

Can You Be A Functional Drug Addict

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Many people think a drug addict is supposed to look emaciated and in poor health, have no family or friends, unable to keep a job, and possibly live out on the street. This couldn't be further from the truth.

Addiction is a disease that doesn't discriminate. This means that politicians, athletes, doctors, teachers, and just about anyone can end up addicted to drugs. In fact, a large number of those struggling with drug addiction may be described as functional drug addicts.

Functional or High Functioning Drug Addicts

It's hard for people to understand who functional drug addicts are, yet the sad truth is that many struggle with this type of addiction. To understand this, we first have to understand the key symptoms of addiction.

A person is said to be addicted to drugs if they can't quit using even if they wanted to and they also have little control over the amount they take. The nature of addiction means that it keeps getting worse and the individual builds tolerance, requiring much higher doses of the drug to achieve a high. Additionally, if they try to stop taking the drug suddenly, or miss taking it, they experience unpleasant withdrawal symptoms.

While addiction is a disease, nothing in its description says that an individual has to be experiencing upheaval or complete loss of control of their lives to qualify as an addict. A functional or high-functioning drug addict usually doesn't appear to have a problem. They often have their lives together – holding jobs, having romantic relationships, hobbies, and having their families more or less intact. Several of them are socially active and may also be active in the community. Only those who are very close to them may be aware that something is amiss.

Signs of a Functional Drug Addict

Since functioning drug addicts have mastered the art of hiding their addiction, they typically don't have the common symptoms of addiction. You have to pay close attention to the subtle warning signs that something isn't right. These signs include:

- Justifying their substance abuse. They rationalize their drug use by claiming they need it for medical reasons or to relax or as a reward.
- Secrecy. They are guarded about their lives and become defensive when questioned.
- Denial of their drug use. If confronted, they outrightly deny having a problem with substance abuse.
- Financial issues. Though they have a job, they never quite seem to have enough money to cover their expenses and responsibilities.
- Their socializing always involves drug use. They frequently hang out with other high-functioning drug addicts and often end up overindulging.
- Deteriorating physical appearance. As the addiction worsens, they start neglecting their appearance and they have a marked decline in their physical health.
- Increased isolation or confinement. Even though they may hang out with family and friends, they may often disappear for long periods, coming back with an altered appearance i.e. looking fatigued, disheveled, or hyped up. They also become more isolated as they hide their drug habit from those close to them.
- Problems at home. As they slip up on their responsibilities and experience financial issues, relations at home become more strained.

Helping a High Functioning Addict

If you have a high-functioning drug addict in your life, it's important to get them to seek help. Addiction often gets worse with time and while they might have things together at the moment, that can drastically change within a short time.

Unfortunately, getting them to admit to having a problem won't be easy. Having a candid conversation with them may lead to them opening up and admitting to what's going on. Most likely though, they will get defensive and deny or refuse to share what's going on.

Since they've been hiding their drug use for so long while maintaining a semblance of normalcy in their lives, functional drug addicts manage to convince themselves that they don't have a problem. They often resist any suggestions for help because they rationalize their lives still appear normal. Admitting to having a problem will shatter this illusion.

Their success at hiding their addiction also makes them think that they can handle everything on their own. Many high-functioning drug addicts won't ask for or accept help until things spiral out of control and come to a head e.g. they face a health issue or are about to be fired from work.

Appropriate Treatment for High-Functioning Addicts

Like all other types of addicts, functional drug addicts require help to beat their addiction. In most cases, these individuals have been using drugs for a long time, sometimes for years, and will need intensive drug addiction treatment to turn their lives around.

Addiction treatment for functional drug addicts is effective if it includes:

- **Treatment with other high-functioning peers.** A 30-90 day treatment program that includes group therapy with similar addicts is likely to be successful. These individuals can connect with like-minded colleagues and share experiences.
- **Teaching problem-solving, relapse prevention, and communication skills.** The individual needs to learn constructive ways of solving problems, how to communicate their needs as well as how to identify and avoid relapse triggers.
- **A support group.** After completing rehab treatment, the individual should be referred to a suitable support group such as Narcotics Anonymous. This helps them interact and receive help and support from others going through the same situation
- **A program that addresses the family unit.** Addiction is a family disease and the person will need the support and assistance of their loved ones to break old patterns that led to addiction. A [family therapy program](#) would be suitable in such cases.

Let Us Help You Recover

At [Evolve Indy](#), we specialize in offering individualized addiction treatment programs that are tailored to accommodate our clients' lifestyles. These range from [partial hospitalization to outpatient](#) and [intensive outpatient programs](#). One of these could be what you need to help you break free of addiction. Get in touch with us today and let's help you build a new addiction-free life.

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