

Literature and Coping Skills
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Lecture 33
The Culture of Escape: Elusion or Illusion? - I


Hello everybody I am Ajit K Mishra, your course instructor for Literature and Coping Skills. I am here again, with a new module on Taming Substance Abuse. Substance abuse, as we know, has been one of the biggest challenges facing the entire human civilization. It has been a major problem for all of us, those who abuse substances and those who do not abuse substances. We all have faced the blues of substance abuse, because it has destroyed generations, families, societies, and then the world at large.

So, it has emerged as one of the biggest challenges today. Although it is a big problem, many often it is not regarded as such a huge problem by most of us. Because one of the biggest issues with substance abuse is that it has been an underground problem. Most often this problem is not reported. Most often, we are not able to detect or determine or diagnose. And that is one big reason why substance abuse has been an elusive problem.

But substance abuse still threatens to eliminate our generations. Therefore, it is very, very important that we take care of this particular challenge, and this particular psychological and mental challenge, so that we can take care of this particular problem well before it turns out to be an unmanageable, uncontrollable giant. So, in this module, I am going to talk about a few very important things that are associated with substance abuse. So, let us start.

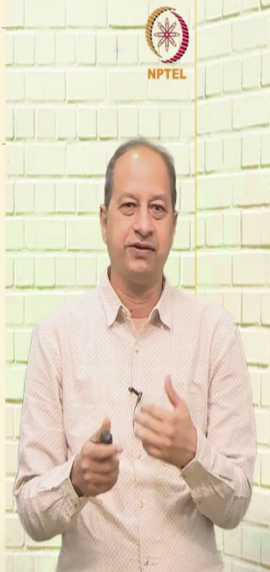
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Taming Substance Abuse



- The Culture of Escape: Elusion or Illusion? -I
- The Culture of Escape: Elusion or Illusion? -II
- Charles Baudelaire, “Be Drunk”
- Charles Bukowski, “The Suicide Kid”

Image Source: Thenounproject




This module, like the previous ones, is also divided into 4 sections. I am going to walk you through each of these sections in these lectures. So, I will be starting with the first section that is; The Culture of Escape: Elusion or Illusion? And it has two parts, the second lecture will also be on the same thing, then I will take you to the third one, in which I will be taking an example of Charles Baudelaire’s, “Be Drunk” to talk about substance abuse, and the other dimensions associated with it.

And then finally, I will take you to Charles Bukowski’s, “The Suicide Kid.” And will get to see how the problem of substance abuse is taken care of or not taken care of in that particular poetic composition. Today, I am going to talk about this particular thing, that is, The Culture of Escape: Elusion or Illusion.

So, when it comes to the culture of escape, substance abuse plays a major role because, escape has been one of the biggest causes, or the willingness, the desire to escape has been one of the biggest causes because of which people generally look forward to substance use, substance misuse, and then finally substance abuse. So, if you get to understand the culture of escape, it will help us understand the varying nature of substance abuse. So, let us take a look at each of these aspects.

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What is a Substance?

- Any psychoactive compound with the potential to cause health and social problems, including addiction
- Substances may be legal (e.g., alcohol and tobacco); illegal (e.g., heroin and cocaine); or controlled for use by licensed prescribers for medical purposes such as hydrocodone or oxycodone (e.g., Oxycontin, Vicodin, and Lortab)

— A. Thomas McLellan

Image Source: stock.adobe.com



We need to start with the idea of what substance is all about. So, what is the substance? So, when we call it substance, we mean those drugs, those things that exercise a negative or an adverse psychological impact on us, on our mental setup. So, substance is any psychoactive compound which has the potential to cause health and social problems, including addiction. So, any psychoactive compound that can cause health problems and social problems as well, because there will be competent social problems as well.

