



## Labels

**Background:** In this group we avoid giving out labels

Discuss: What is some of the potential harm in “labeling” someone?

Discuss: What can be the benefit of a label or diagnosis?

If the person **accepts** a diagnosis or label using their own conclusions it is far more effective than someone from the outside giving out a label to someone else.

### **Activity:**

Decide for yourself: With regard to drugs and alcohol, based on your own conclusions, are you a **user, and abuser, or an addict?**

Directions: Using paper and pen, choose what best describes you with regard to drugs and alcohol- Do you think that you are a user, and abuser or an addict?

Justify your reasoning and make as strong of a case as possible why you think the way you do.

### **Process:**

Everyone read their essay aloud and discuss. Have group members comment on one another's essays

Then go to the board and have the group develop definitions for **user, abuser and addict**. Clinician should skillfully guide this process but allow the group members to brainstorm answers under each category so they come up with their own definitions of user, abuser and addict:

For example –

**User** – uses drugs on occasion with no consequences

**Abuser** – uses drugs, perhaps more regularly than user  
Starts to get in trouble – argue with family, legal, school problems  
Goes overboard from time to time (maybe blackout, get sick, etc)  
Pattern of use – more regular – (after school, weekends, etc.)  
Less time spent in non using activities

**Addict** - Use much more regular (Daily? Binges?)  
Consequences more severe – (multiple legal, severe family problems, kicked out of school/work, etc)  
Continuing to use drugs even AFTER consequences (Probation but still using)  
Selling things for drug money or dealing or stealing to support  
Craving drug use. Preoccupation (thinking about it and associating with substance frequently and spending increased amounts of time obtaining and using substance)  
Very little time spent in non using activities (quit sports team or other sober activity, no clean friends, spending less time with family, stopped doing hobbies, etc)  
Consistently using where you are not supposed to (at school, work, driving, around family, etc.)



**Final Process** – Now go over the group’s definitions of user, abuser, and addict. Starting with the Abuser category, ask group members if any of these items they identified apply to them, even if just a little. For example, using the example above under “Abuser” you could ask the group: “Who here would admit that they use drugs perhaps more than the regular user?” Whoever admits “yes” place their initials next to that item. Move on to the next item: “Who here has started to get into trouble (legal, family, school, etc.)?” – Again place initials of group members who admit that this applies to them. Continue this process for all of the “Abuser” category, then move on to the “Addict” category and do the same.

If done correctly, the idea is that clients will start admitting more than they initially did in their original essay that they may qualify under the “Abuser” or “Addict: category when the items in the group’s definition are reviewed and discussed one by one. This can be an insight-building experience if done correctly

Discuss – Using the Group’s definition of **user, abuser addict** – has anyone changed their opinion from their original essay? (If done correctly many have changed and gained insight as clients who may have initially considered themselves just a “user” in their essay may start to admit they see qualities of “abuser” in their patterns and those who may have initially said “abuser” may in actuality admit they see qualities of “addict” in their behavior patterns