

The Mind Guide – Substance

Will: Hello and welcome back to The Mind Guide, I'm Will Dell.

The Mind Guide is all about mental health and wellbeing, it's produced to co-inside with mental health and wellbeing awareness week here at the University of Chester, there's a new episode every day this week. Just a heads up, there's some stuff in the podcast that some listeners might find upsetting, so if that's you or if you've got kids in the room, you might want to sit this one out.

Today we're looking at substances, how they can affect us and how we can identify and approach someone who might be misusing substances.

We'll be talking to Dr Phil Cooper who was awarded an MBE in 2017 for services to nursing.

In every episode, we invite you to take part in 60 seconds of meditation. That's 0.06 percent of your day to look after your mental wellbeing. All that and more to come on This episode of The Mind Guide.

Phil: My name's doctor Phil Cooper MBE I'm a nurse consultant in mental health and substance misuse, at the North West boroughs healthcare NHS foundation trust.

Will: What is the definition of substance misuse? What are we talking about when we're talking about that?

Phil: Okay well, substance misuse can be a couple of things really, it's a generalised term, however it usually means people either using at hazardous levels, harmful levels or dependant levels. So if you're thinking about alcohol that's the sort of spectrum you're looking at with alcohol or any other substance.

Will: What kind of things should we be looking out for if we're concerned about a peer, whether that's a friend a family member or a colleague?

Phil: I mean again there's a wide range of substances that are out there that people are using currently, the most common substances used in the UK are usually tobacco, alcohol,

cannabis and stimulant drugs such as amphetamines or cocaine. However, you also have a range of other synthetic drugs, used to be known as legal highs, You've got cannabinoids and synthetic stimulants. You're looking at perhaps behaviour changes in people. So are they the same sort of person they were before, has something changed, are they the same sort of bright individual, having a crack or whichever with people. Or are they becoming more withdrawn, are they struggling with money or just not getting to lectures, there's a whole range of different things that people might sort of notice as a first point.

Will: And then how would you advice that maybe we approach somebody to start having that conversation with somebody who we might be concerned about?

Phil: Yeah, most approaches in substance misuse are around using a motivational approach, so what you want to do is get people to see there might be an issue themselves really. Lots of people can say, you're doing something really wrong, and stuff like that however that approach tends to never be too successful. So it's just asking the question really, ask people if they're using anything in particular, if they are what's the good bits what's the not so good, any concerns about using it. What that will then do is prompt the person to start thinking about their own reasons for using and any sort of concerns they do have, rather than me saying this is really really bad, that type of scenario.

Will: What kind of help is out there for people who are using substances at a harmful level, what's kind of, the process to help them through that.

Phil: Most substance misuse services, certainly Pathways which is based in Warrington is 01925 415176 – they cover both alcohol and drug services in the Warrington area and it will be replicated in most other areas. Usually what happens is you contact them, they will arrange for you to be seen pretty much the next day or within the next couple of days and then based on what happens then they will work out an assessment and a plan, what's the best way to support people depending on which substance and where they're up to with what they're using. People who have severe mental health problems tend to use substances much more than the general population, and people who actually access substance misuse treatment usually have clinical anxiety, depression or other issues that might have been there bubbling around for a long time. People may have been using whatever substance to try and help manage those situations to some degree, so again it's been alert to seeing if people have - you know people and you know them relatively well to see if they've changed, just looking for those changes that if you know someone relatively well – just asking people if

they're okay, if they've got any problems that are on their mind, they're the kind of things that I'd be thinking about. Listen, listening's a good thing to do.

Will: Dr Phil Cooper thanks so much for your time today.

Phil: No problem at all, thank you.

Will: In every episode of The Mind Guide we invite you to join in with 60 seconds of meditation, that's 0.06 percent of your day to look after your mental wellbeing, you can do it at home, in the office, on the train or wherever you're listening to this episode. Today's meditation comes with the sounds of summer rain. So, sit back and get comfortable, close your eyes and take some deep breaths in and out.

The Mind Guide, is produced by me, Will Dell for The Cat Radio, for more visit thecatradio.co.uk.

If anything in this podcast has affected you, you can find local support and services by accessing the Hub of Hope website and simply typing in your postcode; this will provide you with all local support, that's hubofhope.co.uk, you can also access support or treatment via the NHS by visiting your GP or local A&E service.

Thanks to Dr Phil Cooper for appearing on the show.

Michelle Ponting is our executive producer

Cat Warren is the script supervisor

and Dean McShane is our mental health adviser

Join us tomorrow for episode three – Mindfulness, and why not share the podcast with a friend?

