



Recovery is an ongoing process, for both the addict and his or her family. In recovery, there is hope. And hope is a wonderful thing.
– Dean Dauphinais
www.LiveDrugFree.org

Supervisor Newsletter

Substance Abusing Executives

In the world of corporate leadership, drug and alcohol addiction can often be difficult to identify. This can be a serious problem because substance abusing executives harm not only themselves, but the organization as a whole. Drug and alcohol-abusing executives can have profound and multifaceted negative impacts on a company affecting its performance, culture, reputation, and ultimately its bottom line.

When Decision-Makers are Addicted

Drug and alcohol addiction can impair an executive's cognitive abilities, decision-making skills, and overall performance. Executives who are struggling with drug addiction may miss deadlines, make poor decisions, and fail to meet their professional responsibilities effectively. This decrease in productivity can hinder the company's progress and competitiveness in the marketplace.

Substance abusing corporate officers can undermine the company's culture and values, creating a toxic work environment characterized by mistrust, secrecy, and dysfunction.

Addicted executives may exhibit erratic behavior, engage in conflicts with colleagues, or violate company policies, leading to morale issues, employee turnover, and a decline in teamwork and collaboration.

Drug-addicted members of a management team are more likely to make mistakes or errors in judgment, which can have serious consequences for the company. In industries where safety is paramount, such as manufacturing or transportation, impaired executives pose a significant risk of accidents, injuries, or even fatalities, leading to legal liabilities, financial losses, and damage to the company's reputation.

Signs and Symptoms

Identifying signs of substance abuse in executives is sometimes difficult, but it is critical for fostering a healthy work environment and supporting those in need of assistance. By understanding the indicators and behaviors associated with drug and alcohol addiction, employers and supervisors can intervene early and provide the necessary help for recovery.

One of the primary indicators of drug and alcohol addiction in executives is a noticeable change in behavior. Executives who are struggling with substance abuse

exhibit erratic or unpredictable behavior, such as mood swings, agitation, or aggression. They may also display symptoms of withdrawal when unable to access drugs or alcohol, including irritability, restlessness, or anxiety. While high-performing addicts and alcoholics are very good at hiding their addiction, they may sometimes still show physical or mental impairment such as slurred speech, memory lapses, or difficulty concentrating.

Changes in appearance can also serve as a warning sign of drug and alcohol addiction in executives. Those struggling with substance abuse may neglect their personal hygiene or grooming habits, appearing disheveled or unkempt. They might also experience significant weight fluctuations or develop health issues related to their substance use like skin problems, bloodshot eyes, or tremors.

Another red flag is an increase in absenteeism or unexplained absences from work. Executives battling drug and alcohol addiction may frequently call in sick or arrive late to work, offering vague or implausible excuses for their absence. They might also exhibit a pattern of disappearing during work hours or taking extended breaks to indulge in substance use.

Financial instability can also be an indicator of drug and alcohol addiction. Executives struggling with

substance use may experience financial difficulties due to their excessive spending on drugs or alcohol. They might also engage in secretive or deceptive behavior regarding their finances, such as hiding bank statements, borrowing money from colleagues or experiencing sudden and unexplained changes in financial status.

Changes in relationships, both personal and professional, can also hint at addiction in executives. They may have difficulty maintaining relationships with clients, colleagues or subordinates due to their erratic behavior or unreliable performance. And of course, physical evidence such as the presence of drug paraphernalia or the smell of alcohol on their breath can provide concrete proof of substance use. Finding needles, pipes, or pill bottles in the executive's workspace or observing them consuming alcohol during work hours are clear indications of a problem.

Conclusion

Detecting drug and alcohol addiction in executives requires an attentive approach to recognizing subtle signs and behaviors associated with substance abuse. But by paying attention to changes in behavior, performance, appearance, absenteeism, finances, relationships, and physical evidence supervisors and employers can intervene early and provide the necessary support for recovery.



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Dangers of Mixing Drugs & Alcohol

Drug and alcohol use are often combined, leading to devastating consequences for both the body and the mind.

Using alcohol and drugs simultaneously causes a long list of health risks. Alcohol is a central nervous system depressant and when combined with other depressants such as opioids or benzodiazepines it intensifies their sedative properties. This synergy can lead to respiratory depression, a potentially fatal condition characterized by slowed breathing and, in severe cases, respiratory arrest.

When drugs and alcohol are used together, the liver has to metabolize both, creating an overwhelming burden that over time can cause irreversible liver damage.

The cardiovascular system is also damaged by the mixing of drugs and alcohol. The combined use of these substances puts stress on the heart and elevates blood pressure and heart rate to dangerous levels. This increases the risk of heart attacks, strokes, and other cardiovascular complications.

There is also strong evidence that alcohol and illicit drug consumption can lead to various types of cancer, with most being a form of oral, liver, and colon cancer. In addition, alcohol use has long been listed in the top five cancer risks, and drugs such as cocaine and heroin often get mixed with cancer-causing cutting agents. And of course, smoking any substance can cause damage to the lungs leading to lung cancer.

Mental Effects

The concurrent use of drugs and alcohol takes a profound toll on mental well-being. Both substances have the ability to impair cognitive function and alter mood, and using them together makes these effects much worse, leading to profound mental distress.

Alcohol's depressive properties are worsened when mixed with other depressants, creating feelings of lethargy, apathy, and disorientation. This cognitive fog impairs judgment and decision-making, often causing individuals to engage in reckless behaviors with potentially dire consequences.

