

# *The Importance of* **True Dual Diagnosis Treatment**

People struggling with addiction often suffer from co-occurring mental health disorders such as depression, bipolar disorder, PTSD, schizophrenia, anxiety disorders, and personality disorders. Accessing true dual diagnosis treatment that addresses both addiction and mental illness concurrently is critical to recovery and the establishment of psychological wellness.

## *The Prevalence and Implications of Co-Occurrence*

Addiction and mental health disorders co-occur at staggering rates; it is estimated that at least 30% of people struggling with addiction also have a mental illness, and for some diagnoses the rate reaches well over 50%. The causes for this are complex and multiple, and include:

- People with mental illness are more likely to self-medicate with alcohol or drugs to escape the pain of psychological suffering.
- Alcohol and drugs can trigger underlying predisposition for mental illness.
- Substance abuse can augment symptoms of mental illness as well as cause new symptoms to emerge.

In other words, **mental illness makes you more vulnerable to drug and alcohol use, and drugs and alcohol can make mental illness worse.** Pharmacological treatment of mental illness without addressing co-occurring addiction can impair efficacy of treatment and present serious health risks due to interactions between drugs, alcohol, and psychotropic medications such as antidepressants, antipsychotics, anticonvulsants, and mood stabilizers. Furthermore, people with addiction and co-occurring mental health disorders face unique triggers and increased risk of relapse of both conditions if not addressed simultaneously.

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## *The Need for Diagnostic Clarity*

Mental illness and addiction often mimic each other, and separating symptoms of mental health disorders from the effects of addiction can be a difficult process. It is also a critical one; without having a complete picture of your emotional and behavioral health, clinicians will not be able to tailor a treatment plan that addresses the full scope of your individual needs. As such, reaching diagnostic clarity requires in-depth assessment by a psychiatrist who specializes in addiction medicine and uses clinical interviews, sophisticated psychological testing tools, and auxiliary testing to establish a diagnosis. Only by understanding exactly what your needs are will your clinical team be able to create meaningful and effective interventions to help you restore sobriety and stability. If you are seeking treatment for an addiction, be sure to inquire about the scope of diagnostic testing used by the facility, and whether this testing is included in the cost of treatment. This is especially important if you have already been through treatment, because untreated co-occurring disorders are a common cause of relapse. Non-compliance with psychiatric medications is also a major cause of relapse for dually diagnosed individuals—and disorders that are not properly diagnosed cannot be properly treated.

## *The Importance of Dual Diagnosis Treatment*

In the past, there was widespread debate about whether someone struggling with addiction and a co-occurring mental health disorder should focus on treating the addiction or the mental illness first. Today, we know that substance abuse and mental illness are not discrete entities, but are deeply intertwined biologically, psychologically, and experientially. As a result, mental health and addiction experts have found that the best outcomes are achieved through comprehensive, integrated addiction and mental health treatment that seeks to address the full scope of your emotional and behavioral suffering simultaneously. The benefits of dual diagnosis treatment include:

- Identifying the root causes of your substance use and emotional suffering.
- Gaining greater insight into the relationship between your addiction and your mental illness and the obstacles they each present to healing.
- Developing the skills to cope with distress without resorting to drugs and alcohol.
- Participating in a range of evidence-based therapies that meet your unique needs.
- Accessing appropriate, well-tolerated pharmacological therapies that address the symptoms of your mental health disorder while supporting your sobriety.

By engaging in concurrent addiction and mental health treatment guided by clinicians who specialize in dual diagnosis care, you are able to fortify your recovery and find relief from psychological pain, setting the stage for long-term emotional and behavioral wellness.

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## *The Value of Holistic Care*

The best addiction and mental health treatment goes beyond simply treating symptoms. While clinical excellence is essential for dual diagnosis treatment, it is also imperative that care be delivered with compassion, kindness, and warmth. Truly extraordinary treatment experiences should uplift you, honor your strengths, and rejuvenate your spirit through a holistic curriculum of therapies that activate your natural healing abilities, enhance your overall quality of life, and create freedom from both addiction and psychological distress.

## **– Take the Next Steps –**

If you have questions regarding addiction and co-occurring mental health disorders or would like to learn more about residential dual diagnosis treatment, we invite you to contact us. We are happy to address any concerns you may have and help you find a path to lasting recovery and inner tranquility.

**Please reach out to us at 888-475-8177.**