

# Substance Induced Anxiety Disorder

When the Substance Itself Becomes the Source of Fear



## What is Substance Induced Anxiety Disorder?

**Substance Induced Anxiety Disorder** is a condition where drug or alcohol use directly causes intense anxiety, panic attacks, or persistent dread that would not exist without the substance. The anxiety can surface during intoxication, during withdrawal, or both, creating a self-reinforcing cycle where the very thing someone uses to cope becomes the thing producing their fear.

## What Does It Look Like?

- **Panic During or After Use**  
Racing heart, dread, or panic that surfaces during use or withdrawal.
- **Escalating Withdrawal Anxiety**  
Each time the substance wears off, the anxiety comes back worse.
- **Confusion About the Source**  
They can't tell whether life or the substance is causing their fear.
- **Using More to Quiet What Use Created**  
They increase use to manage the very anxiety the substance produced.

## How Does Substance Induced Anxiety Contribute to Relapse?

When the substance itself produces the anxiety, every attempt to stop using floods the person with the exact fear that drives them back to use.

- 1) **Substance Use Exacerbates the Problem**  
Temporary relief gives way to worse anxiety once the substance wears off.
- 2) **Short-Term Programs Can't Break the Cycle**  
Withdrawal anxiety can persist for months, well beyond a 30-day stay.
- 3) **Without Enough Time, the Brain Never Recalibrates**  
Neurological recovery requires sustained abstinence no short program provides.

### **Prevalence:**

**~20%** of those with SUD also have a co-occurring anxiety disorder<sup>1</sup>

### **Co-Occurrence:**

**High** Nearly every substance can produce anxiety during use or withdrawal<sup>2</sup>

### **Relapse Risk:**

**Significant** High risk of relapse and treatment dropout<sup>3</sup>

Sources: <sup>1</sup> NESARC (N=43,093); Grant et al., Archives of General Psychiatry, 2004. <sup>2</sup> Smith & Book, Psychiatric Clinics of North America (2010). <sup>3</sup> Smith & Book, Anxiety Disorders with Comorbid Substance Use Disorders, PMC (2010)

# Long-Term Treatment for Substance Induced Anxiety and Addiction

Substance-induced anxiety can persist for weeks or months after the last use, which means a 30-day program often discharges someone at the peak of their anxiety rather than through it. Our **long-term, progress-based model** provides the extended abstinence and clinical structure needed for the brain's anxiety response to stabilize without substances.

Clients advance when they demonstrate genuine changes in how they manage fear, stress, and discomfort without reaching for a substance.



*“Chronic substance use rewires the brain’s stress response. When someone stops using, the anxiety can arise—it’s neurochemistry. Reversing that takes sustained abstinence and clinical support over months, not days.”*



**Dr. Leslie Secrest, MD**  
Medical Director, Burning Tree Ranch

## Dual Diagnosis Treatment for Substance Induced Anxiety Disorder

When substance use both produces and relieves anxiety, treating only the addiction leaves the nervous system in crisis. Untreated anxiety makes the pull to use again overwhelming.

- **Breaking the Chemical Cycle**  
Abstinence is required to normalize the brain's anxiety response.
- **Building Distress Tolerance Over Time**  
Clients must learn to sit with discomfort without reaching for relief.
- **Providing Enough Time for Neurological Recovery**  
Substance-induced anxiety can persist for months after last use.

### Dual Diagnosis:

The presence of both a **substance use disorder and a mental health condition** occurring together. Effective treatment for dual-diagnosis addictions must address both aspects simultaneously.



### Have Other Treatment Programs Missed the Deeper Issues?

Burning Tree Ranch is the Nation's only authentic long-term treatment program for chronic relapse. Call us at (866) 287-2877 or visit us online at [www.BurningTree.com](http://www.BurningTree.com).

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