

Why it is so Challenging to quit Drugs on your Own

If you are [addicted to a drug](#), you have probably tried to quit "on your own," and also probably failed to do so.

Research shows that most [drug-dependent individuals](#) believe that can stop using on their own and they try to stop without outside help.

Although some may be successful in quitting without treatment or outside support, research shows the vast majority fail to achieve [long-term abstinence](#).

What those who have become addicted do not realize is their long-term drug use has actually made significant changes in their brain function which continue long after they quit using. Their use of drugs may have changed the [brain's reward system](#) so that they have a compulsion to continue to seek and use drugs even when it is their best intention to stop.

Cravings Continue Despite Consequences

The biological changes that have taken place in the brain due to drug use can produce an addiction, otherwise known as a pathological pursuit of rewards that causes the addict to continue to crave drugs in spite of negative consequences.

Also making it more difficult for someone to quit using drugs on their own is having to deal with a wide variety of [relapse triggers](#) that can come from stress from work or home, social encounters or even music, smells, people, places, things, and situations.

Difficult for Families to Understand

For many family members of addicts, the concept of addiction being [a brain disease](#) is hard to accept and difficult to understand.

They become frustrated and confused when they see the addict swear they will never use again and a short time later returns to their drug of choice.

They may be surprised to learn that the addict doesn't understand it either. The reward system in his brain has been so altered by his drug use that he continues to have cravings and a compulsion to use in spite of all the damage it has done to his life.

The Drug Is in Control

It may appear that the addict is simply continuing to make poor choices, but in a lot of ways, he really has no choices, because the drugs that he has been taking has [taken control of the reward centers of his brain](#).

That's why alcoholism and addiction have been referred to as "cunning, baffling and powerful." The addict is no longer in control. The drug is.

Even addicts with some abstinence time and the best intentions of staying clean have failed to do so by ignoring the [warning signs](#) leading up to a drug or alcohol relapse.

Fortunately, for those who are dependent on drugs and who want to quit, research also indicates that even the most severely addicted people can learn to live clean and sober if they actively participate in a treatment program.

By [Buddy T](#) - Reviewed by a [board-certified](#) physician. Updated April 18, 2017

