

How to approach the Challenge

- Recognising signs and symptoms
- Confronting
- Seeking help

Dealing with a colleague who is getting involved with substances is tricky...

- ▶ Shame
- ▶ Trust
- ▶ Health concern
- ▶ Uneasiness
- ▶ Knowing what is the right help and what isn't.

*It is an opportunity to help.
It may be turned into a WIN-WIN situation*

Step 1. Recognising signs and symptoms

If a colleague is making use of substances one might notice some common **physical, psychological and behavioural** symptoms.

General Signs:

- ▶ Absenteeism
- ▶ Excessive Carelessness
- ▶ Mood Swings
- ▶ Concealments and Excuses
- ▶ Extremes
- ▶ Financial Difficulties



Substances - 3 main categories

- ▶ Tranquilizers (depressants)

Alcohol, Heroin, Xanax, Barbiturates, Benzodiazepines, GHB, Kava, Cannabis

- ▶ Stimulants

Cocaine, crack, methamphetamine, amphetamine, ecstasy

- ▶ Hallucinogens

Ayahuasca, DMT, LSD, mescaline, PCP, Psilocybin

Category 1: Depressants/Tranquilisers (Downers)

Examples:

Alcohol, Heroin, Benzodiazepines, Xanax, Barbiturates, GHB, Kava

- ▶ Depressants usually reduce arousal and stimulation.
- ▶ They target the central nervous system and slow down communication between the brain and the body.
- ▶ Other signs of drug use include, red eyes (marijuana), smell of alcohol and collapsed veins (use of needle).
- ▶ Most cause physical dependence, apart from psychological dependence.

Depressants

Immediate Term	Long term effect
Sense of relaxation	Irritability
Less inhibition	Amnesia (loss of memory)
Apathy	Sexual problems
Sleepiness	Chronic fatigue
Immediate effect	Breathing difficulties
Confidence	Anxiety
Euphoria	Depression

Category 2: Stimulants (Uppers)

Examples:

Cocaine, crack, methamphetamine, amphetamine, ecstasy

- ▶ Increase activity in the body
- ▶ Short-term sharp increase (rush) of dopamine in the brain.
- ▶ Increase alertness and give a false sense of control.
- ▶ Most often causes psychological dependence.

Stimulants

Immediate effect	Long term effect
Intense feelings of happiness	Persistent anxiety
Increased energy and sociability	Depression (feeling down in the absence of the stimulant)
Increased sexual desire and performance	Chronic exhaustion
Improved attention	Hallucinations
Agitation and restlessness	Paranoia
Increased heart rate	Cardiovascular problems
Suppressed appetite	Malnutrition

Category 3: Hallucinogens

Examples

Ayahuasca, DMT, LSD, mescaline, PCP, Psilocybin

- ▶ Can be synthetic or derived from plants or mushrooms.
- ▶ Usually they affect the neural circuits in the brain and disrupt the brain's glutamate system.
- ▶ Some are used in spiritual retreats or to stimulate creativity.
- ▶ Most often causes psychological dependence.

Hallucinogens

Immediate effect	Long term effect
Hallucinations and spiritual experiences	Hallucinogen Persisting Perception Disorder (HPPD) - flashbacks
Increased heart rate	Speech problems
Nausea	Memory loss
Intensified feelings and sensory experiences	Weight loss
Changes in sense of time	Anxiety and Depression
Paranoia (extreme and unreasonable distrust of others)	Persistent psychosis (visual disturbances & disorganised thinking)
Psychosis (disordered thinking detached from reality)	Depression and suicidal thoughts

Signs of drugs use on the workplace

- ▶ Unkempt appearance
- ▶ Sleeping on duty
- ▶ Sluggish
- ▶ Temper outbursts
- ▶ Irrational and aggressive behaviour
- ▶ Nose bleeds
- ▶ White powder on the face
- ▶ Restlessness
- ▶ Mood swings
- ▶ Secretive behaviour

These signs might not always mean the person is using substances.

Testing

- ▶ Urine
- ▶ Saliva
- ▶ Blood
- ▶ Hair
- ▶ Perspiration

Testing depends on the type of drug used, amount of drug used, frequency, body mass, tolerance, metabolic rate, medical conditions, ethnicity, gender, weight and drug's half life.

Synthetic drugs do not show up in urine tests.

Step 2. Confronting vs Enabling

Confronting

- ✓ Address behaviour rather than denying it.
- ✓ Letting them endure the consequences of their choices
- ✓ Empower them to be responsible
- ✓ Encourage them to seek help
- ✓ Make a plan of action together
- ✓ Work out the plan together

Enabling

- ✓ Denying and avoiding the negative behaviour
- ✓ Assisting financially by loaning money to avoid negative consequences
- ✓ Taking over their responsibilities
- ✓ Lying to cover their behaviours
- ✓ Allowing absences or lateness.
- ✓ Putting their needs before yours

Although it usually comes from good intentions, it can have an opposite effect in the long run. Without consequences, substance use only gets worse. Enabling at work can harm the morale of the whole team.



Step 3. Seeking Help

- ▶ Avoid enabling.
- ▶ Do not try and diagnose the problem
- ▶ Consult your HR for guidance.
- ▶ Ask a trusted supervisor to address the situation.
- ▶ Let the person know that you want to help them and let them know you can help them find treatment options.
- ▶ Gently let the person know that their mood and behaviour affects the whole team.
- ▶ Do not call the colleague an addict or drunkard.
- ▶ It may be appropriate to include a family member in the picture.

You spend a lot of time with your co-workers.

You may get to know a few of them on a personal level.

Confronting your co-worker may not seem the immediate answer,
but sitting back and doing nothing isn't either.

Be Gentle but Firm

Don't make promises you cannot keep.



Thank you

OASI Foundation

21563333

info@oasi.org.mt

@oasifoundation



**We're
here to
help!**