

# Free causal pathways essay example

[Health & Medicine](#), [Drug Abuse](#)



\n[[toc title="Table of Contents"](#)]\n

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1. [Overview of Substance Abuse](#) \n \t
2. [Introduction](#) \n \t
3. [Conclusion](#) \n \t
4. [References](#) \n

\n[/toc]\n \n

## **Overview of Substance Abuse**

Overview of Substance Abuse

### **Introduction**

Substance abuse refers to the excessive and hazardous use of any psychoactive substance or drug that affects a person's mental processes, leading on to a dependence syndrome. The condition is characterized by a range of behavioral, cognitive and physiological changes that typically include a strong substance seeking behavior, tolerance to its effects, withdrawal symptoms on stopping its use, and, a detrimental effect on the afflicted individual's personal and social spheres. Substance abuse is a major contributor to the global burden of disease with abuse of tobacco and alcohol being its most common examples (WHO, 2014). Self administration of prescription drugs (e. g., narcotic analgesics, sedatives, nervous stimulants) and addiction to illicit drugs (e. g., heroin, cannabis, cocaine) are all examples of substance abuse.

Whether substance abuse is a disease or merely a sign of moral weakness has long been a contentious issue. However, there is now a global consensus that substance abuse is a complex disorder with multi factorial causation including biological, genetic, psychological, socio cultural and environmental determinants. Regardless of the reasons, the end result is the alteration of neurophysiology which affects the brain's capacity to function normally in the absence of that particular substance. Therefore it is important that drug dependence is not regarded as a mere failure of mental strength or poor character but a medical disorder that could affect any human being. It is typically a relapsing disorder and often associated with mental and psychological co-morbidities. (Kalat, 2002)

The issue of substance abuse lies at the interface of medical and social science and has no easy solutions. The susceptibility to pleasurable effects of drugs and the combined influence of peer pressure, social and behavioral contexts, all require a comprehensive approach to prevention of substance abuse. Medical, psychotherapeutic and behavioral interventions like, cognitive behavioral therapy and motivational enhancement therapy have an important role in its prevention and treatment. These interventions work by targeting the same physiological, neurological, biochemical and motivational processes that are affected by psychoactive substances (WHO, 2004).

## **Conclusion**

Substance abuse is an increasingly common problem that has a crippling effect on individuals, their immediate families and the society at large. Prevention and treatment of substance abuse requires a comprehensive approach that includes medical, social and psychotherapeutic approaches.

Stigma and discrimination related to substance abuse often hinders access and optimal utilization of treatment and harm-reduction interventions. More research is needed to understand inter individual differences in susceptibility, responses and coping mechanisms associated with substance abuse.

## **References**

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