And any psychoactive compound that has a potential to lead to addiction is a substance. And then substances may be legal, like alcohol and tobacco; may be illegal, like heroin and cocaine. And they can also be controlled for use by licenced, medical prescribers. Such as hydrocodone or oxycodone. They are basically painkillers that subside extreme or severe pain. So, a substance can be illegal, legal, and then a substance can be acceptable under certain medical prescriptions. So, this definition was given to us by Thomas McClellan psychologist.

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• Illicit drug users (2015): 246 million
• People suffering from drug use disorder (2019): 35 million
— Based on www.unodc.org figures

Image Source: Iconfinder Image Source: thenounproject

And then when we come to the real issue, the real problem, when we take a look at the globe, that we live in our world, which appears to be extremely beautiful, when we take a look at it, for the moment, we get to know that this world has been invaded or brutally by substance abuse, then we feel like there is a big problem, this big challenge right in front of us, which we need to negotiate, which we need to overcome if we have to survive and make this existence or life better.

So, these are some of the figures that will definitely force us to think about this problem seriously. The number of illicit drug users reported in 2015 stands at 246 million, that is a worldwide number of substance abusers or illicit drug users. And people suffering from drug use disorder or substance use disorder, the figure that we have from the 2019 survey stands at 35 million.

And all these figures are based on the UNODC, United Nations Office for Drugs and Crimes, UNODC figures. So, on the basis of these figures, we can say that substance abuse or drug abuse is rapidly turning out to be one of the biggest concerns for humanity. If we do not to wake up to this particular problem, if we do not devise ways to overcome this particular problem, then it will be extremely difficult for us to take care of ourselves and people around us.

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Substance Abuse

According to the WHO Expert Committee on Drug Dependence (1969) *substance abuse* is "persistent or sporadic excessive drug use inconsistent with or unrelated to acceptable medical practice"





Image Source: Iconfinder



So, it is very, very important that we get to know substance abuse extremely well, so that we understand the problem and then we can think of devising ways to overcome this problem. So, on the basis of WHO our Expert Committee definition, we can say that substance abuse is persistent or sporadic excessive drug use, which is inconsistent with or unrelated to acceptable medical practice.

So, any amount of drug that is not acceptable according to medical practice can cause huge physiological and psychological problems. So, therefore, it is very important that we, we understand, realize that there has to be a persistent or even sporadic but excessive use of drugs or any substance that is not medically acceptable.

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Substance Abuse

According to the DSM-5 of APA, substance use disorder (SUD) is the persistent use of drugs (including alcohol) despite substantial harm and adverse consequences

Image Source: Iconfinder

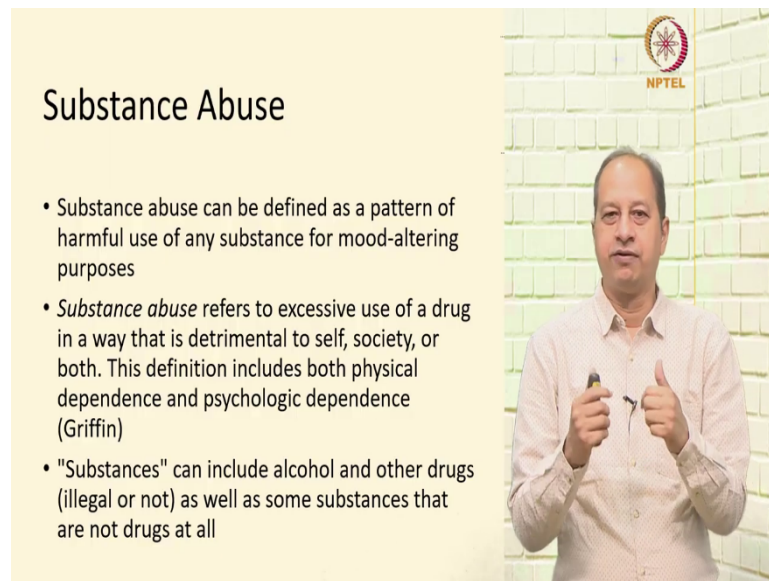
The slide features a yellow background. On the left, there is a blue rounded rectangle containing the definition of SUD. Below the text is a yellow icon of a hand holding a syringe. On the right, a man in a light-colored shirt is speaking, with an NPTEL logo in the top right corner of the slide area.

