

## Substance abuse

Substance abuse is defined as the **overindulgence in and dependence** on an addictive substance, especially alcohol or drugs.

Abused substances produce some form of intoxication that alters judgment, perception, attention, or physical control.

Many substances can bring on **withdrawal**—an effect caused by cessation or reduction in the amount of the substance used. Withdrawal can range from mild anxiety to seizures and hallucinations.

Drug overdose may also cause death.

Your choices and the decisions you make about substance use can affect your academic performance, increase your chances of contracting a sexually transmitted infection or developing other acute or chronic physical problems, expose you to legal consequences, or jeopardize your enrollment at the University.

Any person can develop problems regarding substance abuse or dependence.

Knowing facts about drugs is important, but analyzing your attitudes and behaviours toward alcohol and drug use helps you in making careful decisions for yourself.

Change the World

**NELSON MANDELA**  
UNIVERSITY

### Enquiries

**Student Counselling, Career and Development  
Centre  
Nelson Mandela University**

<http://counselling.mandela.ac.za>

[counselling@mandela.ac.za](mailto:counselling@mandela.ac.za)



mandela.ac.za

# Substance abuse

## Self-assessment

Answer the following questions to assess yourself: All questions include the use of legal and illegal drugs:

1. Are you unable to stop drinking or dosing after a certain number of drinks/doses?
2. Do you need a drink/drug to get motivated?
3. Do you often forget what happened while you were partying (black outs)?
4. Do you drink or use drugs alone?
5. Have others annoyed you by questioning your drinking or drug use?
6. Have you been involved in fights while you were drunk or high?
7. Have you done or said anything while drinking or using drugs that you regretted?
8. Have you destroyed or damaged property while drinking or using drugs?
9. Do you drive while intoxicated or high?
10. Have you been physically hurt while under the influence of drugs or alcohol?
11. Have you been in trouble with University officials or the police?
12. Have you dropped or chosen friends based upon their drinking and/or drug habits?
13. Do you think you are a normal drinker/drug taker despite friends' comments that you drink or use drugs too much?
14. Have you ever missed classes or work because you were too hung-over to get up on time?
15. Have you ever done poorly on an exam or an assignment because of drinking or drug use?
16. Do you think because of drinking or getting high a lot?
17. Do your social activities involve drinking or the use of drugs in order for you to enjoy yourself?
18. Do you feel that drinking or drug use is affecting your ability to maintain healthy, intimate relationships with a significant other?
19. Do you feel that drinking or drug use is affecting your physical health on an ongoing basis, including insomnia, intestinal disturbances, mental processing, etc.?
20. Do you believe you need to drink or use a drug (other than those prescribed by a doctor) to function at work, home, or in social situations?

★ If you answered “yes” to one or more of these questions, or you are concerned about your use, you may be using alcohol or drugs in a way that is harmful. **It is advised to seek professional help.**

## Coping with someone close to you who has a substance abuse problem

**Accept that you are not responsible for the person's addiction**

You may have somehow got the idea that stopping the other person from drinking or taking drugs is **your responsibility**.

**Accept that you can't get the other person to stop** drinking/use drugs.

You are not responsible for his/her decision to continue drinking/using drugs.

Help the addicted individual to learn to take responsibility for their own behavior

**Don't cover up their mistakes, misdeeds/ negative consequences**

**Remain detached**

Don't participate in the others person's addiction

**Don't allow yourself to be abused or taken advantage of**

Don't let your anxiety make you do for the addict what he/she should do for himself/herself.

**Learn all of the facts about substance abuse/addiction and how it affects people and their families**

**Get support outside of the family/ relationship**

See a counsellor at Student Counselling or joining a support group

**Remember that you are emotionally involved with the addict in your family.**

Changing your own attitude towards the person and your approach to the problem can be helpful both to you and to the other person.

**Don't put off** facing the reality that substance abuse and addiction are **illnesses** that only get worse with time.

**You have a right to be happy in your life. Find the help that you need.**

## Ask for help

You don't have to be an alcoholic or addict to experience negative effects from the use of alcohol and/or drugs.

You might have developed an abusive pattern as a way of adjusting to the pressure of university life and/or you may actually experience a physiological as well as psychological addiction to the substance(s) of your choice.

As a result, you might need to learn to use the substance in a more controlled, more responsible manner, or you might benefit from becoming completely abstinent.

## ★ Please note

Student Counselling offers free counselling services to all Nelson Mandela University students who are seeking assistance with any personal and emotional, academic and study as well as career and employability concerns.

### Available Resources (Nelson Mandela University)

South Campus: **041 504 2511**

North Campus: **041 504 3222**

Missionvale Campus: **041 504 1106**

Second Avenue Campus: **041 504 3854**

George Campus: **044 801 5047**

In case of an emergency, please use the following numbers for assistance:

Protection Services: **041 504 2009 or 041 504 3483**

Suicide Emergency Line: **0800 567 567 or SMS 31393 for a call back**

Life Line: **0861 322 322** (Counselling available 24/7)

SA Anxiety Group 24-hour helpline: **0800 12 13 14**

**Note:** Student Counselling services are confidential, free of charge to registered Mandela students and offered by qualified counsellors and psychologists.