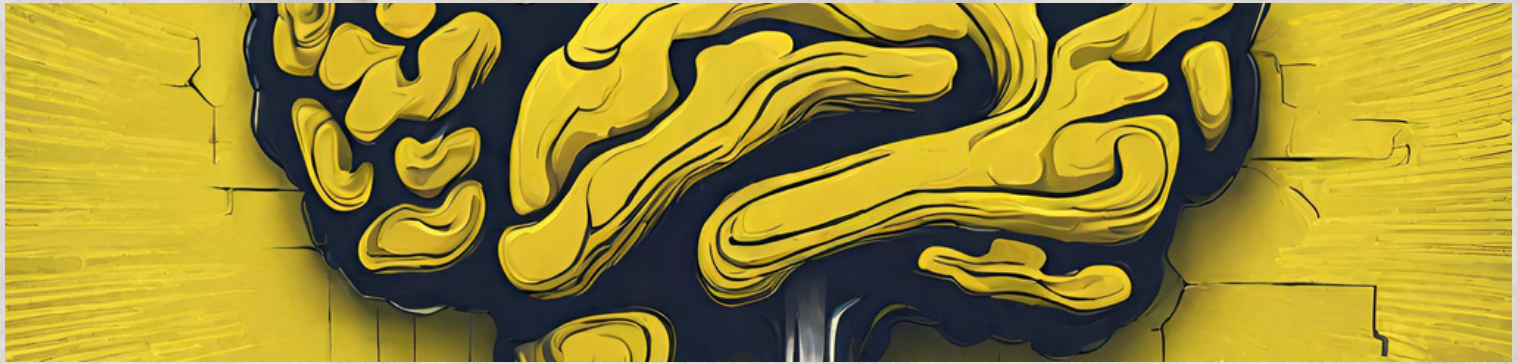


THE CHAINS



SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS

As a psychiatrist practicing in South Africa, I often find myself at the forefront of addressing substance use disorders, a pervasive issue with far-reaching consequences. It's imperative to shed light on the various facets of addiction, from illicit substances to legal drugs like alcohol and prescription medications, and to emphasize the importance of empathy and support in the treatment process.



DIAGNOSTIC CRITERIA



Substance use disorders are diagnosed based on eleven criteria assessed over a 12-month period. These criteria encompass a loss of control over substance use, increased consumption beyond intended amounts and increased time spent using and recovering, persistent craving, and neglect of social, occupational, or academic responsibilities. Interpersonal difficulties arise due to the latter failure to meet obligations. Individuals may also engage in risky behaviors while under the influence, disregard health concerns raised by healthcare professionals, and experience withdrawal symptoms upon cessation of use. Tolerance is defined as the need to use more of the substance to experience the desired effect, with usual amounts of the substance failing to produce such an effect.

DANGERS OF USE

Alcohol withdrawal poses significant dangers, including seizures and delirium tremens, making supervised detoxification essential. Similarly, resuming opioid use after a period of abstinence, where tolerance has decreased, can lead to overdose and respiratory depression.

Family support plays a crucial role in the recovery journey, offering understanding and encouragement to individuals grappling with addiction. It's vital to recognize that substance use disorders are rooted in neurobiology, and empathy is key to fostering a supportive environment for those affected.



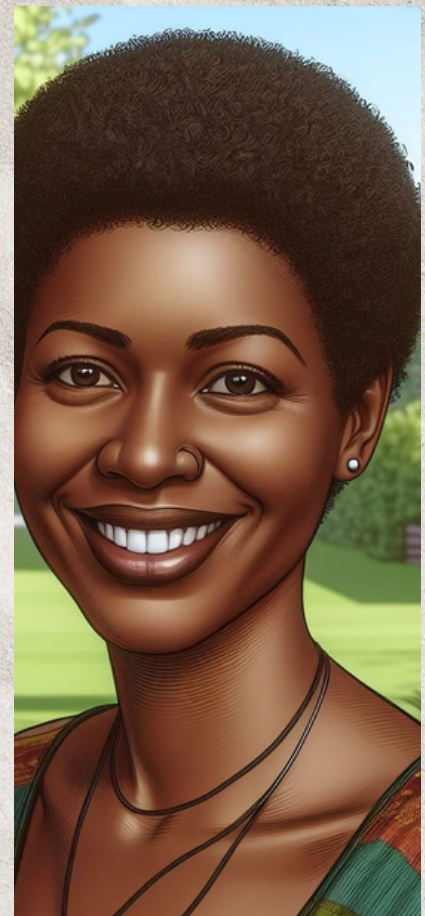
MENTAL ILLNESS

Psychiatric symptoms related to substance misuse can manifest in different ways, including intoxication, psychosis, and neurocognitive issues. Moreover, conditions like depression and personality disorders frequently accompany substance use disorders, making treatment more complex and highlighting the need for a comprehensive care approach. Addressing the prevalent use of cannabis among young people and individuals with mental health issues demands a strategic intervention.

RECOVERY IS POSSIBLE

Detoxification followed by participation in a rehabilitation program is often the first step towards recovery. Motivational interviewing techniques can be instrumental in guiding individuals through the contemplation and precontemplation stages of seeking help, fostering a sense of empowerment and autonomy in their recovery journey.

In conclusion, addressing substance use disorders requires a comprehensive understanding of the underlying factors contributing to addiction, as well as a compassionate and supportive approach to treatment. By recognizing the complexities of addiction and offering empathy and guidance, we can work towards healing individuals, families, and communities affected by substance misuse.



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