Abusing both alcohol and drugs makes the risk of developing psychiatric disorders much greater and worsens existing mental health conditions. Many individuals who develop

substance use disorders are also diagnosed with mental disorders and vice versa. People with mental health issues are more likely to use drugs and alcohol to cope or self-medicate. And those who abuse drugs/alcohol are more likely to develop mental health issues because of the inherent risks of both.

Substance abuse is intricately linked to mood disorders such as depression and anxiety, and the effects of mixing drugs and alcohol increase this risk. People may experience profound emotional dysregulation, oscillating between euphoria and despondency as the substances wreak havoc on neurochemical balance. Additionally, the effects of alcohol coupled with the altered perception induced by drugs can cause psychotic episodes in vulnerable individuals, resulting in hallucinations, delusions, or paranoia.

The most recent *National Survey on Drug Use and Health* found that almost 60% of people over the age of 18 with a drug/alcohol disorder also had a mental illness of some kind. Twenty-two percent of adults with a drug/alcohol use problem had serious mental illness.

Social and Interpersonal Problems

The problems caused by mixing drugs and alcohol extend beyond the user. Substance abuse ruins friendships, destroys relationships, strains family bonds, and results in social isolation. The erratic and unpredictable behavior of people under the influence of alcohol and drugs can alienate loved ones, leading to fractured trust. And the financial strain imposed by substance abuse can break a family and lead to a cycle of poverty and deprivation.

Increased Risk of Long-Term Addiction

Mixing drugs and alcohol leads to a cycle of dependence that makes it even more difficult to break free of addiction. The reinforcing effects of combining these substances heightens the risk of addiction and fuels a downward spiral of dependence and despair. As time goes by, higher doses are needed to achieve the same effects, and dependence, where the individual experiences withdrawal symptoms when not using the substances occurs.

Conclusion

Mixing drugs and alcohol can have devastating effects on both the body and the mind, leading to a range of health problems, impaired functioning, and increased risk of accidents and overdose. It's essential to seek help if you or someone you know is struggling with substance abuse.

The following suicide prevention information, while provided by the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, will also be helpful to those in states other than Georgia. All online resources listed are available to users nationwide.

August is right around the corner, and this August will mark the sixth National Wellness Month since it was first observed in 2018. Though wellness isn't a new topic, being conscious about our own self-care and making time for it is a recent topic of discussion, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic upset all our daily routines and led to more self-analysis. Though suicide rates saw a brief decline in the early days of the pandemic, they have since resumed their previous upward trajectory in the last few years. The data surrounding that brief decline is a matter of some debate, but there is evidence to support that families sheltering in place together may have increased one crucial protective factor for preventing suicide among older adults, which is connecting with others.

That same isolation had a different effect on young adults and adolescents who were cut off from spending time with their friends, but since young adults and adolescents make up a smaller percentage of suicide deaths in America, a steep decline in the overall rate was still very evident. What the data highlights across the board are that connecting with other people and having meaningful relationships are crucial protective factors for suicide, the counter to the major risk factor of social isolation.

Sensational reporting tends to focus on the increase in suicide rates and paints a bleak and often oversimplified view of why these rates continue to rise, but this type of reporting does little to address the issue. There is no simple solution to remove all the risk factors that increase suicide rates, and erasing the effects of childhood trauma once it has already occurred is impossible. What is attainable is our ability to balance the scales with the protective factors that reduce suicide risk, which fall neatly into the category of wellness.

SAMHSA identifies eight domains of wellness, which include:

1. Emotional
2. Physical
3. Occupational
4. Intellectual
5. Financial
6. Social
7. Environmental
8. And spiritual

Investing some of your energy into each of these domains results in a balanced and fulfilling life that makes people more resilient when they are faced with unexpected hardship. Moreover, putting all your focus in only a couple of these areas while neglecting the others can have very real consequences. That adage "don't put all your eggs in one basket" comes to mind and can be useful when looking at why balance is important. For example, some of us are self-proclaimed "workaholics" or "health nuts," wrapping a lot of our identity and self-worth up in our careers or our fitness. That may seem great when things are going well, but when an unexpected injury or health condition happens, or a corporate restructuring resulting in mass layoffs at your company occurs, what are we left with? Another analogy for this is the idea of diversifying your portfolio instead of putting all your capital into one stock which results in lower risk and more stable returns.

Naturally, some of these domains will be easier for some of us than others, and that is to be expected. What each of these domains mean to you personally is what truly matters. The goal is to nourish an important part of yourself when you work on each domain, so how you do that should be in line with your own personal values and interests. Making time for each of these domains in our modern busy lives can also seem daunting, so look for ways to combine some of these domains into a single activity and find ways to build on what you already have instead of trying to rework your entire life which isn't sustainable. And if you truly don't feel like you have the time, look at why and see if there are ways to spend less of your time in the areas that are dominating your day.

For example, do you pay someone to do your yardwork? Maybe you could do it yourself instead, which could increase your activity while also saving you money. And while you're doing yardwork, you could listen to a podcast about physics to stimulate your intellectual needs. That example may not apply to you, but it should give you some ideas on how to look at areas that need some attention and to get creative with combining activities to help you balance out that wellness wheel.

To learn more about suicide prevention, visit the DBHDD website at:
<https://dbhdd.georgia.gov/suicide-prevention>.

Or contact the Suicide Prevention Director, Rachael Holloman, at:
rachael.holloman@dbhdd.ga.gov.