Ecstasy Abuse
(MDMA, Methalenedioxymethamphetamine)

Ecstasy has been around for more than eighty years but recently achieved popularity as a “recreational drug”. Ecstasy is taken by oral ingestion. Although teen use of most drugs has declined in the past ten years, the use of ecstasy or “e” has gone up. The use of ecstacy affects the brain by increasing the release of *serotonin* in the brain. This is the "feel good" neurotransmitter between nerves. Prozac, a modern mind altering medication used in medicine, also causes serotonin levels to rise, but does so in a safer and controlled manner. Studies done on people who have used ecstasy show poorer performance on memory tests, and computer images show that there are fewer serotonin receptors in ecstasy users, which may have irreversible consequences. Much of the ecstasy on the market is impure. A number of people taking this medication die of *adulterants* (contaminants) purposely added which raise the body temperature to a fatal level (*hyperthermia*). The use of ecstasy is also followed by a “crash”. The crash is associated with depressed feelings, which cause a craving for the drug to regain the high or feeling of normalcy.

WHEN IS DRUG USE A PROBLEM?

Anytime drug use is interfering with normal living activities it has become abuse. This includes problems with family and friends. Psychological dependence has developed when your mind tells you that the drug is needed. Street drugs are filled with impurities which can cause serious problems or even death.

If you have signs of chemical dependency or addiction, you should seek help immediately. There are many resources available to help combat alcoholism and chemical dependency.

SOME OF THE SIGNS OF CHEMICAL DEPENDENCY ARE LISTED BELOW:

- You have been told by friends or family that drugs have become a problem.
- Changes in mood or behavior when using drugs.
- Having *blackouts* (not remembering what you do while using).
- Lying about use or amounts of drugs (chemicals) used.
- You feel that you need the drug to "get going" or function normally.
- You suffer in work performance or school because of drug use.
- Using drugs makes you ill but you continue to use anyway.
- You feel you need drugs to relate to people or feel comfortable in social situations.
- You use drugs to escape from problems.

If you answered "yes" to any of the above signs of chemical dependency it indicates you have a problem. The **longer the use** of drugs continues, the **greater the problems** will become. If there is a family history of drug or alcohol abuse it is even more **important not to experiment** with drugs. Drug dependence definitely follows patterns of inheritance.

HOW TO STAY DRUG FREE ONCE YOU HAVE QUIT USING

- Develop healthy activities and form friends who do not use drugs.
- Stay away from the drug scene.
- Continue to utilize any and all outside resources to help you avoid continued or future drug us and dependency.
- Develop a strong support system of friends or family who will help you avoid future drug use.

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