



Use of Alcohol and Drugs

People use recreational drugs and drink alcohol because they believe they make them feel better in the short run. But, they can make problems worse, particularly if they are being used as a form of 'self-medication' to manage stress or pre-existing emotional or physical disorders. Alcohol and drugs can impair performance at work and home, create dependencies, and compromise general health. They do little to deal with the issues at hand. Finally, drugs and alcohol interact with many prescription medications.

The following questions, known as the CAGE questionnaire, can be used to understand whether you or someone you care about may be addicted to alcohol or other drugs.

- Have you ever tried to **CUT** down on the amount you use or quit using alcohol or other drugs? This means that you're concerned that you have lost control over your use and want to show yourself or others that you can control these behaviours.
- Have you ever been **ANNOYED** by others' comments about your substance use? People usually only comment about someone's drinking or using drugs if they witness a problem from it.
- Have you ever felt **GUILTY** about something you said or did while under the influence of alcohol or other drugs? This can range from missed work or aggressive behavior to traffic violations or criminal acts.
- Have you ever needed an **EYE-OPENER**? This means that you need to use something the next morning, after using the day or night before, to stop withdrawal.

Answering yes to even one of the above questions indicates a possible problem with substance abuse or dependency and should lead a person to seek further evaluation and help.

The prospect of eliminating alcohol and drug use from your life can be a daunting one. Remember that while using none is best for some people, reducing your intake is better than becoming overwhelmed and giving up. Use the principles of goal-setting outlined elsewhere to help you examine the problem and overcome it a bit at a time.

If your use of drugs or alcohol is a source of concern for you, your employer, and/or your family, then you should address this directly. A number of organizations exist that can help. You may be able to obtain support through company programs, EAP providers, Alcoholics/Narcotics Anonymous, and your family physician.