

The Use/Abuse/Dependency Continuum

1. **Experimental use** is short-term, non-patterned, and usually motivated by curiosity.
2. **Recreational use** occurs in social settings among friends/acquaintances who desire to share an experience. Generally, it is patterned. It usually does not escalate to more frequent or intensive use patterns.
3. **Intentional use** arises from an individual's need or desire to achieve altered mood or thought processes.
4. **Intensified use** is the stage at which use becomes more frequent and tolerance and other symptoms of dependency may emerge. Evidence that "use" is turning to "abuse" begins to appear.
5. **Compulsive use** is a pattern of high frequency and high intensity use, characterized by a high degree of psychological—and sometimes physical—dependence. The chemical use dominates the person's existence and preoccupation with use precludes normal functioning.