

10 Signs You Are in Serious Denial

Addiction Help

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Published July 16, 2017

Addiction has been called the only prison with the locks on the inside.

And it's true – in order to have a fully successful recovery, an addict first needs to confront their reality and then overcome the reason for becoming addicted in the first place. In effect, substance abusers themselves are the key to their own recovery.

But getting to the point where true progress can be made requires full recognition that their substance abuse behaviors are an actual problem. Sadly, many individuals suffering from addiction will never get to this point and, thus, won't seek treatment for their problem at all.

Why do so few people choose the path of recovery when their drug habits are so destructive? In most cases, they don't admit to themselves that they even

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have a problem at all. As with most problems, then, denial is the first barrier to recovery.

Consequently, learning how to recognize the signs of denial is crucial in starting down the road to sobriety. That's why we've put together the list below of 10 signs that you might be in serious denial about your substance abuse problem.

1. You avoid talking about the issue

Have you ever noticed that when someone doesn't want to answer a question or admit to something, they tend to skirt around the issue? Maybe they change the subject or try to divert the conversation with humor. Or maybe they simply ignore it entirely.

No matter how you dodge the subject, a reluctance to face an issue head on, even in a simple conversation, is one of the leading signs that you might be in denial about your substance use disorder.

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2. You use other people's behaviors as evidence that you don't have a problem

A classic tactic for convincing yourself that you aren't addicted, pointing to how bad someone else's addiction has gotten does not mean you don't have a problem as well.

Contrary to popular belief many people struggling with addiction don't fit the profile of what a lot of people think an addict looks like.

3. You promise future control to ward off concern

If you are able to admit that your substance abuse behaviors are an actual problem, you may still be in denial if you make promises like "I'll get it under control soon" or "I'm working on cutting back," especially if these promises become a regular thing.

Whether you're just trying to get people to leave you alone or if you're simply trying to convince yourself, repeating this same excuse over and over without any progress is pointing to a problem.

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4. You deny a problem absolutely

“The lady doth protest too much, methinks.” We all know how common it is to overreact once someone strikes a nerve. And when conversation turns to your perceived substance abuse problem, if you immediately react with emotional defensiveness, your response might be a clue that you really do have an issue.

What’s more, when you outright deny behaviors that others have seen you engage in firsthand, it’s likely that you may be either consciously or subconsciously trying to cover up hints at destructive patterns of abuse.

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5. You rationalize your substance use

Rationalization is one of the most powerful techniques that individuals with substance abuse problems engage in. “I’ll just use this weekend because it’s a special occasion.” “I have a hard time sleeping if I don’t take the drug and I don’t want to be tired for work tomorrow.” “I’m unbelievably stressed right now and I need something to help me blow off steam.”

While all of these excuses make it much easier to justify abusing a substance, they can all be used to cover up extensive and long-lasting behaviors that point to a serious problem instead.

6. You blame others for your problem

Keeping in line with rationalization, blaming other people for your substance abuse behaviors is one of the most common excuses in the book. Whether its pointing towards your boss riding you too hard at work, your partner coming off too distant, or perhaps a parent with a history of substance abuse, you are ultimately in control of what you do.

And if you are consistently blaming others for you using, you’ve undoubtedly got a problem.

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7. You ignore the advice and concern of loved ones

One of the earliest signs of a substance use disorder is the growing concern of friends and family. While they may have engaged in enabling behaviors for a while, eventually they will say they've had enough and will confront you about your issue.

When that happens, listen to them. These people are close to you because they care about your well-being. If they tell you they're worried you may have a problem, it may be likely that you really do.

8. You have "stints" of sobriety

While you may point to being able to quit whenever you want as the main defense against being addicted, the fact that your sobriety only occurs for short periods is indicative of a problem.

Sure, you can stop using for a week or two, but seeing as you always go back to abusing the substance eventually, you're probably still addicted.

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9. You engage in manipulative recovery efforts

After some hard pressure from a family member or a friend, you've finally agreed to try to get your substance use disorder under control. And while the people you care about couldn't be happier, they don't really know that you're just going through the motions to get them off your back.

Agreeing to see a counselor is one thing, but if you find yourself reluctant to fully commit to a recovery effort, you probably haven't truly accepted that you have a problem.

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10. You consistently fall back on the “It’s my life!” defense

The final cry of someone in denial who’s run out of defenses, willingly and knowingly engaging in self-destructive behaviors simply because it’s your right to do so is one of the most obvious signs of a substance use disorder.

Now that you know about some of the most common signs of denial when it comes to a substance use disorder, you can learn to recognize this roadblock to recovery both in yourself and in others.

Once you’ve decided to get help for your problem and chosen a proper treatment option, you’ll finally be on the road to a happy and sober life.

Source:

National Institute on Drug Abuse (2014 July). Drugs, Brains, and Behavior: The Science of Addiction. Retrieved from <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugs-brains-behavior-science-addiction/drugs-brain>