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'Anything can be a trigger' for ex-addicts

Experts said one of the reasons the numbers of those incarcerated for drug-related offences is relatively high could be because of the nature of addiction, which makes re-offending more likely.

Psychologist Lawrence Tan told The New Paper there are multiple reasons why former addicts fall back into the habit. These range from social and the emotional to the physiological.

And the challenges they face can be difficult to overcome, especially without proper treatment, he added.

Mr Tan said: "It's a vicious cycle. After having been incarcerated for a long time, they come out and are not prepared to re-enter society.

"With the stigma and lack of support, it is easy to give up on themselves and fall back into old habits or old company."

Like Nina said earlier, everything can be a trigger.

Mr Tan added: "Even an old job, with the people they used to know or where access to drugs might be present – anything can be a trigger."

He said for many addicts, the brain has also become wired to require specific types of highs.

And they might find daily pleasures such as meeting friends or a good meal no longer adequate in providing happiness.

Mr Tan added the isolation they feel adds to the risk.

He said it is usually those who stay close to their support systems and recovery networks such as counsellors who are more likely to recover.

He added the type of drug the former addict used to take can affect the process of recovery.

National University of Singapore sociologist Tan Ern Ser told TNP the impacts of such disorders can be far reaching.

He said: "First, drug abuse has a negative effect on health, which could impair a person's capacity to function normally.

"This could, in turn, affect the drug abuser's capacity to hold on to a job and be able to contribute as a responsible member of his or her company, family, community, and society."

Associate Professor Tan added that drug abusers are likely to become a liability to the people closest to them.

He said: "They may also end up committing crimes to feed their addiction, and eventually leading to incarceration or even suffer capital punishment.

"This would likely have a traumatic effect on their families and children, if any." – CHEOW SUE-ANN

Text:

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By Cheow Sue-Ann

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