

Environmental factors of substance abuse



Environmental factors of substance abuse: Addiction to recreational drugs is gaining epidemic proportions in the United States. These drugs include marijuana, cocaine, heroin, etc. The focus of this essay will be heroin. The following passages will attempt to determine what are the factors that lead to heroin addiction and what role does the environment, meaning social setups, contribute to the condition.

First of all, it is important to understand, that heroin is sought after by addicts for its ability to mitigate pain and suffering. So, all individuals who are mentally stressed and display symptoms of depression are prone to heroin usage. But, unfortunately, this relief in pain is only temporary and in the long run the habit deepens the sense of suffering and pain than ever before. In this context, all individuals who were brought up in dysfunctional family environments are susceptible to addiction. Hence, the first environmental factor is the dysfunctional family of the person. In the case of Ellis, we learn that his father used to return home drunk and beat up Ellis' mom or sometimes Ellis himself. This is a telling sign of chaos in the family and this is a significant environmental factor that leads to Ellis's addiction to Heroin.

The fact that Ellis started experimenting with alcohol and marijuana even before reaching his teens is a strong indicator that he will have problems in his adult life. And sure enough, a couple of years after the death of his father, his old habits had come to haunt him, this time in the form of heroin addiction. It is a recurrent pattern with most heroin addicts that they seek out drugs very early in life.

Recent research suggests that alongside environmental factors, genetic factors also have a role to play. But the consensus among researchers is that <https://assignbuster.com/environmental-factors-of-substance-abuse/>

social and environmental factors are more important than genetic factors in determining the vulnerability of an individual to succumb to substance addiction. Researchers also concur on the view that those with genetic predisposition to drug abuse and growing up in a dysfunctional family environment run a very high risk of addiction. It was also found that people living in violent and lawless neighborhoods have a greater chance of heroin addiction. This implicitly means that the socio-economic status is a strong environmental factor in assessing risk for heroin abuse.

The therapeutic approaches to treating heroin addiction have proven quite successful. Since the addicts developed their addiction as a result of flawed conceptions of guilt, reward and punishment, bringing life back to normalcy is primarily the domain of the Psychotherapy. For the same reasons, medical interventions in treating addiction problems should only be the last resort and be applied only for severe cases of addiction. Even so, the medical approach is only temporary and the best solution for abstinence from drugs in the long term is through psychological counseling. Researchers have also shown that people who are engaged in happy relationships, either with their spouse, children or parents, are less likely to take up drugs.

Another interesting finding is that people who participate in organized religion and adhere to the tenets of their faith were unlikely to abuse drugs. Hence, environmental factors such as the family conditions, the immediate neighborhood, socio-economic background, religious faith, etc. are all significant factors in drug abuse. These factors have been found to outweigh the genetic predisposition of the individual. In the case of Ellis too, his social-economic and parental background led him to heroin addiction. His rehabilitation process should ideally focus on psychological counseling and

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developing a support network.

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