



WELL-BEING

Column

Drug and alcohol use: when the pleasure is gone

Do you feel sad or hopeless? Do you suffer from physical discomfort? Regardless of our age, gender and social status, difficulties that arise during our lifetime can lead us to drugs or alcohol, shelters that give us the illusion that we are getting better or of resolving all our problems in seconds. But is this really the case? Is it not, rather, the start of a dark downward spiral? It is time to ask the right questions about this.

Why do we use drugs or alcohol?

Anybody can be drawn to drugs or alcohol for all sorts of reasons, the first being the "pleasure" that they can bring when using them occasionally. Others perceive drug or alcohol use as a solution or, rather, a remedy for a situation considered to be insurmountable.

According to several studies, anxiety, relationship difficulties, low self-esteem, peer pressure, a particularly stressful lifestyle or even genetic factors can lead a person to develop a drug or alcohol dependency. In addition, believing that using drugs or alcohol can help a person live his life better is an even greater temptation that can lead to excess. Based on this premise, drug or alcohol use can increase to the point where a person can forget his initial problem. This is when the use becomes *the* problem.

Serious consequences

People struggling with drug or alcohol abuse can suffer from the harmful consequences it can have on their bodies, families and social lives.

From a physical perspective, for example, problems include malnutrition, loss of balance, serious respiratory problems, weakened immune system, gastro-intestinal problems, infertility, etc. These excesses can also cause marital problems, relationship difficulties, work problems, the risk of traffic accidents, injuries and violent or suicidal behaviour.

Recognizing the signs

Are you using drugs or drinking and questioning yourself? The goal is not to label you. The signs listed below can, however, help you determine if your situation is problematic or at risk of becoming so, particularly if you have been experiencing them for some time:

- You feel a need to drink or use drugs and it is difficult to control.
- You sometimes lose control of your drug or alcohol use or you have trouble limiting the amount.
- You are constantly concerned about everything dealing with drugs or alcohol.
- Despite the harmful consequences, you continue to abuse drugs or alcohol.
- You keep increasing the amount to achieve the desired effect.
- You experience memory loss.
- You have trouble sleeping, numbness, or shaking in your hands or legs.

The signs and symptoms can vary from one person to another. If you have doubts about your drug or alcohol habits or about those of a person close to you, feel free to confide in somebody you trust or contact your Employee Assistance Program.

Conclusion

It is not easy for an individual to accept that they might have a drug or alcohol problem. However, do not underestimate yourself: you have the strength you need to take the first step. Believe in yourself because your entire life will improve as a result!

If you have any doubts about your drug or alcohol use or you notice similarities between your current experience and the aspects previously described, don't wait! The support services offer you additional help and active listening.

It is never too late to invest in your health!