

Psychoactive drugs and their effects

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Psychology Psychoactive Drugs and their Effects Medications that effect people psychologically are called psychoactive drugs. They are often helpful in treating depression, anxiety, insomnia, and other psychological complications. Psychoactive drugs don't affect the underlying causes of these disorders, but they can provide symptomatic relief to allow people to live more normal lives. Anxiety can be defined as persistent nervousness, tension, or panic caused by stress or other psychological causes.

Anti-anxiety drugs (also know as minor tranquilizers) are used to promote relaxation or reduce the physical symptoms of anxiety. Everyone feels depressed at times, but when it is prolonged and starts interfering with daily life, support, professional help, and psychoactive medications may be appropriate. Insomnia has many causes, including anxiety and depression. When the cause is known and can be treated, sleep patterns generally return to normal. When the insomnia is persistent, sleeping drugs may be appropriate. Drugs are classified according to their effects and actions on the mind and body.

Example: Depressants, Hallucinogens, opiates and stimulants. Depressants (sometimes called downers) are a class of drugs that slow normal brain function. It acts on the central nervous system because of this effect on GABA activity that produces a drowsy or calming effect. GABA works to decrease brain activity. Depressants also carry high addictive potential. The withdrawal effects from long-term depressant use can be life-threatening and produce some of the worst consequences of any other drug classifications. Examples: alcohol, Valium, Xanax, Librium, and barbiturates.

Hallucinogens (commonly referred to as Psychedelics) are drugs which cause altered perception and feeling. Hallucinogens have powerful mind-altering effects and can change how the brain perceives times, everyday reality, and the surrounding environment. They affect regions of the brain that are responsible for coordination, thought processes, hearing and sight. They can cause sensory or perceptual distortions in people to hear voices, see things, and feel sensations that do not exist. Hallucinogens change the way the brain works by changing the way nerve cells communicate with one another.

Hallucinogens possess a moderate potential for addiction with very high potential for tolerance, moderate level of psychological dependence and low potential for physical dependence. Examples: LSD, PCP, MDMA,(Ecstasy), marijuana, mescaline, and psilocybin. Opiates (or narcotics) are powerful painkillers. They are made from opium, a white liquid in the poppy plant. Opiates produce a quick, intense feeling of pleasure followed by a sense of well being and calm. Long-term opiate use changes the way the brain works by changing the way nerve cells communicate with one another.

If opiates are taken away from opiate-dependant brain cells, many of them will become overactive. As with many other drugs, opiates possess very addictive potential. Examples: heroin, morphine, codeine, Oxycontin.

Stimulants (uppers) are a class of drugs that elevate mood, increase feelings of well-being, and increase energy and alertness. Stimulants can cause the heart to beat faster and will also cause blood pressure and breathing to evaluate. Repeated use of stimulants can result in paranoia and hostility. As with other drugs, stimulants possess very high addictive potential.

Examples: cocaine, methamphetamine, amphetamine, MDMA (Ecstasy), nicotine and caffeine. Drug Abuse generally refers to drug taking that cause emotional or physical harm to one self or others example, operating machinery or driving a vehicle, while “ under the influence” of alcohol. Addiction is a broad term referring to a condition in which a person feels compelled to use a specific drug. Drug addiction can be psychological, physical or both. Drug addiction is not the same as substance abuse or drug abuse. A Individual who abuse drugs are not necessarily drug dependent, people who are addicted to drugs, conversely are also called drug abusers.