



## A word from the editor

Workplace drug abuse is increasing as drugs become more readily available. It is estimated that \$6 billion per year is lost in productivity in Australian workplaces due to substance abuse. The abuse of alcohol and drugs in the workplace is not necessarily measured by how often or how much a person drinks or takes drugs, however, it is measured by how one's life, and those around them, is affected by the substances they continue to abuse. If you are suspicious of a colleague, here are some examples that one may identify with a drug and alcohol problem:

- Frequently returning from lunch tipsy, in turn disturbing the workplace.
- Clumsiness, tiredness and memory lapses due to taking prescription medication for long periods of time.



With the growing use of drugs and alcohol, one in ten workers claim that they have been negatively impacted by a co-workers use of alcohol and drugs. And remember, if a co-workers abuse of alcohol and drugs is affecting you in the workplace, then they do have a substance abuse problem.

Continue reading to find out more on the affects of drug and alcohol abuse in the workplace and how to support your colleagues that are suffering from substance abuse.

*Alana Sumic*  
*Associate Editor*

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### In this edition:

A Word from the Editor

*Drugs in the Workplace*  
by Catherine Brophy

*Is Your Colleague Struggling  
with Substance Abuse?*  
by Emma Sestan

*Workplace Management of  
Drug and Alcohol Issues*  
by Peter Horton

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Trauma are available  
through the Archive





## Drugs in the Workplace

Certain industries and occupations have been found to be more at risk of drug use in the workplace than others. Studies have shown the hospitality and construction industries recorded the highest number of workers attending work under the influence of drugs.

It is important to be able to identify the groups that are most at risk of using drugs in the workplace so as to ensure that strategies for intervention and treatment are being targeted in the most effective manner. Studies in both Australia and overseas have identified that tradespersons and unskilled workers are at a higher risk of drug use at work. Young single males with no children who frequently consume alcohol were found to be more likely to attend work under the influence of drugs and often used more than one type of drug.

The potential for harm or injury in the work place due to the impairment of workers under the influence of drugs is significant. Work place polices need to be clear and breaches of policy need to be managed in a fair and



consistent manner. The ACTU stresses that polices need to offer an educative and non punitive component whilst also being supportive of a rehabilitative component. Employers have a duty of care to all employees to provide a safe workplace environment. Not only should clear policies and procedures based on workers performance and workplace health and safety be implemented but work place culture and contractual factors should also be regularly reviewed.

*Catherine Brophy*  
*Undergraduate Counsellor*

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**Newsletter**  
Spring 2016 Edition

**DARWIN WORKSHOP**

**Drugs and Trauma:**  
**A Treatment**  
**Approach**

The Trauma and Psychology Interest Group workshop has been postponed until early 2017. Keep an eye out in the Summer Newsletter for confirmed dates!!

*“Drugs take you to hell,  
disguised as heaven”*  
- Donald Lyn Frost

*“Addiction isn’t about using  
drugs. It’s about what the  
drug does to your life”*  
- Jenni Rivera





## Is Your Colleague Struggling with Substance Abuse?

When we think about people who are struggling with substance abuse, we often think about the struggles that the family and friends are residually struggling with. However, employers and colleagues are also greatly affected and have to cope with the consequences of working with someone who dealing with substance abuse.

According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2013), 22.6% of alcohol consumers classified as risky were employed. Similarly, 51.2% of employed people had previously used illicit drugs with 16.8% reporting that they had used illicit drugs recently. These statistics suggest that drug and alcohol use is more common in the workplace than what people may believe.

So how do we spot if a colleague is struggling with substance abuse? Often, addicts are experts at hiding and covering their tracks which is why they can be tough to recognise in the workplace. However, usually there are a number of clues to look out for.

- Frequent tardiness or unexplained absences
- Inconsistent on-the-job performance
- Unusual physical symptoms or behaviours
- A sudden lack of concern over personal appearance and hygiene
- Paranoia or overreaction to criticism or helpful suggestions
- An unwillingness to talk about hobbies, family life, or personal interests in someone who was forthcoming before
- Lower levels of productivity in the morning; a general sluggishness when first reporting to work
- Bloodshot eyes, or bags under the eyes indicating a lack of sleep
- Acne and skin blemishes that may not have been present previously.

So what do you do if you suspect a colleague is struggling with substance abuse? Read Peter Horton's article on supporting people with drug and alcohol issues in the workplace to find out more.

*Emma Sestan*  
*Provisional Psychologist*

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## Workplace Management of Drug and Alcohol Issues

The evidence and body of research undertaken since 2000 are snapshots of various industries and cannot be stated across the board. However, industry is well aware of drug and alcohol issues and the risks they pose to the safety of workers families and the wider community.

As a response, Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) have evolved from occupational alcohol programs which started in the 1940's. In Australia they are often used as early interventions.

EAP's services provide an easy access to counselling and training and also support management to help employees to reach their potential. More broadly governments have a greater responsibility, they use media campaigns to educate and promote awareness



of health and policy issues, but this is aimed at the broader population. The workplace has observable populations which can be the interface for real health promotional issues and help. More needs to be done to provide connections with staff, employees and EAP services.

How do we as participants in the workplace, connect with those who need help, and help direct them to EAP services? Most active users recognise the need to keep their drug and alcohol issues secret; and frown on suggestions they may have issues. Solid educational health promotional material can be an initial step, not for users to utilise, moreover to help work colleagues and supervisors, recognise the signs in others and in turn able to play an active role to getting help to those potential drug and alcohol clients.

*Peter Horton*  
*Psychologist*

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Newsletter  
Spring 2016 Edition

## Trauma and Psychology Interest Group Upcoming Events

**22 November 2016**  
**Drugs and Trauma: A  
Treatment Approach**  
With guest presenter  
Tanja Hirvonen

**8 December 2016**  
**TAPIG AGM**

Details for both events to  
follow

For bookings, please contact  
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