



# Drugs and Mental Health

If someone close to you has substance use **and** mental health problems (called dual diagnosis), it is very likely that the substance use is having an effect on their mental health and vice versa. This effect is likely to be different for each person and will depend on many things including:

- The type of drugs your family member is taking and the mental health problems they have (whether you know about them or not – it's not always clear that someone has a problem with anxiety or depression or a thought disorder)
- How serious the problems are
- Their physical health
- The place, time, and **reason** they use the substance

## **Types of drugs**

(Note: you can find out more about types of drugs from any Drug & Alcohol treatment service or from the Internet

– type “types of drugs” into a search provider)

- **Depressants:** e.g., Alcohol, Cannabis, Heroin, Morphine, Valium, Xanax, Codeine, Methadone, GHB, Ketamine  
Drugs that slow you down. They slow the central nervous system functions making people feel more relaxed and less aware of their surroundings.
- **Stimulants:** e.g., Amphetamines (Speed), Cocaine/Crack, Ice, Ecstasy, MDMA  
Drugs that speed you up, i.e., speed up mental processes to make people feel more alert and energetic.
- **Hallucinogens:** e.g., LSD, Mushrooms, Cannabis (also a depressant), PCP  
Drugs that change the way the world seems to you, your sense of time and place; they can make you see / hear /feel things that aren't there (hallucinations).

## **What usually happens....**

- Depressant drugs can make you feel more depressed.
- Stimulants can make you more anxious.
- After someone has used stimulants, it usually makes them feel depressed (a come-down).
- Depressant drugs can improve feelings of anxiety in the short term but make it worse in the long term.

- It can be dangerous to take Ecstasy if a person is prescribed some medications, like SSRI's (an anti-depressant).
- If someone has a family history of schizophrenia, then taking marijuana may activate it. It's a good idea not to use these types of drugs if there is a family history of psychosis.

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**IMPORTANT:** Any drug use can act as a short term 'feel-good' option but

- Drugs tend to cause more problems later when the person builds up a physical and/or mental need for the drug. And when the negative side effects kick in, they start to complicate any mental health issues.
- AND
- Drugs stop someone finding healthy solutions to the way they are feeling. People who use drugs can get to the point where they don't get much pleasure from anything else, even things that used to help them to feel happy. It can take awhile for them to find happiness in usual things again (good music, seeing friends, etc) once they let go of the drugs.

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### ***Withdrawal***

- Once the body becomes dependent on a drug, the withdrawal process can be hard.
- How withdrawal will make someone feel and the effect it can have on thoughts and mental health will depend on the drugs taken, how long they have been taken for, how often, and the person's health and personality.
- It can be important to have a doctor's help when someone is withdrawing (for example when someone has severe alcohol, heroin or benzodiazepine dependence).

**For more information**.....you can find out more about the way drugs work and what happens with different mental health issues:

- Speak to a counsellor at **Odyssey House Victoria** (call 03 9420 7600) or another drug & alcohol service
- Call **DirectLine** 1800 888 236 or the **Mental Health Advice Line** 1300 280 737
- Ask your doctor/GP
- Look for information on the internet – check out Odyssey's mental health pages on the website for suggestions.