WHAT CAUSES ADDICTION

Drugs manipulate your brains chemical balances

In generating ways and methods for all of us to understand the drug addiction and the best ways to help prevent and treat substance abuse it is important to understand what actually goes on in the brain to cause addiction in the first place.

In the case of cocaine addiction, as is the case with most addictions, the drug is an undiscriminating one. Once we know the chemical processes that occurs in the brain when a person uses cocaine it will help us to understand why it can trap any of us. There is no such thing as being too smart or too educated to let such a thing happen. Cocaine traps smart people. Cocaine traps educated people. Even though you may think you're in control of your life and the substances you use the drugs will win out in the end. By studying the effects of cocaine it also helps us to understand why relapses occur despite the best intentions of people trying to stay off drugs.

Stimulants are used to increase alertness and to brighten a person's mood. Although increased alertness and a brightened mood may sound very positive, and in fact, the introduction of new stimulants throughout

history were welcomed as a positive step until their true dangers were realized. This happened almost a century ago when German chemists were able to purify and extract the drug Cocaine Hydrochloride from the leaves of the South American Cocoa plant scientifically known as Erythroxylon.

The Coca leaf was well known to native cultures for thousands of years. Chewing the Coca leaf was as much a part of the working ritual then as a coffee break is to us now. Purifying cocaine changed all that. Using this new pure form of cocaine it became possible to inject it with the recently available hypodermic syringe. This meant that the alertness and brightened mood could be brought about at a much greater speed and at a higher level. The quicker the drug was delivered to the brain the more deadly the results could become.

The brain uses a number of neurotransmitters such as norepinephrine that increases alertness, dopamine which is associated with instinctive cravings and reward seeking behaviours and seratonin which is important to regulating sleep cycles. Cocaine temporarily increases the amount of these three chemicals in the brain. Inducing the brain to use more of its neurotransmitters than it normally would.

When a person uses cocaine at high levels over an extended period of time two important things happen. First the brain runs out of neurotransmitters. This is called a crash. Since there are no more neurotransmitters to push out, taking more stimulants no longer has any effect. Secondly it effects the brains own mechanism of regulating the amount of neurotransmitters released. The temporary increases caused by cocaine confuses the control mechanisms. As the brain level of cocaine drops neurotransmitter levels rapidly return to below normal. Another dose of cocaine is then needed for the user to feel normal again which results in the addictive

Possession and use are illegal and can result in fines, arrests & travel bans

cycle. The addictive power of cocaine should never be underestimated. News headlines tell us of bankers, ballplayers, teachers and mayors all whose lives were shattered by cocaine. These were all strong, capable and educated people. They were, in the end, seduced by cocaine and seduced into believing that they were in control of their own situations when in fact cocaine was in control of them.

One use can cause death!

"She is Addiction."
...by Ray Dillon

Addicted to Addiction. She **is** Addiction.

She eats it, smokes it, drinks it... Loves it.

An Addict.

She's teaching by example.
She's leading with selfishness.
Now, I look and see myself.

An Addict.

I deny it, deny it, deny it... Love it.

Addicted to Addiction. **I** am Addiction.

Much like any other addictive drug, never using cocaine is far safer than using it and then trying to stop. But if we can understand the effects that the drug has on each and every one of us, perhaps it will lead to a better educated public who will choose abstinence over experience.