

Your University at your side

Counsellors at the University of Wolverhampton:

- provide free and confidential individual counselling
- offer non-judgemental support and understanding
- are professionally trained
- are experienced in dealing with a wide range of problems

Counselling can:

- help you to develop your strengths
- offer you the chance to focus on and understand your difficulties
- enable you to make positive decisions and changes
- help you to develop the skills and resources to cope
- help prevent small problems from becoming bigger.

More information is available online, including guided self-help programmes: wlv.ac.uk/SSW

Get in touch

You can make an appointment to see a counsellor by filling out the Contact Us form at www.wlv.ac.uk/SSW, alternatively, you can come along to one of our drop-in services. For more information go to the web address above and click on the Mental Health and Wellbeing option. From here you will find a wealth of useful information and self-help tools as well as our Drop-ins and Group activities.

Addictions



Addictions

Recognising difficulties with alcohol and drug use



Alcohol

Alcohol is used mainly in social situations and has the ability to provide both enjoyment and misery. Problems are caused when too much alcohol is drunk at the wrong time.

Alcohol is addictive, which means that we can end up not feeling right without it, or unable to control how much we consume. In addition, we can become tolerant to it, which means we need to drink more and more to achieve the desired effect.

Alcohol can be bad for us physically, with too much resulting in hangovers and vomiting.

In the long term, abuse of alcohol can lead to liver disease.

It is fairly common to use alcohol to give us a bit of 'dutch courage', for example, when we are trying to meet new people. But too much alcohol can be bad for us mentally, affecting our mood, making us feel depressed, and affecting our memory.

Of course, getting drunk can also lead us into doing things we wouldn't normally do, with unforeseen consequences:

- Relationships with loved ones and friends can be affected.
- We can get into fights or other compromising positions.
- It can lead to money troubles and accidents.

Too much alcohol can affect our ability to work and our confidence in what we do. There is also a connection between alcohol and depression.

This works in two ways. On the one hand, regular drinking can leave us with hangovers, feeling guilty, jittery, anxious, tired and depressed. On the other, we then drink more to relieve us of our depressive feelings, and with the benefits wearing off quite quickly, more and more is needed to have the same effect, and so the cycle goes on.

Drugs

It is pretty much the same story with drug abuse. Temporary apparent gains can be at a considerable cost to our mental well-being. Some drugs are more addictive than others, while the usage of some creeps up on us without us realising it.

Stopping use of a substance may lead to a state of withdrawal with physical and psychological symptoms. Drug use, like

use of alcohol, can lead to an increase in depressive feelings; disrupted social relationships; accidents; physical illness and criminal behaviour to support the drug use.

Causes of drug and alcohol misuse

The causes are wide and varied, with several factors being important: ease of availability; peer pressure and other social factors; a low tolerance to stress; low self-esteem and as an escape from other personal problems. Alcohol misuse can also run in families, with genetic factors playing a part.

Changing habits

The first few steps are to recognise there is a problem and to want to do something about it. It is often useful to enlist the help of a friend or family member as a confidante (although sometimes you may have to consider changing some of your friendship groups). Keeping a diary of your use can alert you to the truth of your situation.

Other help can come in several forms. Doctors can help with substance dependency and offer replacement medication to help with both the dependency and the unpleasant withdrawal symptoms. There are many campaigns around to stop smoking cigarettes.

Counselling and psychotherapy can help in terms of support while looking at some of the stresses and underlying feelings which may have contributed to the dependency.

Support groups can also be very useful, often with ex-users among the people available for support. And while it can be difficult and feel embarrassing to admit that there is a problem, for fear of judgement from family, friends, your doctor, and other bodies, good sources of help, like those listed overleaf, won't generally be judgemental. Admitting you have a problem with alcohol or drugs is not a sign of weakness.

Much of the information provided here was obtained from the Royal College of Psychiatrists' website.

You might like to look at:

Advice and support for anyone whose life has been affected by someone else's drinking – www.al-anonuk.org.uk/

Help to recover from alcoholism – www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/ or tel: 0845 769 7555

Substance misuse charity based in the West Midlands – www.aquarius.org.uk/ or tel: 0300 200 2400

People you might want to contact:

- Students' Union Advice and Support Centre – tel: 01902 322038
- NHS 111 tel: 111
- Visit: www.talktofrank.com/ has a free and confidential drug information and advice line on tel: 0300 123 6600
- Samaritans: provides confidential, emotional support 24 hours a day on tel: 08457 90 90 90
- Stop smoking: www.nhs.uk/livewell/smoking/

“I didn't feel judged, but in the company of someone who genuinely cared about my problems.”

Other useful websites:

The Royal College of Psychiatrists
www.rcpsych.ac.uk/healthadvice/atozindex.aspx

Advice from Mind:
www.mind.org.uk/information-support/mental-health-a-z/

Useful leaflets:
www.ntw.nhs.uk/pic/selfhelp/

Health A-Z at:
www.nhs.uk

Free meditation exercises:
<http://franticworld.com/free-meditations-from-mindfulness/>

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