Then there is another definition given to us by the DSM-5, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association. That says that substance use disorder is the persistent use of drugs, including alcohol. So, DSM-5 says alcohol is a drug as well, despite substantial harm and adverse consequences.

So, despite somebody realising that it can cause substantial harm and adverse consequences to somebody's physiological and psychological setup, if such a person continues to use it persistently, or in an excessive manner that will lead to substance use disorder, or SUD. So, if we focus on these two very important definitions of substance abuse or substance use disorder, we find something very, very common between them.

The focus is on persistent use and excessive use. And there is also an emphasis on any type of use that is not medically acceptable. So, we need to understand that substance abuse leads to severe health conditions, both physical health and psychological health. And it finally alters our well-being conditions as well by severely now denting our well-being and our wellness. So, it is very important that we take care of substance abuse.

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The slide features a yellow background with the title "Substance Abuse" in bold black text. Below the title is a bulleted list of three definitions. To the right of the text is a video inset showing a man in a light-colored shirt speaking, with an NPTEL logo in the top right corner of the video frame.

Substance Abuse

- Substance abuse can be defined as a pattern of harmful use of any substance for mood-altering purposes
- *Substance abuse* refers to excessive use of a drug in a way that is detrimental to self, society, or both. This definition includes both physical dependence and psychologic dependence (Griffin)
- "Substances" can include alcohol and other drugs (illegal or not) as well as some substances that are not drugs at all

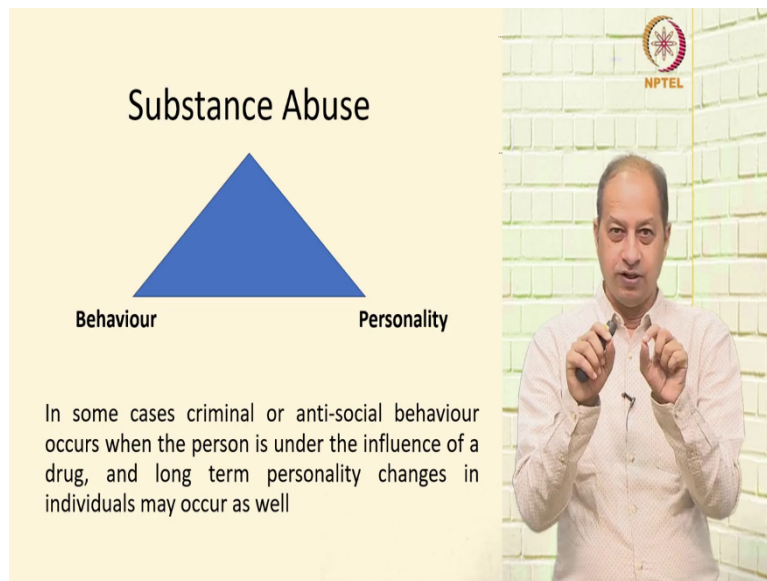
So, therefore, substance abuse can be defined as a pattern of harmful use of any substance for mood altering purposes. And this mood altering can go either way, either to lift the mood or to depress or to suppress disturbing mood. So, any amount of substance that is taken to alter our moods is an instance of substance abuse.

So, it becomes a pattern of harmful use, although it leads to actual alteration of moods, but it turns out to be extremely harmful for the users. So, substance abuse also refers to excessive use of a drug in a way that is detrimental to self, society or both. This definition includes both physical dependence and psychological dependence.

So, when a person becomes physically dependent or psychologically dependent on any drug, so that the person ends up using that particular drug excessively and thus posing a serious threat, or challenge to oneself and the society, then that is an instance of substance abuse. So, substances can include, as I have already told you, they can be illegal substances, legal substances, or medically acceptable substances.

