

# ADDICTION AND MENTAL HEALTH

Two-thirds of uninsured adults with OUD reported mental illness in the past year.



Addiction and mental health disorders frequently happen in people at the same time. It can be difficult to know whether a mental health condition caused the addiction, if the addiction caused the mental health problem, or if they just occurred together by coincidence. All these things are possible.

Many people started using or kept using because they had an unpleasant feeling. These feelings can be normal, everyday things like boredom, loneliness, or anger. People discover quickly that using powerful drugs can erase these negative feelings. Over time, they become so used to coping through drugs that they forget any normal and healthy way to cope. Eventually, the negative feelings can feel so unfamiliar and unpleasant that drug use seems like the only way to feel better. Treatment can help you rediscover, or maybe discover for the first time, healthy ways to cope with negative feelings.

Sometimes, however, negative feelings can be severe enough that they are evidence of a mental health problem. People with mental health problems sometimes use drugs to make their symptoms temporarily go away. One thing you'll learn in treatment, however, is that drugs almost always make these problems worse in the long run. Also, psychiatric medications don't work very well in the brain when alcohol and opioids are there at the same time.

During your assessment, your BHG counselor will screen for any mental health problems. Maybe you already know you have some, and if you do make sure to tell your counselor. One of the ways treatment can help you is by connecting you to the mental health professionals who can treat these conditions. Recovering from addiction is hard enough without trying to do so with a mental health condition. Research has shown that people do best when their addiction and their mental health issues are addressed at the same time.