

Withdrawal

Withdrawal - not as bad as you think?

How hard is it to withdraw?

Withdrawal from using drugs, especially 'hard' ones like 'crack' or heroin, is frequently believed to be more difficult than it actually can be. Whilst quick withdrawal from certain drugs (alcohol, barbiturates and tranquillisers) can be dangerous, withdrawal from heroin may be comparable to a nasty bout of flu. Undesirable, but hardly life threatening.

The exaggeration of the difficulty of withdrawal is based partly on the exaggerated power of certain drugs to 'enslave' the individual. One of the problematic outcomes of this belief is that users themselves may not attempt to stop using because they feel that it is unachievable.

Of course it is true that withdrawal from use is just the start of the 'battle' against dependence - the much harder battles still to come - but portrayals by the media consistently exaggerate the drug's influence over individuals who relapse. Relapses are normally the result of various factors in the life of an ex-user, combined of course with availability of the drug. It is not credible to explain relapse in terms of 'drugs luring people back in' or any other such simplistic way.

References

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Plant, M. (1987) *Drugs in Perspective*, London, Hodder and Stoughton.

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