

At What Point Does Drug Use Become Drug Abuse?

By The Professionals At Robert Alexander Center

Not everyone who uses drugs (prescription or otherwise) will go on to become a drug addict. But what is the difference between drug abuse and drug addiction and what process leads to which outcome?

Words matter and we must know the differences between abuse and addiction. With that being said, without the proper **treatment**, the end of the road for both of these situations is a tragedy.

It can be confusing to know the difference between "use", "abuse" and "addiction" because the terms are often used as substitutes for each other regularly. But there is a difference and knowing the difference is important as there are different types of treatment that work towards individualized circumstances.

What is Drug Use?

"Drug use" is often referred to as a singular use of a substance whether it's for medicinal or recreational use. This doesn't *necessarily* mean that the user will go on to become an abuser or addict, but knowing that this has happened is very important nevertheless as it may lead to something more serious. It doesn't mean that at this point we need an "all hands on deck" type of situation but it is still well worth knowing what's going on. The danger is that often we don't know that this event has happened when it's taken place recreationally.

It's a good idea to keep an eye out for your children or loved ones though if they've had to be on opioid medication after surgery for example.

What is Drug Abuse?

"Drug abuse" can be explained by users who are using substances regularly without thought to consequence and driven by an extreme desire to use and often use compulsively.

If we examine the differences between drug use and abuse, a differentiating factor is the frequency of use combined with the desire to use and importantly, the level of control that the user has at his or her disposal.

What is Drug Addiction?

"Drug addiction" is also known as substance use disorder. This occurs when you have used the substance over an extended period and now you find that you can't cope or feel "normal" without it. While some drugs have mental addictions, others can be physically addictive.

You'll know you're displaying the signs of addiction when you find yourself spending more and more money on your use and resorting to unconventional methods to get the money to fund your use. When you have the intense desire to use the drug regularly, sometimes several times a day and when you can't control your desire to use it.

The people in your social and familial circles may have started mentioning your use to you or they've started to withdraw from events where you're present, or *you* may be avoiding people you know or indulging in the activities that you normally would.

As soon as you feel like you cannot run your life the way you used to, or when your daily life is no longer recognizable, it is time to seek some help. You will need managed **detoxification** and you may be recommended for **intensive outpatient** treatment or some other form of inpatient or **outpatient** treatment.

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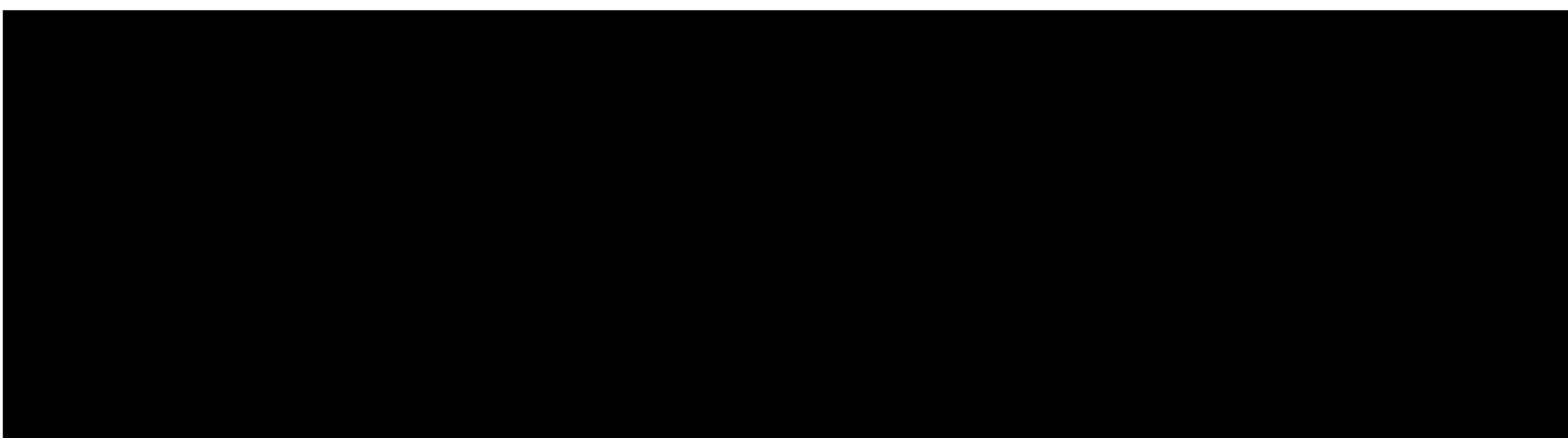
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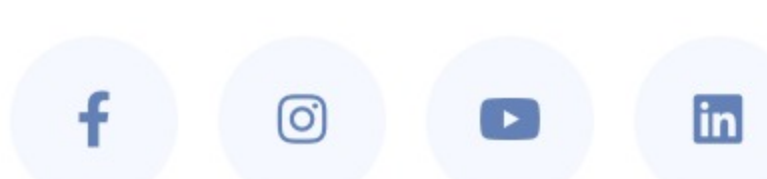
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