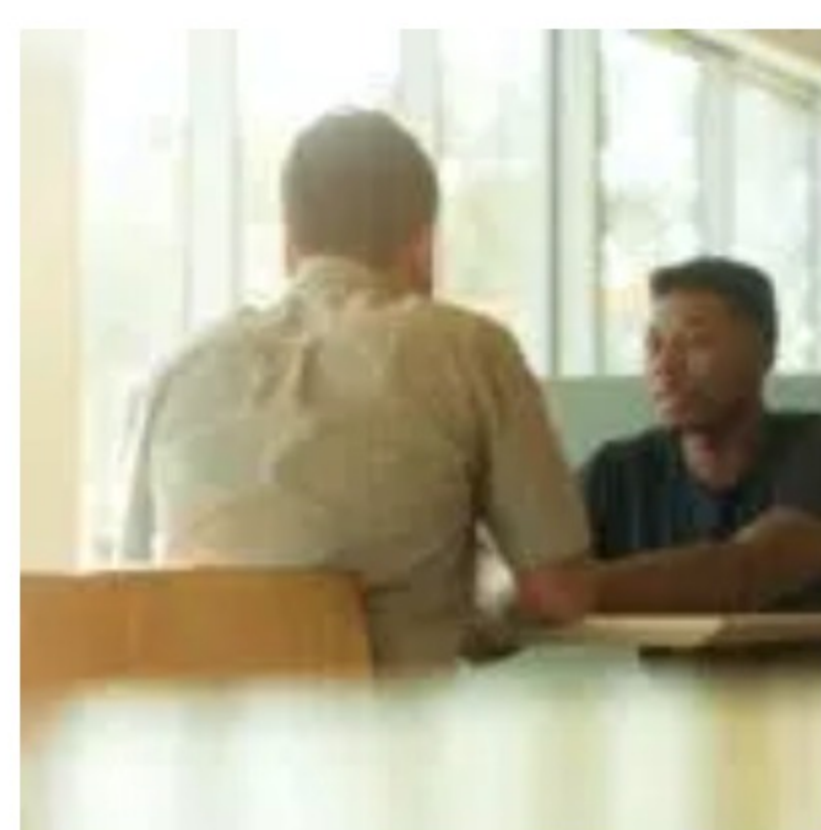
It is important to remember that your journey to remove opioids from your life can be a challenging one. If you feel that you are ready to speak to someone about your opioid use, contact us and we can discuss your options. Our friendly staff is ready to help you take the first steps in your journey to sobriety.

