

... And All Other Mind Altering Substances

STEP ONE

*We admitted we were powerless over cocaine and **all other mind-altering substances...** that our lives had become unmanageable.*

What exactly does the "and all other mind-altering substances" part mean? I came to Cocaine Anonymous because cocaine had become a problem in my life.

We in Cocaine Anonymous, who have been around a while, hear this statement all the time from newcomers. If you read on, we will share with you how we learned that our real problem was not just cocaine or any specific drug; it was the disease of addiction.

Some of us never even used cocaine. There were other drugs that got us into trouble. Or, maybe it was the combination of cocaine, alcohol, marijuana, or heroin that had made our lives miserable. Cocaine Anonymous' [first step](#) is viewed by our Fellowship as a "blanket" first step. All types of drug users are welcome as long as they have the desire to stop using.

In our using days, we rode drug roller coasters. There were drugs to come down with, drugs to go up with, and drugs to mellow out with. In recovery, we had discovered, sometimes the hard way, through [relapse](#), that we could not control our use of any mind-altering substances. If our bodies were not absolutely drug-free, the compulsion to use was always lurking. We inevitably returned to our favorite drug, or went back to an old preference in chemicals. Whatever the drug, the problem of not being able to stop would resurface, usually stronger than before.

Here is an example: imagine that you have just run out of cocaine and cannot get any more. What would you use as its substitute? Alcohol? Speed? Heroin? The list could go on and on. It really wouldn't matter what you'd substitute for cocaine. The point is that you would soon find yourself unable to stop using and would be worrying about when you would run out of your replacement drug.

ALCOHOL

Alcohol is a mind-altering chemical in liquid form. Many people don't realize that it is no different from cocaine, marijuana, painkillers, or tranquilizers in its ability to lead to addiction. One drink is never enough, just as one hit, fix, pill or snort is never enough. We are masters at combining and substituting one drug for another to get high. Many of us never felt that alcohol was part of our problem. However, take away the drug of choice, substitute another, and eventually it becomes a problem drug.

PAINKILLERS

Our bodies and minds don't know the difference between drugs used for pain relief and drugs used for pleasure. It is wise to inform each of your physicians, from your dentist to your orthopedic surgeon, from your psychiatrist to your medical doctor, that you are a recovering addict. They might already know, especially if you have abused prescription drugs. Informing your doctors is suggested because they should keep this in mind before prescribing anything that could threaten your recovery.

Sometimes, the use of painkillers is necessary if you are suffering physically. Don't be alone with your worst enemy. We are people who like drugs -- a lot! The drugs can talk to you and soon have you convinced that you need them more frequently than prescribed. Another recovering addict to talk to, an informed prescribing physician, and medication dispensed by someone other than yourself can be helpful in preventing abuse.

TRANQUILIZERS, ANTI-DEPRESSANTS AND OTHER PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

In sobriety we begin to experience feelings that have been buried deep within ourselves. Sometimes these feelings seem to surface all at once. Follow the advice of a physician who is aware that you are a recovering addict if it comes to the need to use tranquilizers, antidepressants, or other prescription drugs.

Abruptly stopping the use of such drugs can be dangerous and even deadly if not done under the guidance of an informed physician.

OVER THE COUNTER AND COMMONLY USED LEGAL DRUGS

Over-the-counter and legal drugs, such as cough syrup that contain alcohol and/or codeine, diet pills that act like speed, and antihistamines that cause drowsiness and can be abused to induce sleep, can be just as addicting as street drugs. We suggest that you become a label reader. There are many more products on the market that contain mind-altering chemicals that can be dangerous to an addict who has the potential to abuse just about anything.

In summary, we suggest that you ask your doctor or pharmacist if you have any questions that are unanswered. Be honest with your sponsor about what drugs you take or are prescribed to you. Uninformed addicts are a danger to themselves.

When you realize that you no longer need drugs to come down, go up, or maintain, you have experienced one of the many joys and freedoms of recovery. You have stopped using and have started to live.