

Alternative Therapies for Substance Use Disorder

Modality	Description/Cost	Pros	Cons
Acupuncture	Used as adjunctive treatment in many addiction treatment programs. Auricular acupuncture is often utilized to potentially lessen withdrawal symptoms and cravings. Also used for pain relief. Insurance coverage may be available dependent on plan. Average out-of-pocket cost in US is \$60–\$120 per visit.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May stimulate release of dopamine, which can potentially reduce cravings in patients with substance use disorder (SUD) • Sanctioned by the WHO for treatment of patients with SUD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of study evidence showing SUD outcomes, anxiety, or sleep-related outcomes are improved • Minor side effects such as nausea and vomiting, headaches, and fatigue
Biofeedback/Neurofeedback	Used to monitor various biological functions, including breathing, heart rate, and muscle tension. Insurance coverage often available dependent on plan. Out-of-pocket cost is \$35–\$85 per visit for an 8–10 visit course.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May minimize symptoms of depression in patients with SUD • May improve patient response to everyday stressors • Noninvasive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No regulations on practitioners
Marijuana	Used as a means for harm reduction in patients with SUD. Costs and accessibility vary by state.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Available in some states without prescription 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of evidence about efficacy of cannabis for SUD • Association between marijuana use and SUDs including alcohol use disorder, tobacco use disorder, and cannabis use disorder • Not legally accessible throughout the US
Meditation	Used in many addiction treatment programs as an adjunctive treatment to retrain the brain's reward centers. Free or fee-based depending on practice setting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May help patients with SUD gain awareness of craving cues • Easily accessible; can be practiced alone or in a group setting via classes, apps, or video streaming services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May occasionally result in heightened feelings of depression, anxiety, panic, or paranoia
Yoga	Used in many recovery programs as an adjunctive treatment. Free or fee-based depending on practice setting. Fees may be offset by insurance companies with fitness discounts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May relieve stress, anxiety, and depression • May increase levels of gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA) • Can be practiced alone or in a group setting via classes, apps, or video streaming services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costs associated with classes • Potential for physical injury

From the Expert Q&A:
"Alternative Therapies for SUDs"
With Steven Novella, MD