

HEALTHY MINDS
A WEEKLY COLUMN ALL ABOUT MENTAL WELLNESS
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Methamphetamines

We are reading and hearing in the news with great frequency, nationally and locally, about the discovery of an illicit drug laboratory in someone's shack or basement. Those involved go to jail. I see a lot of them at the Monroe County Jail where I run the addiction therapy program. If their children are near the labs, they often become victims of this substance or the dangerous chemicals used to make it. Kids lose their parents and parents lose their kids.



The drug in question is one of the most dangerous substances on the illegal market (and sometimes sold legally as well, prescribed, astoundingly, for attention deficit disorder) are stimulants called methamphetamines. They speed up your brain and all of your nervous system, and speed up your heart as well. They come in a variety of forms: powder, pills, and crystalline chunks, hence the name crystal meth. It is very popular with young adults and has a variety of names: copilots, Christmas tree, speed, uppers, meth, crystal, chalk, ice, glass, and crank, among others.

Meth is found in high-class dance clubs and tumble-down shacks, but is gaining in popularity. It can be very profitable. It can be sniffed (also called snorted or bumped) smoked or swallowed for an intense high, or can be injected into a vein for an even stronger one, called a rush or a flash.

Meth kills the appetite and is sometimes foolishly used by those trying to lose weight. It also keeps people from going to sleep. Meth users can keep on going and sometimes it is used for long-range driving without sleeping, or doing other tasks.

You don't get something for nothing, however. Meth pumps up your heart rate and blood pressure, or gives you irregular heartbeats, blurs your vision, dries out your mouth, makes you perspire, gives you hot flashes, gives you headaches, makes your skin dry, itchy or numb, gives you acne, and makes you dizzy.

On the long term it is even worse, for it can cause brain damage that gives you memory problems and difficulties with body movements. Sometimes it can lead to high temperature, confusion, convulsions – meaning uncontrollable jerky movements of the body, heart attack, stroke, and ultimately to your death.

Psychologically, it can increase your alertness, self-confidence, and feelings of euphoria, sociability, increased self-esteem, increased energy, and higher ability to concentrate. It is also a sexual stimulant that will lead to reckless sexual activity (leading to HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, and hepatitis and other diseases from sharing needles). However, it also leads to anxiety, irritability, increased aggression, feelings of power and

superiority, and a condition known as amphetamine psychosis. It ages a person quickly, destroys their teeth and ruins their skin. Some users look like the walking dead.

When you withdraw and come down from its use, you will sleep excessively, tend to over-eat, and fall into depression, anxiety, and have spells of drug-craving. Watch the videos online, listed below if you want to see some graphic proof.

TIP OF THE WEEK: Many thanks to those of you who contacted me with congratulations on finally earning my second and most important license. This license allows me to take patients/clients as an independent practitioner (as a mental health counselor/psychotherapist) effective immediately. My official license is LPCC which stands for Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor, and I am now undergoing the process of getting credentialed by Anthem (Blue Cross/Shield) and other insurance companies. It took 5 years of hard work, on top of my previous bachelor's degree, to reach this point, and I am trying to catch my breath before I move on.

Two bills to provide Medicare reimbursement of licensed counselors and marriage and family therapists (MFTs) have been introduced in the House and Senate. On March 23, 2009, Senators Lincoln (D-AR), Barrasso (R-WY), Durbin (D-IL), Inouye (D-HI) and Wyden (D-OR) introduced the Seniors Mental Health Access Improvement Act, S. 671, which is almost identical to last year's bill. The following day, a companion bill was introduced in the House by Representatives Gordon (D-TN), Napolitano (D-CA), and Lewis (D-GA). NBCC has increased its efforts to get such legislation recognizing licensed counselors under the Medicare program passed. Please contact our two senators and our congressman (he is a good one) and ask that they support this measure.

WEBSITE OF THE WEEK: Meth brief videos:

<http://abcnews.go.com/Video/playerIndex?id=3675512>

<http://www.odcp.ky.gov/NR/rdonlyres/FC22EA16-749C-45BE-A780-3417D4D02A45/0/ODCPPSA7low.wmv>

<http://www.odcp.ky.gov/NR/rdonlyres/37077007-944B-476E-B5B8-A791E737C4C4/0/ODCPPSA1high.wmv>

<http://www.blinkx.com/video/chrvstal-meth-psa/phvqtBgsYvuHtfDxRxpKRO>