Why Isn't Drug Addiction Considered A Social Issue In The USA?

By The Professionals At Robert Alexander Center

Prescription drug misuse and illicit drug abuse are increasingly common in modern-day American society. Indeed, the National Survey on Drug Use and Health reports that about 38.5% of adults in the US battled an illicit drug use disorder in 2019. Drug addiction is a significant problem for addicts and society since both parties are heavily affected. Nevertheless, many people do not consider it a social issue facing the country. Therefore, the question "Why isn't drug addiction considered a social issue in the USA?" is commonly raised by many concerned parties. Below are some insights into the topic.

Why Some People Don't Recognize Addiction As A Social Issue

Generally speaking, the failure to recognize addiction as a social canker stems from broad misconceptions and ignorance concerning the topic. As such, many people hold inaccurate beliefs about addiction and are ignorant of some of the complex, science-backed truths that make this problem a collective problem.

1. All Drug Addicts Are Criminals

For instance, one stereotype about the average American addict is that they are criminals who reside in dark alleyways, have poor hygiene, and are unemployed, or cannot hold a job. In addition, some people see addicts as ambitionless, sad, weak-willed individuals who cannot maintain essential relationships. Addiction is seen as the curse of social outcasts, which is hardly an issue concerning the larger society.

However, this is far from the truth, as addiction can affect all types of individuals regardless of age, race, sexual orientation, and economic status. Research shows that many illicit drug users (13.4 million) are gainfully employed, and 8.8% are full-time employees. Indeed, an illegal drug supplier can be in any office, and an addict can have no criminal record. Also, these individuals may be well-groomed, have successful careers, have friends and family members who love them, and be financially successful. There are growing percentages of young adults who are captured from the first try of an illicit drug and find difficulty quitting.

2. Addiction Is A Choice

Furthermore, some people also believe that drug addiction is nothing more than a personal choice that can be stopped with simple willpower. This conception of the average addict assumes that they can simply walk into an effective drug rehabilitation center if they want to or just give up drug use by simply deciding to. However, repeated studies show that addiction has little to do with willpower. Addiction is a disease that changes your brain profoundly, making mere will nearly useless in resisting repeated drug use. Drugs can change your brain's chemistry, specifically in your reward circuits, where feelings of relaxation and pleasure are released. As you use drugs consistently, your brain's reward circuit sends positive feedback to your body, "informing" it that it has experienced "something good" and would want that experience repeatedly.

However, the cells in your reward circuit diminish with sustained drug use, so the addict's brain will require more illicit drugs to obtain similar feelings of pleasure they had when they started abusing drugs. Therefore, addicts cannot stop even if they genuinely want to and struggle to function effectively without substance or professional help.

3. Addiction Is About Morality And Not Health

Additionally, some people view addiction as a moral issue and not a health or social issue. After all, addicts select their illicit drug consciously without subjecting themselves to any personal, societal, or divine moral standard. However, it is worth noting that addiction is never a choice, although the addict chooses their substance consciously. Sustained drug use alters the brain's chemistry to create cravings which cause the brain to adapt to a physiological desire for the drug. As such, the addict is not an awful person with terrible morals; they are simply suffering from a brain disorder.

4. An Addict Doesn't Need Help Until They Have Hit Rock Bottom

Lastly, another great answer to the question of "Why isn't addiction considered a social issue in the USA?" is the association of addiction to hitting rock bottom. For some people, there is no need to pay attention to the addict who has not yet committed a crime, harmed themselves, or had a near-fatal overdose. But, this notion is dangerous because rock bottom differs from person to person, so it may be too late to get help for drug addiction.

While addiction isn't considered a social issue yet, the damage it does to individuals is quite apparent. Fortunately, world-class drug abuse treatment centers are dedicated to offering evidence-based and top-notched addiction treatment for everyone. These facilities provide compassionate care to all and are interested in helping people find their path to a personal and sustained recovery from drug and alcohol addiction.

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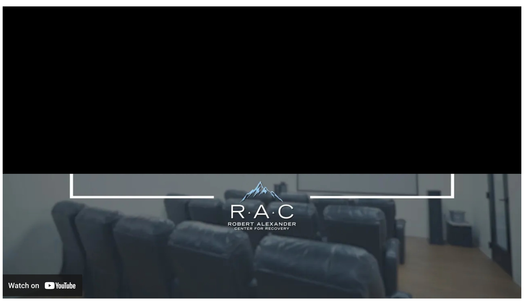
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