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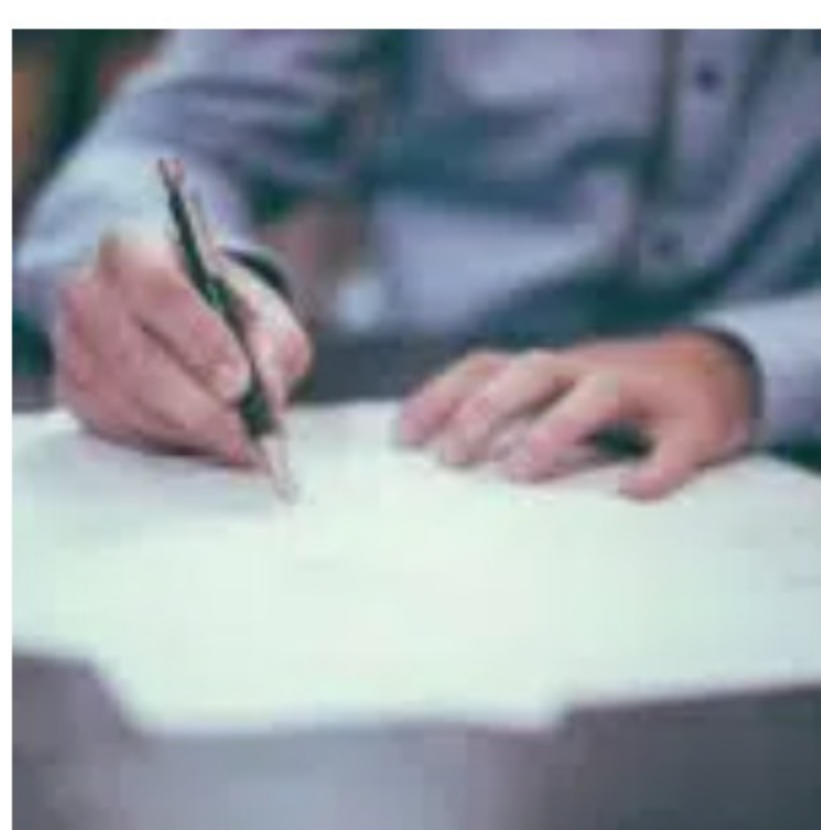
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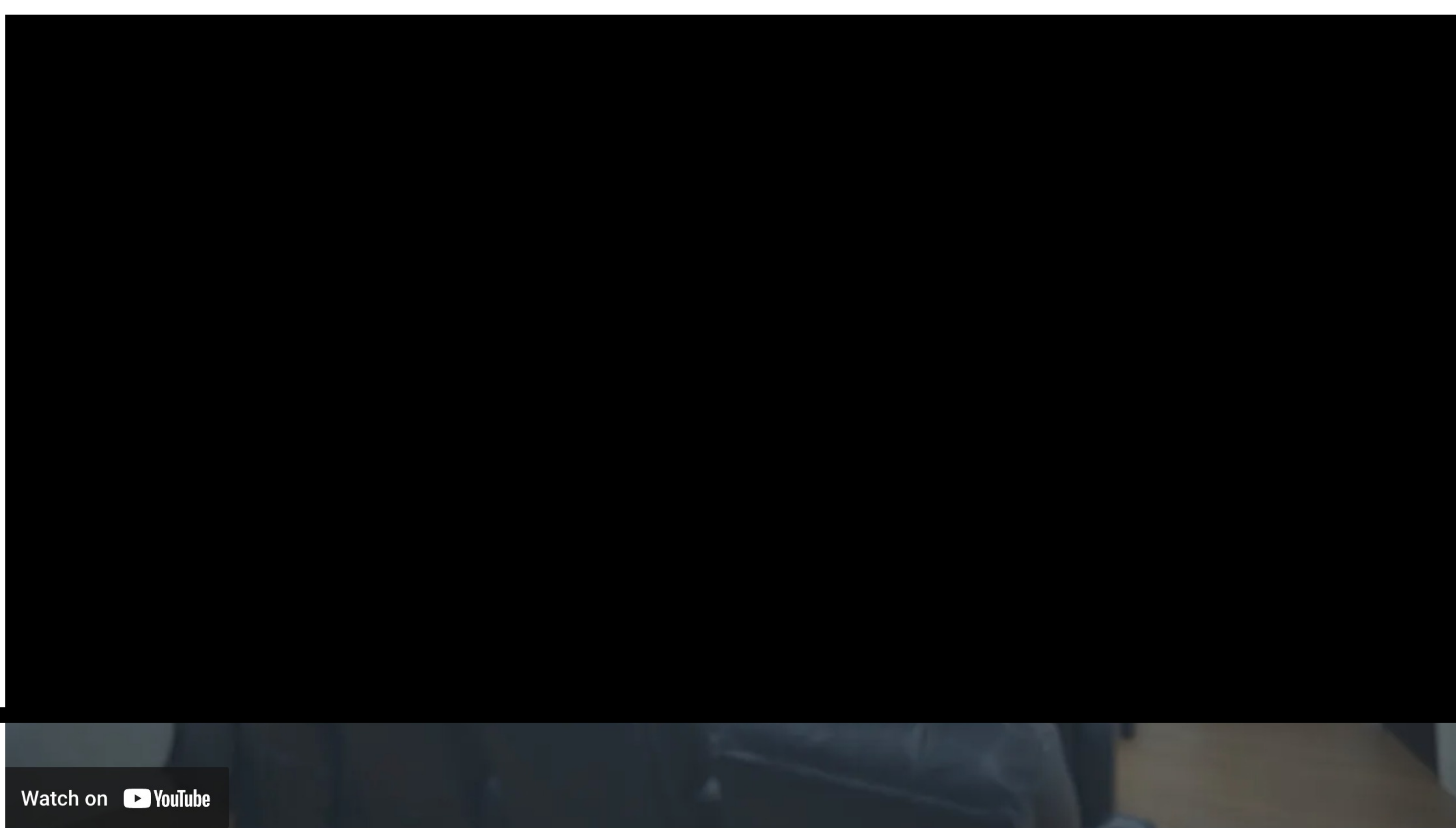
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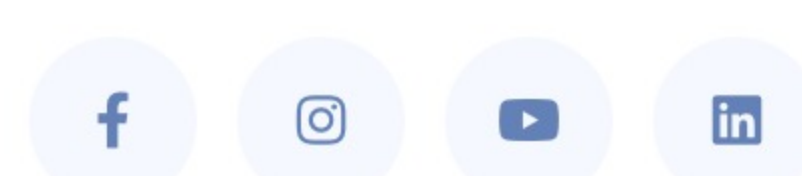


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The Robert Alexander Center for Recovery is a brand new, state of the art addiction treatment center in Kentucky, offering evidence-based treatment for substance abuse.



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