



Illegal Drug Dealing

Drug Dealing is an issue that can come up in substance abuse treatment because dealing can be just as addictive as using. Keep in mind that in any substance abuse program, **drug dealing cannot be tolerated** and anyone caught selling or bringing drugs to a program needs to be discharged immediately for the safety of the other group members. If anyone in a substance abuse program suspects that any drug sales may be going on in the program then the counselor should be notified immediately (even anonymously) Active drug dealing or any other kind of drug selling or trading in treatment is an extremely serious issue in any program.

The following exercise is for people who are in treatment now, who may have sold drugs in the past, but have stopped and are working toward change today and not returning to that lifestyle. Before that discussion can take place in a positive manner, one rule needs to be reviewed:

Bragging, boasting, "I can top that", war stories, bravado, showboating, grandstanding, etc. is not productive in this discussion. – If you were involved in drug dealing, it is not appropriate to use this forum as an opportunity to brag about your exploits in the drug business. Nothing positive comes out of those types of conversations in a setting where people are trying to change their lives for the better. *It is also not appropriate to try to convince others that drug dealing is a good idea.* This activity is for people who accepted the reality that change is needed to have a positive future.

Discussion: There are many ways drug dealing can be associated with many types of “highs”. In reality, these “highs” are only temporary and bring with them serious negative consequences, similar to drug using or even worse. Discuss the following:

Cash Flow - It can be easy to fall in love with the allure of having large amounts of cash coming in regularly. Many drug dealers who try to quit may keep going back to the drug dealing game by promising themselves: “just one more time...” Unfortunately, just like with drug addiction, trying to sell “just one more time” doesn’t usually work out that way.

➤ **Reality: Illegal cash is not the same as honestly earned money** – When drug money is made illegally, it can be difficult to manage. Accumulating large bank accounts, investments, and merchandise with no way to legally account for it can draw attention from the authorities thereby increasing the risk of getting caught. Holding on to large amounts of illegal cash and drugs and merchandise brings with it a constant risk of getting robbed by one’s own customers and associates who know that the police won’t get called for robbing a dealer of their drugs, cash or supply. Constantly looking over your shoulder is an extremely difficult and stressful way of life.

Power and “Respect” – As long as there are drug users out there as customers, the drug dealer will be in demand. There can be a sense of power that comes with the feeling of constantly having what others want. The drug dealer is usually welcome at any drug party and once there people who use drugs are happy to see him/her. A drug dealer’s phone is always buzzing with text messages and phone calls which can bring with it a sense of importance. People always owing money and favors also brings with it a sense of power.

➤ **Reality: Power and respect associated with dealing can be short lived and conditional** – In many instances, “status” is directly linked to the demand for what is being sold. When a drug dealer goes out of business, even temporarily, they often find out who their true “friends” really are. A customer or associate can quickly become an enemy as it is not uncommon for a dealer’s customers and associates to set them up to be arrested to avoid their own legal consequences. Every drug dealer has to worry about getting beat by their customers, and then what to do when that happens. This may seem easier to handle than it is because it can open up a dealer’s life to a very violent lifestyle. Also, having your phone active all the time can be an exciting novelty at first but over time many drug dealers will attest to the difficult struggle associated with drug users of all types blowing up their phones at all hours of the day and night desperate for product, and often without the money to even pay for it.



Excitement – Staying a step ahead of the authorities, watching your back to keep from getting robbed, picking up and moving large amounts of product, guns, gangs, meeting all kinds of shady characters, etc. – the thrill and rush involved with drug dealing can be addictive. If nothing else, drug dealing surely keeps a person very busy

- **Reality: The excitement associated with drug dealing often comes at the expense of security and peace of mind.** Drug dealing can feel exciting but there are so many risks of getting caught, robbed, ripped off, snitched on, assaulted, that can be extremely nerve-wracking and stressful, to say the least. Many drug dealers lead a more and more paranoid and distrustful lifestyle the longer they remain in the game. Finally, all the excitement of the streets is gone once a drug dealer gets locked up, then the regrets start.

Having plenty for yourself – A common reason why many people deal is to be able to use for free

- **Reality: Becoming your own best customer can easily become your downfall** – If someone deals drugs to support their own drug use habit, that can seem like a great idea at first but once addiction takes over it can be a matter of time before you put your own self out of business by using at a faster rate than you can sell. This story is all too common

Perceived “Success” – Many drug dealers keep going back because they felt they were good at it. There is a degree of strategizing, organizing, risk taking, and other “business”- like skills that some individuals excel at.

- **Reality: “Success” can come crashing down quickly** – It does not take much to go from having a lucrative drug dealing business to being unemployed, on probation or parole with a felony record with little or no legal job experience or prospects. The vast majority of stories of individuals who spend time in the drug dealing game do not have happy endings as most people are well aware.

What to do? Depending upon your perspective, continuing to stay away from drug dealing can be extremely challenging for those individuals who become “addicted” to the lifestyle. Unfortunately there are no easy answers when it comes to staying on the straight and narrow path. The principles for learning to live without drug dealing are the same as the principles for quitting using substances:

- **Motivation** – Things don’t usually change for the better unless we want them too. It is important to develop the desire for a better life in the long term rather than living for the day to day tentative, short-lived and elusive thrills and risks associated with drug dealing. There is a much better future for those who make their money legally, that is the truth
- **Lifestyle Change** – Just like with any other addiction, it is necessary to look at changing habits, behaviors, thinking and associations and replacing them with new positive supports, attitudes and values instead. Getting out of the game means getting out completely if you want to say out.
- **Finding a New and Improved Purpose** – If drug dealing is taken out of the picture, something good needs to take its place. Learning to instead focus on new things such as career, family, beliefs, interests, goals, etc. is essential. That is the best recipe for success – to find a better and more positive place to focus all of the time and energy wasted on the drug dealing lifestyle.

If drug dealing was an issue for you, what is your plan to continue to stay on the right path to success?