

The Effects of Drug Rehabilitation

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Did you know that 68% of drug users are rearrested within the first three years of release from prison (Belenko, 2013)? At first glance, sending drug users to prisons and jails seems like a good idea since it keeps their harmful behavior away from the general population while teaching them that their actions have consequences. However, many people do not stop to fully examine how imprisonment truly affects people and many do not realize how much incarceration worsens an individual's behavior...including their substance use disorder. To fully understand the benefits rehabilitation has on drug users, we should look into how rehab affects recidivism, the impact it has on an individual's motivation, and how it improves their cognitive distortions.

The rate of recidivism, which is defined as an individual's relapse into criminal behavior, is often mentioned when discussing the impact rehabilitation has on society and is an important factor when it comes to the four approaches to crime (*Recidivism*, 2021). A study examining the recidivism rates of 50 participants in the Midwest finds that successful completion of drug courts correlated with the decreases in misdemeanor and felony offending. Many drug programs reported reductions in recidivism with "the average reduction across jurisdictions approximately 14% to 26%" (Wadkins, 2021). Although it may not appear to be such a big accomplishment to some, it is a far better result compared to the 76.9 percent rate of recidivism after five years for those who were released from prison (Wadkins, 2021). Those who receive rehabilitation for their substance use disorders are able to return to society in a better condition since they are assisted during their journey in improving themselves. The exit opportunities they are provided give them a chance to leave with skills that will increase their chances of obtaining a job/career and interacting with others who will be able to support them (Sung, 2003). That benefit is frequently unavailable when placed behind bars and drug users are left alone to deal with their actions. A

lack of guidance negatively affects a drug user's ability to recover and even leads to deterioration once they are released, which introduces the importance of motivation.

Motivation has been shown to play a part in one's recovery journey and is often improved during drug rehabilitation. A study conducted in Malaysia by the Faculty of Educational Studies separated 66 residents into two groups and examined the achievement motivation of a group who received rehabilitation while the other did not (Ahmad, 2010). An individual's achievement motivation, which is their desire to achieve a goal, can be used to determine how likely they are to work on themselves and deter away from future misuse. It was discovered that the group who received treatment gained a better understanding of motivation and its importance in thriving in their environments. Results have also shown that there was a "significant difference between the pre- and post-test measures of motivation achievement in the experimental group" (Ahmad, 2010), which signified the effectiveness of the treatment. Rehabilitation proves to be crucial in getting individuals to take the first step in their difficult yet rewarding process in achieving success despite their situation. Additionally, rehabilitation is seen to increase a person's self-confidence and help them gain a more positive view about their future (Ahmed, 2010). As minor as some may view it, self-confidence can really help a user gain the motivation needed to successfully complete a treatment and develop a positive view on their future.

Unknown to some, rehabilitation also plays a part in the improvement of a user's cognitive distortion, which can encourage them to work towards their integration back into society. Cognitive distortion refers to "the unusual beliefs about self such as self-blame, self-criticism, helplessness, and hopelessness" (Zamani, 2014). In many cases, frequent drug misuse usually leads to individuals losing confidence in themselves and feeling that they can only get

worse in their condition. Although it can be challenging and exhausting at times, rehabilitation has been seen to have an impact on a user's ability to deal with difficulties in life and improve their view on themselves (Zamani, 2014). Unlike the little to no treatment individuals are given in prisons, rehabilitation focuses on a person's mental health and implements various plans to help them cope with their situation. Through these strategies drug users are able to learn how to manage during challenging times and develop new perspectives, which guides them away from drug misuse in the future.

Rehabilitation provides a better option for drug users rather than imprisonment due to its ability to decrease recidivism rate, the positive impact it has on a person's motivation, and its guidance in improving their cognitive distortions. Despite its many positives and the benefit it has on society as a whole, opponents believe it is too costly and think it is not worth spending so much on those who have broken the law. But wouldn't you prefer if these individuals returned to society without being a threat to others and themselves, instead of potentially harming another as a result of receiving little to no help in prison? Without treatment, they are less likely to fully understand the impact of their actions and return to drug misuse, which can result in costs much higher than the cost of rehabilitation.

Although there has been gradual support in rehabilitation for drug use over the years, many are still being locked up for minor offenses and are not receiving the help they need. We must continue to show our support for rehabilitation programs and push for legislations that embraces and provides additional funding towards them. Send a letter to your state governor and let them know that those who are sentenced or about to be sentenced for drug misuse should be treated, not placed behind bars. Not only does rehabilitation benefit the individual, but also benefits society as a whole as it contributes in making the country a better and safer place.

Citations

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