



Drug Use and Violence

People who have difficulty controlling their anger while sober are more likely to engage in violent behavior when under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Drinking and using drugs can lower inhibitions and result in risky behavior. A person with unreleased rage may become angry and violent when intoxicated. These individuals are sometimes referred to as a "mean drunk."

While most drug and alcohol use occurs among people who are not violent, many drug users do have a violent past and are often referred to mandatory drug treatment by court systems after committing violence-related crimes. If more people would voluntarily seek treatment for their anger issues and learn how to deal with anger in better ways, the level of drug- and alcohol-related violence could be decreased.

Suicide, Substance Abuse, and Violence

Suicide is also a violence-related behavior that sometimes occurs after substance abuse takes place. Suicide is violence against one's self, and substance abuse is the number two risk factor for suicide.

Drug addicts and alcoholics with past histories of aggressive behavior are more likely to report suicidal thoughts or past suicide attempts.

Often, people with past suicide attempts have experienced an inability to control their anger at themselves and others. Individuals who cannot control their rage are more likely to act on impulse and

become violent. When this type of person uses drugs or alcohol, the situation worsens, and self-directed violence (suicide attempts or suicide) or harm to others is more likely to take place.

There is a great deal of empirical literature and research studies that link drug and alcohol abuse to suicide. There are also a large number of reports on the link between opioid abuse, intravenous drug use, and self-directed violence.

Of course, there is far more to the root causes of violent behavior than just drug and alcohol abuse, but substance abuse has been proven to play a significant role as a precursor to violent acts like suicide and suicide attempts.

In one study of more than 6,000 people in treatment for addiction, those who had committed acts of serious violence like rape, murder, or assault were more than 50% likely to report multiple suicide attempts.

Drug Abuse and Domestic Violence

Drug and alcohol abuse also often results in domestic violence. Violence against one's spouse while intoxicated is a widespread problem. And it is not just hitting, beating, punching, or slapping a family member. Domestic violence also includes sexual abuse, rape, molestation, and treating a partner or other family member in an emotionally abusive and demeaning way. It can include attacking a family member's self-worth, being controlling, blackmailing, bullying, threatening to harm children, and abusing pets.

Many studies have identified substance abuse as a factor in as much as 60% of domestic violence cases.

Victims at Higher Risk of Addiction

Sadly, victims of drug- and alcohol-induced violence become substance abusers themselves. As a result of the abuse, these victims are at a higher risk of developing mental health problems and trying to self-medicate to deal with the emotional pain. More than 50% of victims of partner violence are diagnosed with a psychological or mental health disorder, and these victims are 70% more likely to abuse alcohol or other drugs.

Victims of intimidation and violence—whether it be a spouse who is being abused, or an employee who is being bullied by a substance-abusing boss or coworker—are sometimes driven to using drugs or alcohol themselves to try to cope with the physical, psychological, and emotional trauma of the pain.

So many people suffer from the abuse of drug addicts and alcoholics that some have called for stronger drug and alcohol consumption-related serious crime laws to increase punishment of offenders.

The Silent Victims

One group of victims, however, is often unable to speak out. Children of domestic violence have difficulty understanding—and therefore are not able to talk about—what is being done to them by an abusive drug- or alcohol-impaired parent. And the younger the child, the more vulnerable and defenseless the victim becomes. The pain, stress, and anxiety brought on by a substance-abusing parent can have a life-long effect on a child's mind and life.

The brains of children who experience a violent attack or witness violence against another family member at the hands of a drug addicted parent are formed differently than children who are not subjected to such violence.

Kids who were the victims of drunken parental violence often grow up into teenagers, then adults, who continue the cycle of drug addiction and alcoholism.

Highway Violence

Yet another form of drug/alcohol-fueled violence is drunk and drugged driving that results in death, injury, and disability for innocent victims. More than one million people are arrested in the U.S. annually for driving under the influence.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) at https://www.cdc.gov/motorvehicle/safety/impaired_driving/impaired-driv_factsheet.html reports that 28% of traffic deaths are due to one or more drivers being drunk at the time of the crash.

Conclusion

Drug- and alcohol-related violence damages millions of lives and places enormous burdens on families, businesses, and communities. The result of this type of violence is devastating and long-lasting. A long-term, broad strategic approach is needed to prevent drug- and alcohol-related violence and protect innocent victims from harm.