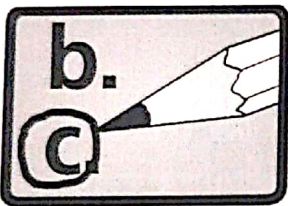


One technique you can use to help a worrier is to show that you truly understand how he or she feels. Expressing empathy is more honestly supportive than the false reassurance we usually dispense unthinkingly, namely: "Don't worry, everything will turn out okay."

Are You Addiction Prone?

Take three ordinary people: Judy is an efficient housewife, Cheryl is a college honors student, and Jim, a successful businessman. But look closer: Judy is a chain smoker, Cheryl downs twelve cups of coffee a day, and Jim drinks three martinis at every lunch. These "everyday people" are substance abusers, and there are many others like them.

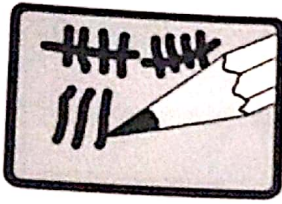
In the United States, 13 million people drink too much alcohol, and more than 2 million people abuse drugs like Valium. Millions more overeat, smoke excessively, or overindulge in chocolate and soft drinks. Strictly speaking, although Judy, Cheryl, and Jim are not addicts, they do share some personality traits with those who are.



TEST

If you consistently crave something—even something as seemingly benign as nuts or pastries—and you wonder if you might have any of the traits of a full-blown substance abuser, the following quiz might tell you.

1. I perspire easily.
True False
2. I enjoy reading newspaper crime stories.
True False
3. I take more risks than most of my friends do.
True False
4. I often satisfy my craving for excitement by doing something impulsive.
True False
5. I was a discipline problem at school.
True False
6. I suffer from bouts of depression.
True False
7. When under stress, I tend to get headaches, diarrhea, or stomachaches.
True False
8. I get restless and am easily bored.
True False
9. I enjoy big noisy parties.
True False
10. I often stole things as a child.
True False



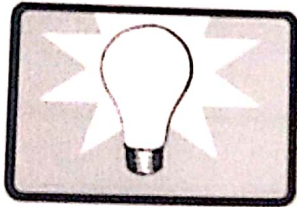
SCORING

Give yourself 1 point for each "True" response.

A score of 0–4 points: Your potential for addiction is very low. You possess few to none of the personality traits associated with addictive behavior.

A score of 5–7 points: Most people score in this range. You have some of the predisposing factors for addiction, but aren't likely to have any serious problems with it.

A score of 8–10 points: You exhibit many of the same traits associated with people who have problems with addiction. Be aware of your behaviors now, and seek out help if you notice any of your habits growing into full-time fixations.



EXPLANATION

The search to identify the personality traits that predict substance abuse has been a long one. But such types have certain traits in common, such as a high level of inner tension, excitement when doing or hearing about daring exploits, a propensity for taking risks, and an opposition to authority. Such high-risk types also share a history of mood swings, a tendency to manifest physical symptoms in relation to stress, and a feeling of generalized boredom with the ordinariness of everyday life.

The quiz is based on the findings of John Graham and Gloria Leon, whose work at Kent State University, in Ohio, and the University of Minnesota, respectively, spearheaded research to identify substance abusers. They studied thousands of substance-dependent personalities and found that they could identify about 79 percent of such types from a group of several thousand subjects. One of Leon's studies of a large freshman group identified with 85 percent accuracy students who became alcoholics thirteen years later.

Substance abusers are orally fixated and relieve their frustration through activities of the mouth like eating, smoking, and drinking (usually alcohol). This oral fixation is a prime trait of the addictive person, and is not found significantly in other people. Why some people under stress develop addictions instead of other symptoms, like compulsive hand washing or a physical tick, is unknown. Symptom selection can even vary within the same person who, at one time of stress may develop a headache or a stammer, and at another times, an addiction.