A substance can include alcohol and other drugs, illegal or not, as well as some substances that are not drugs at all. For example, the solvents, there are synthetic drugs. So, there are a few such substances that are not treated as drugs at all, but if somebody uses them excessively, in a harmful manner, that can also be called substance abuse.

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Substance Abuse

Behaviour Personality

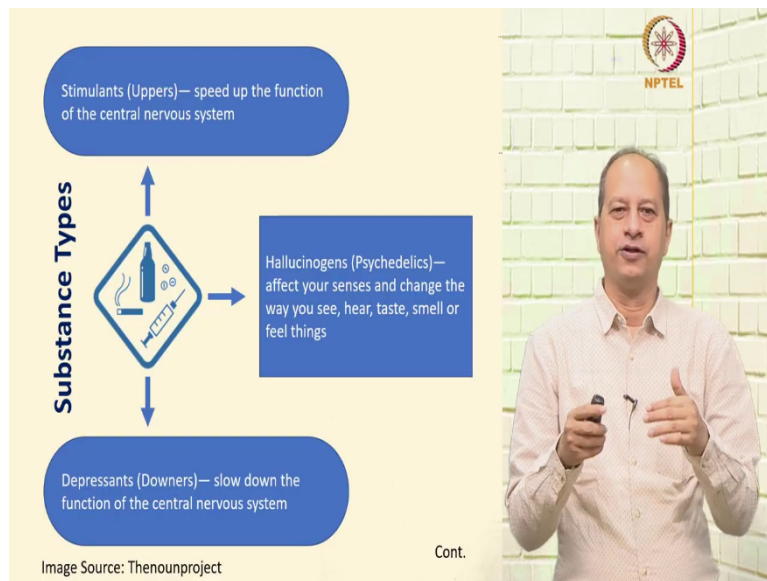
In some cases criminal or anti-social behaviour occurs when the person is under the influence of a drug, and long term personality changes in individuals may occur as well

NPTEL

So, when we look at the substance abuse, pyramidal structure, we get to see that substance abuse actually affects a person's behaviour and a person's personality as well. So, it is very, very important that we get to understand how somebody's behaviour is severely affected or influenced by substance abuse and how somebody's personality is also altered under the impact or influence of substance abuse.

So, there are several cases in which criminal or antisocial behaviour patterns are found among substance abusers. And then, whenever somebody is under the influence of drug such behavioural patterns generally surface or crop up, antisocial or even criminal behavioural patterns. And then when somebody is under the influence of drug for a prolonged period that will lead to personality changes in such persons. So, substance abuse seriously influences behaviour patterns and personality types. So, therefore, it is very, very important to us, so watch out for this particular effect or impact.

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Now, brings us to substance types, which we need to understand that substance or substances have been divided into various types. Starting with the first one that is stimulant, the first type that stimulants. They are also very popularly called, colloquially, in fact, called uppers. Because this speeds up the function of the central nervous system by speeding up the communication between the neurons, and the central nervous system.

Therefore, we call stimulants because it stimulates your condition, your mood, by speeding up this neural communication process. So, neuro receptors, neurotransmitters, they all are greatly activated, they are super activated, and there is an enhanced communication between or among these neurotransmitters, neurons, neuro receptors, and then the entire body feels stimulated. So, they are called stimulants.

