

5 MYTHS ABOUT DRUG ABUSE AND ADDICTION

(based on reports from National Institute of Drug Abuse - www.drugabuse.gov)

- **MYTH 1: Overcoming addiction is a simply a matter of willpower. You can stop using drugs if you really want to.** Prolonged exposure to drugs alters the brain in ways that result in powerful cravings and a compulsion to use. These brain changes make it extremely difficult to quit by sheer force of will.
- **MYTH 2: Addiction is a disease; there's nothing you can do about it.** Most experts agree that addiction is a brain disease, but that doesn't mean you're a helpless victim. The brain changes associated with addiction can be treated and reversed through therapy, medication, exercise, and other treatments.
- **MYTH 3: Addicts have to hit rock bottom before they can get better.** Recovery can begin at any point in the addiction process—and the earlier, the better. The longer drug abuse continues, the stronger the addiction becomes and the harder it is to treat. Don't wait to intervene until the addict has lost it all.
- **MYTH 4: You can't force someone into treatment; they have to want help.** Treatment doesn't have to be voluntary to be successful. People who are pressured into treatment by their family, employer, or the legal system are just as likely to benefit as those who choose to enter treatment on their own. As they sober up and their thinking clears, many formerly resistant addicts decide they want to change.
- **MYTH 5: Treatment didn't work before, so there's no point trying again.** Recovery from drug addiction is a long process that often involves setbacks. Relapse doesn't mean that treatment has failed or that you're a lost cause. Rather, it's a signal to get back on track, either by going back to treatment or adjusting the treatment approach.