



MENTAL HEALTH



Take care of yourself to be able to

Addiction to a substance or a behavior can cause caregivers to suffer from co-addiction: a dependence on the addict

EL PERIÒDIC
ESCALDES-ENGORDANY
X @PeriodicAND

Addiction to a substance or behavior can be defined as a mental disorder, a disease of the brain that lasts a lifetime. The founder and director of Projecte Vida, Eva Tenorio, explains that in an addiction, the neurotransmitters in the brain are changed to the point of generating a dependency towards the object to which you are addicted. This addiction can be to a substance, such as drugs, alcohol, tobacco, heroin, etc. or to a behavior, such as gambling, mobile phones or sports betting.

In the case of substances, the person usually begins to consume them to taste or in a playful way, explains Tenorio, and it depends on the vulnerability - and this is due to multiple factors such as he-

redity, social situation, another disorder mental, etc —, and adds that when a person starts taking a substance they may never taste it again or take it other times. The founder of the project indicates that she is an alcoholic: **«I didn't drink every day, my problem was that when I started drinking I couldn't stop»**, adding that **«you don't control the substance, but it controls you»**. Tenorio points out that she has never relapsed, but **«that I will never be able to taste alcohol again because it is a chronic disease»**, and points out the difference between enjoying the substance and being addicted: **«you are a slave, the brain has become addicted and behaves as such»**. It also reports that one in 10 people will develop an addiction in their lifetime.

If what a person with an addiction goes through is hell, it is also hell for the person who is there day

I didn't drink every day, the problem was that when I started drinking I couldn't stop

You are a slave to the substance, the brain has become addicted and behaves as such

in and day out, taking care of them. The founder of the association explains that they live for the addict, even acting as police. In addition, they often do not have information and do not know that their loved one is ill: **«There are not many places to turn. They know that person has a problem, but they don't know how to name it»**, so they develop a dependence on the addict himself, Tenorio remarks, adding that **«they base their whole life on the sick person and their care»**. This addiction is called co-addiction.

This is what happened to 34-year-old Violeta (fictitious name and age), who suffered from her ex-husband's co-addiction: **«my ex-partner is an alcoholic and, in addition, has an addiction to cocaine»**, she reports, who wished to remain anonymous in this report. Violeta explains that her ex-husband has had an ad-

diction since the age of 20, and being her carer destroyed her emotionally and psychologically.

And it is that, as in the case of the testimony, co-addiction can create anxiety and depression in the person: **«All carers of a disease have to take a lot of care. In the case of addiction, being such a stigmatized disorder where there are people who believe it is not a disease and think that people are addicted because they want to, it is even more difficult to take care of themselves»**, explains Tenorio. This is when the caregiver's fault appears: **«many families blame themselves because addiction is not considered a disease, but if your child, for example, has diabetes, you will not be blamed»**, she remarks. This feeling was also shared by the witness: **«I have had problems with self-esteem, co-addiction, in addition to guilt, depression and anxiety**

PROJECTE VIDA

The president of Projecte Vida, Eva Tenorio.



o help

and problems in the family nucleus», emphasizing the stigma that she and her partner suffered.

In order to put an end to this situation, the person suffering from co-addiction could move away, although Tenorio explains that «it is a very personal decision, because the addict is sick, but it is very difficult to help him». This is what Violeta did after a while with her ex-husband: «contrary to what I thought at the beginning of the relationship, I realized that I cannot help him, since he is in denial. She doesn't think he's an addict, she thinks he's always in control». That's why she decided to break up the relationship, due to the fact that «he had a lot of nightlife

There are people who believe that it is not a disease and think that people are addicted because they want to

Contrary to what I thought, I realized that I can't help him because he thinks he's in control

and was not compatible with family life, since we have a little girl in common». Regarding whether she thinks she did the right thing at the time, she explains that she had doubts because she felt guilty about the situation, and she believed that with her help he could change.

This situation has affected the mental health of the witness, to the point of losing her security, self-esteem and joy: «I have suffered from several depressions, I have lost my own emotional control». In addition, she remarks that «I have had a lot of psychological fear, trying to control a situation that was uncontrollable because it did not depend on me». So Violeta ended up being sick herself, suffering co-addiction on the part of her husband.

It is important, then, as we have said, to have information about addiction and its consequences, both in the person who suffers from it and in their core because «it is a black hole that sweeps away everything, as can family, friends, the partner, the job, the family economy, etc», explains Tenorio, noting that «if you ask for help and put in the means to take care of yourself, it is easier to get out of the situation and be able to help the addicted person without falling into co-addiction». However, finding one is not easy. Violeta herself points out that «there is not much information. I didn't know it was a disease until I went to Projecte Vida».

Alcoholism

The former drug adviser to the British government, David Nutt, did a study to find out which was the most dangerous drug in the world. The results ruled that, although the drug that most physically affects the addict himself is heroin, if we look at the real damage they cause, that is to say, with the physical and social damage it can do to the person with the disorder and in its whole circle, it is alcohol.

Regarding this, the founder of the association argues that «it is the drug that affects society the most. In addition, it is well regarded, and there are even many people who do not consider it a drug due to its legality. This can make you dependent», and argues that «the fact that it is legal there is even more risk. Films and advertising have done a lot of damage in this regard, for example Estrella Damm every year welcomes summer with its beer ad».

Projecte Vida

The association Projecte Vida was founded by Eva Tenorio to be able to give visibility to those people who suffer from an addictive disorder, in addition to preventing and intervening on this pathology. They are also dedicated to accompanying the relatives of addicted people and asking for more resources in the country for those who suffer from this mental disorder. ≡

The relationship between addiction and other disorders

- ▶▶ Eva Tenorio explains that having another mental disorder can be a cause for contracting an addiction.
- ▶▶ On the other hand, many people with a disorder self-medicate with some drug to lessen the symptoms, without knowing that they may contract another disorder.
- ▶▶ This fact is called dual patho-

- logy: when you have an addiction or another mental disorder at the same time.
- ▶▶ The main cause may be a lack of awareness about the disorders.
- ▶▶ So, addiction can be the cause or the consequence of another mental disorder.
- ▶▶ Dual pathology can be prevented by avoiding any risk factor that can lead to an addiction.

E.T



▶▶ The president of Projecte Vida, Eva Tenorio.

Don't miss any special editions of **El Periòdic!**

Your leading real estate agency in Andorra.

Our experience guarantees results, realtors since 1988.



(+376) 353 424 / (+376) 379 769

(+376) 747 747

laportella@andorra.ad

Casa Nova Olivet 10 · Ordino

www.laportella.ad