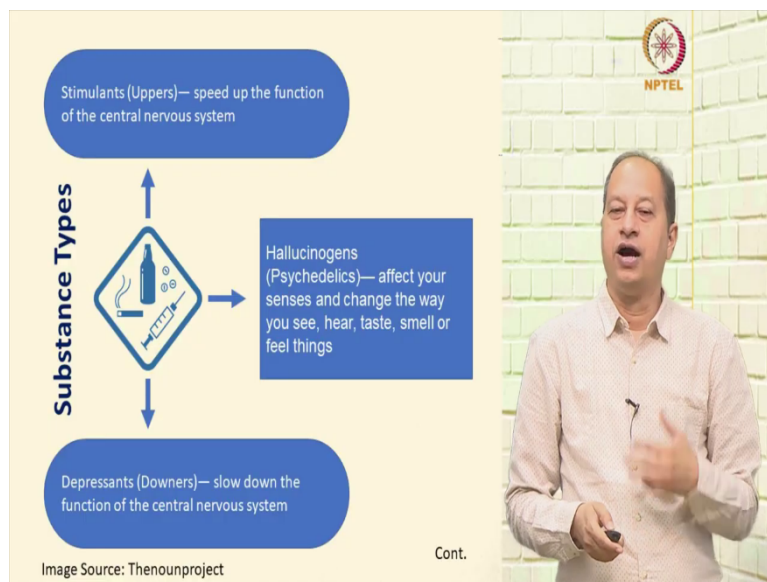
And then the second type that are called the depressants, they are popularly or colloquially called downers, downers, because this slow down the function of the central nervous system, unlike the stimulants, which up the function of the central nervous system, the depressants down the function of the central nervous system.

So, they exercise a sedative influence on the central nervous system, you feel drowsy, numb, and then the entire body comes to a resting position. Unlike the body that is restless, supercharged, super activated, under the impact of the stimulants, then there is a third one that are called Hallucinogens or Psychedelics, as they are very popularly referred to so this Hallucinogens affect our senses and change the way we see, hear, taste and smell, or even

feel things, they create of veneer of hallucination right in front of us, so that everything turns out to be unreal or hallucination.

And then or we are transported to a very different world, we do not even realize what is happening there. We sometimes move out of ourselves and we may be communicating with ourselves because we are under the impact of these Hallucinogens. So, these are the Hallucinogens. So, these are the 3 major substance types, there are other types as well. But for the sake of convenience, I have classified them into 3 categories or 3 types, the stimulants, the depressants and the hallucinogens.

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So, these types can further be explained as, for example, stimulants or stimulants as I told you, they speed up the messages between the brain and the body. A person begins to feel more awake, alert, confident and even overly energetic, so these drugs increase the user's level of alertness, pumping up the heart rate, the blood pressure, and the breathing and blood glucose levels also go up; so, that is the impact of the stimulants, everything is stimulated, the entire body is stimulated, the brain is stimulated. So, a person feels super confident and super active, supercharged, super energetic. There are a few very popular stimulants like caffeine, cocaine, ecstasy drugs like MDMA, nicotine and amphetamines.

So, out of these stimulants, nicotine and caffeine are very, very popularly used, the tea or the coffee that we all take they suddenly lift our mood, whenever we feel down, our mood can be

lifted by the cup of tea, that we sip or a cup of coffee that we sip. So, they are mood lifters, mood enhancer, because they are stimulants. So, these are the stimulants.

Then if we focus on the depressants, as you know, by now, they are called downers, because they bring the consciousness level down, the level of anxiety or stress down by exercising a numbing effect on the nervous system. So, the depressants slow down the messages between the brain and the body. Unlike the stimulants, which speed up the messages between the brain and the body.

So, the depressants do not necessarily make you feel depressed. So, the slow messages, in fact, affect a person's concentration and coordination. And then a person's ability to respond to what is happening around him or her. So, these drugs, in fact, offer a seductive experience to users making them tempting, a tempting choice for teens who wish to escape everyday stresses. So, escape, elusion or illusion?

So, there are a few common depressants, they are alcohol, cannabis and opioids. So, they are generally depressants which exercise a sedative impact or influence on the users. Well we come to the third type that is hallucinogens. These hallucinogens are generally I mean a class of psychoactive substances which change our sense of reality, they alter our sense of reality, so that we can have hallucinations, our senses are completely distorted, the way we see taste, smell and feel things turn out to be completely different. For example, I may see or hear things that are not at all there or I may also have unusual thoughts and feelings on the impact of these hallucinogens. So, a few examples of hallucinogens are cannabis, ketamine. LSD is a very popular hallucinogen. And then a few others sell well, or especially the magic mushrooms, or psilocybin, magic mushrooms. So, these are the different types of drugs or substances that leave a terrible impact on our consciousness levels, our behaviour patterns.

