ABOUT SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER
(formerly ABOUT DRUG ABUSE)

Not everyone who comes into this program is concerned about the use of drugs. However, in today's world, all of us need to confront this issue. Also, those with an emotional problem often turn to drugs in search of a solution to their difficulties.

We have learned that substance use disorder (drug abuse, drug dependence, or addiction) is a matter of **illness**, not a moral issue. For the purposes of this program, the label is not important.

Dependence on drugs can be psychological or physical—or both. The compulsive use of drugs or alcohol does not indicate a lack of affection for the family. Even when they **know** what will happen when they take that first pill, drink, or fix, drug-dependent persons may still do so. This is the "insanity" we speak of in regard to this illness.

Using drugs as a means of escaping reality is a symptom of emotional problems. However, little emotional growth is likely to take place until the individual stops using chemicals to try to solve his or her problems of living. Switching from one mind-altering substance to any other, including alcohol, is only likely to prolong the illness, not arrest the problem.

There is nothing that we as individuals can do to prevent another person's use of drugs, but we have learned that there is much we can do to avoid **standing in the way** of his or her recovery. We have found that the most constructive approach is to deal with our own reactions and to learn new ways of coping with **our** problems. When we accept substance use disorder as an illness and understand that there **is** something we can do to help both ourselves and the situation, we become ready to learn a better way to live.

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