

Definition of Terms

Drugs:

A drug is a substance, other than food, that, when taken into the body, changes the way your brain or central nervous system works.

Tolerance:

As people take more of a drug, the body can adapt to manage increased amounts. This means the person needs to take a higher dose to achieve the same effect.

Dependency:

The definition most commonly accepted by addiction experts is a shortened version of the one laid out in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV TR), psychiatry's handbook of all mental conditions. By the book, addiction (dependency) is the compulsive use of a substance despite ongoing negative consequences, which may lead to tolerance or withdrawal symptoms when the substance is stopped.

Physical dependency:

A strong compulsion to keep taking a drug is dependency. Physical dependency is when the user has to keep taking the drug to avoid the physical discomfort of withdrawal.

Psychological dependency:

In this case people feel they could not cope without the drug – perhaps to make them feel good or to function – even though they may not get physical withdrawal symptoms if they stop.

Withdrawal:

This is how the body reacts when the user stops using the drug(s) they were dependent on. With physical dependency these will include a feeling of illness.

Drug Misuse/problematic use:

This can often be a confusing term to use as people will have differing opinions and feelings on what counts as 'misuse'. The term 'drug use' is broader and is more useful to use.