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Why Substances?

- To feel good
- To feel better
- To do better
- Subculture curiosity
("because others are doing it")

— Based on NIDA, NIH

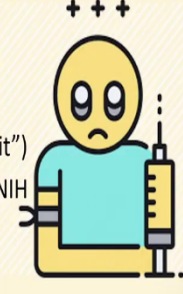
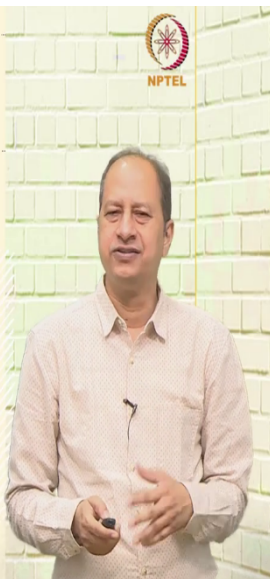


Image Source: Iconfinder



But the question is why substances? Most people say yes, people feel good, people help themselves overcome the attacks, the onslaughts of stress, anxiety, trauma, and depression. Therefore, there is nothing wrong with going for substances. And especially when people say that there are certain substances, there are certain types of substances that are medically prescribed.

So, there are several arguments in favour and against the use of substances. When we try to sum up these arguments, these popular arguments, we can list a few under this particular question, that is, why substances? The first is to feel good, we generally feel good under the impact of substances. That is why people say they use substances because they turn out to be mood enhancers, mood lifters, for example, the stimulants, they are mood lifters and mood enhancers, so that is the reason which people give in favour of their substance use, which ultimately turns into misuse and abuse as well, this is one.

And the second is to feel better, we feel better. Therefore, now we can take to substances for example, somebody is struggling with stress, so anxiety, which cannot be managed otherwise. Therefore, the person suddenly switches to some substance. And under the impact of that substance, the person is able to forget, the person enters a state of oblivion, forgetfulness, and then forgets the pain and suffering.

To do better, is also another major reason why people use substances. Because there are occasions when people come under tremendous pressure to perform in a certain situation, for example, athletes, cricketers, they have to perform, they have to excel their opponents so that

they can win, they can ensure victory for themselves, as a result of which they take those substances, to do better or to perform well. That is another reason.

And then this important thing, the subculture curiosity, the subculture curiosity, which is tremendously present among the teens, the youth, because they want to belong to the subconscious, so that they can identify themselves with those practices with those communities. As a result of which, most often, especially the teens and the young ones, they give into the enticement, the attraction of substances, the logic that is given for such practices is because others are doing it, and there is nothing wrong in doing that, everybody else is doing that.

So, you can give it a try and a variety of other things. So, all these assumptions are actually based on the National Institute on Drug Abuse of the National Institute of Health. So, to feel good, to feel better, to do better and to explore a subculture everyone else is using, so there is nothing wrong if I use it, so that tells us that when it comes to the feeling good component of substance abuse, or substance use, most abused drugs in fact, produce intense feelings of pleasure. And that is one big reason why people want to give it a try. They want to feel good, different substances like cocaine and other stimulants leave a tremendous lifting experience on the users.

So, the initial sensation of euphoria is followed by other effects as well, which actually differ with the type of drug being used. But it does lead to an initial response or sensation of euphoria. So, the pleasure level is so high, it goes up in such a manner that people think it is worth it. And that is one big reason why, in order to feel good people use substances.

