

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Addiction in the arts: How rife is it?

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The arts have long had associations with the likes of drugs and alcohol. It's something that can almost feel part and parcel, from the sex, drugs and rock and roll to the likes of Van Gogh, many of whom contribute his addiction to the amber-hued paintings he was famous for.

However, there's way more to it than the romanticised view we often get, and you only need to look towards the likes of Amy Winehouse, who was in and out of **drug rehab**, Philip Seymour Hoffman and Robin Williams to understand the damage it is causing. That extends far beyond those that have made it to the top. But why is addiction in the arts such a problem?

Well, there are many reasons for that. Which is why we're delving into the details as we look to understand how exactly it could change.

Sensitivity and Vulnerability

There is no doubt that things are changing for the better in the arts. One of the main reasons that people turned to drugs and alcohol in the first place was due to the fact artists are **often vulnerable souls**, incredibly sensitive to their emotions and experiences. It's why they can connect to an audience so successfully.

However, it also makes the highs and the lows of life, missing out on parts or certain failures much more intense. This makes them much more susceptible to the allure of substances and self-medication, and in turn addiction.

Of course, in today's society, while the pressures are greater, there's also more support there for people who are struggling, with many actors, musicians and artists seeking therapy to aid with this.

Pressure to Perform

Pressure has long been a reason why people turn to drugs and alcohol as a coping mechanism. That's not just the case across the arts but in all high pressure jobs. Whether it be actors vying for coveted roles or writers grappling with writer's block, there are many demands and artists may well turn to substances to try and boost confidence or to numb the self doubt that may start to creep in.

Cultural Norms and Expectations

Unfortunately, drug and alcohol abuse has happened in the arts for so long that it has become the social norm.

As Gen Z start to become more prominent in music, acting and elsewhere that may begin to change, with more people of this age shunning substances than ever before, becoming more finely attuned to the dangers and health risks of substances. That will go a long way to changing the norm for future generations but at present it's very much at the beginning of a transition.

Peer Influence and Social Circles

At present though, that's not the case and the social circles many people are finding themselves in can facilitate the spread of addictive behaviours. Peer influence has long played a huge part in shaping attitudes towards substance abuse and you only have to look at the stories around one actor introducing another to drugs and chaos ensuing from there to see just how dangerous it can be.

We are beginning to see change now. Older artists who had once been so hedonistic are now getting clean, and younger artists coming onto the scene are aware of the dangers, and over time we may start to see that cycle of addiction and abuse start to slow, which is only going to be good for the arts.

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