



Mental Health and Substance Use Treatment Overview

The Garden of Good Health – *(An illustration about mental health and substance use treatment)* – Anyone who has taken care of a grassy lawn knows that weeds may grow at times. One quick way to get rid of the weeds is to mow the lawn really low so that you cannot see them anymore.

Group Question: This is a quick solution, but what almost always happens over time?

Yes, the weeds grow back with time and eventually they are back again. Therefore, the only way to really deal with the weeds is to pull them out by getting to the root. This may require more effort up front, but in the long term, the grass will grow much healthier when the time is taken to deal with the weeds properly.

Comparing this with mental health and substance use: If a person has mental health or substance use issues, that person may attempt to conceal or ignore those issues temporarily (like cutting the lawn really short in the illustration) and it may work for a short time. However, in the long run, like the weeds in the illustration, mental health or substance issues that have not been properly taken care may grow back.

Neglecting your mental health or substance use issues may end up resulting in negative impact in other life areas including family, work, education, financial, physical health, etc. So, it really makes sense to be proactive and take care of these issues rather than ignore them.

Group Questions:

- Does this make sense?
- Has anyone ever seen or heard of a story where neglect of caring for mental health or substance use issues resulted in other life problems down the line (like in this story)?
- When should someone seek help for a mental health or substance use problem?



It's OK to get help



Group Quiz – Mental Health and Substance Use – As a group, review and discuss the following questions about mental health and substance use treatment:

1. According to research done by the US Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA), approximately what percentage of adults are currently living with a mental health condition?
A – 10% B – 15% C – 20%

2. What percentage of adults will experience a mental illness at some point in their lifetime?
A – 26% B – 46% C – 100%

3. **True or False** – Depending upon which study you read, about half of all people who suffer from as substance use disorders also have at least one mental health disorder

4. Which of the following are signs that someone might have a substance use disorder?
 - A.** Feeling guilty about using alcohol or other drugs
 - B.** Having at least one family member or friend complain about your alcohol or drug use
 - C.** Using more often or in larger amounts than you originally intended too. (For example, stopping at the bar for a quick drink and ending up staying longer and having 5 or 6, or purchasing an amount of a substance and intending for it to last a week or a month but it ends up being used in a few days)
 - D.** Showing up late or calling out of work, school or neglecting other responsibilities such as paying bills or taking care of your home because of drinking or drug use.
 - E.** All of these are signs of a substance use problem

5. **True or False** – Almost one third of all adults in the US have experienced an anxiety disorder at one point in their lives

6. Which of the following can be negatively impacted by depression?
 - A.** School performance
 - B.** Work performance
 - C.** Sleep and appetite
 - D.** Physical Health
 - E.** Social Relationships
 - F.** All of these areas can be adversely impacted by depression



Answers:

1. **C** - According to the most recent SAMHSA data approximately 20% of US adult lives with a mental health disorder. That is 1 out of 5 US adults. There are children as well
2. **B**- In the US, almost half of adults (46.4 percent) will experience a mental illness during their lifetime. (www.Mentalhealthfirstaid.org)
3. **True** – Studies consistently show that individuals with substance use disorders commonly also suffer from mental health disorders as well. This is called having co-occurring disorders. Some studies show that the number is much higher than 50%
4. **E** – All of those are signs of substance use. People often minimize or make excuses about some of these signs in an effort to avoid facing the fact that substance use may be a problem. Substance use problems may get worse without treatment as consequences of substance use may get worse with time
5. **True** – Anxiety disorders are one of the most common forms of mental illness. In fact, people with an anxiety disorders are three to five times more likely to go to the doctor and six times more likely to be hospitalized for psychiatric disorders than those who do not suffer from anxiety disorders. www.adaa.org
6. **F** – Untreated depression can affect a wide range of life areas including work, school, relationships, as well as physical health. Chronic depression can be debilitating and even fatal at its worst.

Open Ended Discussion Questions

- 1) What is anxiety?
- 2) What exactly is depression?
- 3) What is Bipolar Disorder?
- 4) What really is addiction?
- 5) What stops some people from getting help with mental health or substance use problems?
- 6) What is stigma and why does stigma affect people?
- 7) What about medication for mental health? How about medication for substance use?
- 8) What should you do if you think you need help with mental health or substance use concerns?



Answers to Open Ended Discussion Questions

- 1) **Anxiety** is your body's natural response to stress. It's a feeling of fear or apprehension about what's to come. ... But if your feelings of anxiety are extreme, last for longer than six months, and are interfering with your life, you may have an anxiety disorder. www.healthline.com
- 2) **Depression** is a common and serious medical illness that negatively affects how you feel, the way you think and how you act. Fortunately, it is also treatable. Depression causes feelings of sadness and/or a loss of interest in activities once enjoyed. It can lead to a variety of emotional and physical problems and can decrease a person's ability to function at work and at home. www.psychiatry.org
- 3) **Bipolar Disorder** (formerly called manic-depressive illness or manic depression) is a mental disorder that causes unusual shifts in mood, energy, activity levels, concentration, and the ability to carry out day-to-day tasks. www.nimh.nih.gov
- 4) **Addiction** has many definitions. In 2019 one widely accepted definition of addiction is: "Addiction is a treatable, chronic medical disease involving complex interactions among brain circuits, genetics, the environment, and an individual's life experiences. People with addiction use substances or engage in behaviors that become compulsive and often continue despite harmful consequences." www.asam.org
- 5) **People** may avoid treatment because they are ashamed (stigma) or often because they lack insight. It can be harmful to just ignore a mental health or substance issue and simply hope it goes away by itself. It can be better to talk to a professional when there is a concern
- 6) **Stigma** involves people shaming others or being judgmental because of mental health or substance use. People may avoid getting help because of fear of being judged or shamed by society. In truth, mental health and substance use are diseases like any other so stigma is wrong. Effective treatment centers focus on treating all clients with dignity and respect, to eliminate stigma
- 7) **Medication** for either mental health or substance use can be misunderstood. A good way to look at medication would be if you needed medication for a physical health disorder like diabetes or heart disease, it is likely you may take it. Why not take medication for a mental health or substance use disorder if you need it? Medication can be effective at improving mood, attention or for lowering levels of anxiety. For substance use disorders, there are medications that are scientifically proven to reduce cravings and lower overdose rates when taken properly
- 8) **Help is available** – Just ask for it. There is no shame in asking for help. If you go for mental health or substance use treatment voluntarily it can be on your terms, the way you want it. It is much better to be proactive and deal with a problem early before it gets worse and more difficult to treat. Treatment may involve seeing a doctor or else seeing a therapist or attending a group to healthy coping skills and to develop positive supports, or both.

"Healing takes time, and asking for help is a courageous step."

- Mariska Hargitay