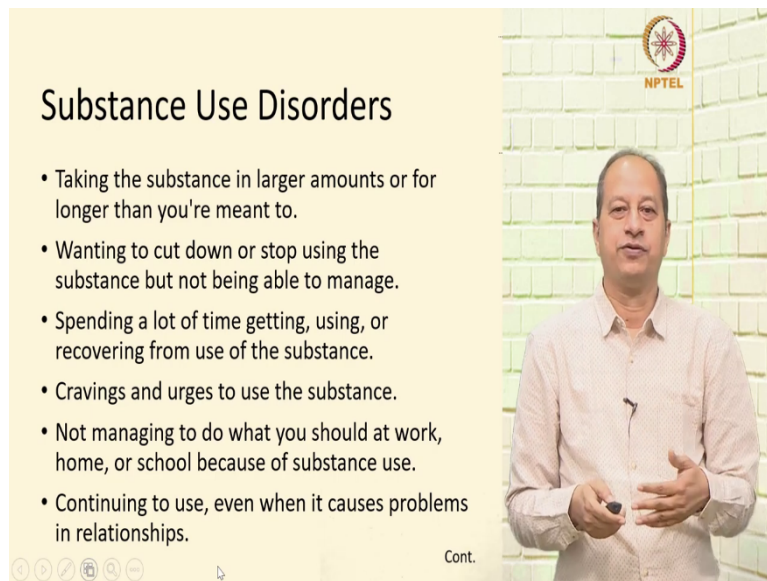
Then again in order to feel better as I said, there are many people who suffer from social anxiety and stress related disorders, depression and a variety of other problems or psychological problems. And when they use these substances that helps them minimize the onslaught of the pain and suffering, thereby helping them find relief, however temporary that relief may be, but they do find relief by using these substances.

And then, as I told you, there are people who want to do better, therefore, in order to improve their performance and their cognitive abilities as well, they take those substances, they want to chemically enhance their performance level. And that is one big reason why they take

those substances in order to do better. And then finally, the sub cultural curiosity and with that logic, piece of logic, because others are doing it.

So, adolescence and the youth are particularly vulnerable to this type of attitude, this type of motivation. So, because there are people who engage in risky and daring behaviours, to impress their friends and to express their independence from parental and social rules, people generally take to substances, because the subculture tells them, ask them to be rebels in their own riots. So, in order to rebel, in order to show or express their independence from parental or social controls, such people take to drugs. So, that is the motivation.

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Substance Use Disorders

- Taking the substance in larger amounts or for longer than you're meant to.
- Wanting to cut down or stop using the substance but not being able to manage.
- Spending a lot of time getting, using, or recovering from use of the substance.
- Cravings and urges to use the substance.
- Not managing to do what you should at work, home, or school because of substance use.
- Continuing to use, even when it causes problems in relationships.

Cont.

So, these are all the most important motivations. And then we come to the major substance use disorders. According to the DSM-5 of APA, these are some of the symptoms or the signs of substance use disorder. Taking the substance in large amounts, for longer than you are meant to, I have talked about it.

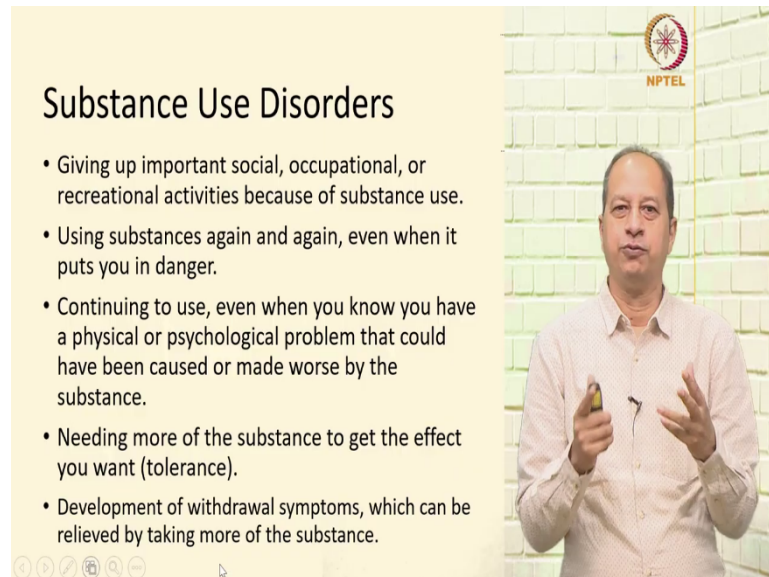
So, using substances excessively, or for a period that is longer than the prescribed limit or the prescribed period. And then, when somebody struggles with this particular desire to want to cut down or stop using the substance, but not being able to do so or manage that, then we know that is a substance use disorder, that means a person is experiencing SUD, all these are the symptoms, signs of SUD.

And then spending a lot of time getting used to or recovering from the use of a substance, that means the impact of the substance continues to be longer on somebody's body and mind. And then when somebody begins to crave and experiences urges to use substance, when substances become a craving, then that is an instance of SUD.

And then when somebody is not able to manage to do what one should do at work, home or even school or college, because of substance use, if somebody is not able to focus, concentrate, perform in their professional and personal lives, then that is also an instance of SUD. And then continuing to use even when it causes problems in relationships, when somebody begins to value substances over relationships, then you know, that the person has

become an addict, the person cannot live without substances. And therefore, the person is suffering from SUD.

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Substance Use Disorders

- Giving up important social, occupational, or recreational activities because of substance use.
- Using substances again and again, even when it puts you in danger.
- Continuing to use, even when you know you have a physical or psychological problem that could have been caused or made worse by the substance.
- Needing more of the substance to get the effect you want (tolerance).
- Development of withdrawal symptoms, which can be relieved by taking more of the substance.

There are a few other signs and symptoms, for example, giving up important social, occupational, or recreational activities because of substance use, that means you gradually withdraw from your public life, your social life, even personal life. So, you leave your work, you leave your social life and then you do not find the recreational activities enjoyable at all. That is an instance of substance use disorder.

And then using substances again, again, even when it puts you in danger, when somebody knows that the substance use can put somebody or does put somebody in danger, even then, if the person continues to use, that is an instance of SUD. And then continuing to use substances, even when you know, you have a physical or a psychological problem that could have been caused or made worse by the substance, and that is a very, very serious issue, if somebody is already struggling with some mental or psychological problems, or even physical problems.

And when a person takes to substances, under such circumstances, that can lead to some serious and devastating results. So, therefore, the person has to be aware has to realize that substances are a big no in such conditions, I mean they are a big no in all other conditions as well, but this can mean disaster for them. And then needing more of the substance to get the effect you want.


So, when people begin to use and continue to use substances, they become tolerant of those substances, they develop the tolerance level, that means they need to increase the dose, the amount in order to feel the impact of that substance on them, because they became, you know, (()) (36:45) to those users. So, in order to experience the impact, or the influence of such substances, they go on increasing the amount, and that leads them to some serious consequences.

And then finally, development of withdrawal symptoms, which can be relieved by taking more of the substance. So, once somebody becomes an addict, the addict begins to show withdrawal symptoms, because one cannot be under the impact of substance, all the while, the moment the impact of the substance disappears or vanishes and you begin to return to your senses, normalcy, that is the moment when somebody behaves like somebody is, you know, experiencing withdrawal symptoms.

If you remember, I talked about withdrawal symptoms while talking about heartbreak, so that is exactly what I was pointing towards, addicts show withdrawal symptoms, terrible withdrawal symptoms, because the moment they return to their senses, they begin to show withdrawal symptoms.

So, in order to take care of their withdrawal symptoms, they need to consume more of the substance in order to relief themselves of the onslaught of the withdrawal symptoms. So, these are some of the major indicators, symptoms of substance use disorder. So, if you take a look at the entire lecture, you can quickly recall that I talked about substances, substance abuse. I also showed some global figures to wake you up to the call of substance abuse. And then I also talked about different types of substance abuse or substances and then the major indicators of substance use disorders.

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That is all for this lecture. Thank you for joining me when I meet you next, with my next lecture on this particular issue. I will be talking about the other dimensions of substance use and substance abuse. Thank you for joining me.