



THE GOOD LIFE
THERAPY CENTRE

THE SOBER TRUTH: DOING EFFECTIVE COUPLES THERAPY WITH ADDICTED CLIENTS

Sue Diamond Potts, M.A.

Founder/Director The Good Life Therapy Centre
www.goodlifetherapy.ca

© The Good Life Therapy Centre 2017

Overview of Workshop

1. Assessing and treating the Addict
2. Understanding the Role of the Spouse
3. Integrating the Principles of Recovery and Development in Couples Therapy
4. Getting Unstuck: Role-playing interventions based on participant questions



© The Good Life Therapy Centre 2017

Thinking Holistically About Addiction

- Physical: A brain disorder
- Emotional: Self medication for symptoms of PTSD and/or developmental trauma disorder
- Psychological: Cognitive/perceptual distortions that contribute to and perpetuate the problem
- Spiritual: An existential wound; life at low bottom
 - God – gift of desperation
- Relational : an arrested attachment bond that is symbiotic in nature



© The Good Life Therapy Centre 2017

The Vulnerable Brain

There is lots of evidence today supporting the fact that certain brains are vulnerable/susceptible to addiction.

- Genetics
- Early abuse, trauma, or neglect
- Later stressful events
- Mental disorders, such as depression &/or anxiety



© The Good Life Therapy Centre 2017

Wired For Addiction

- The part of the brain affected by addiction is located in the older regions of the brain – the limbic & reptilian brains.
- This part of the brain is known as the “mesolimbic dopamine system” - more commonly known as the “pleasure pathway” or “reward pathway” . It’s normal function is to help us have a happy life, moving toward the positive and away from the negative.



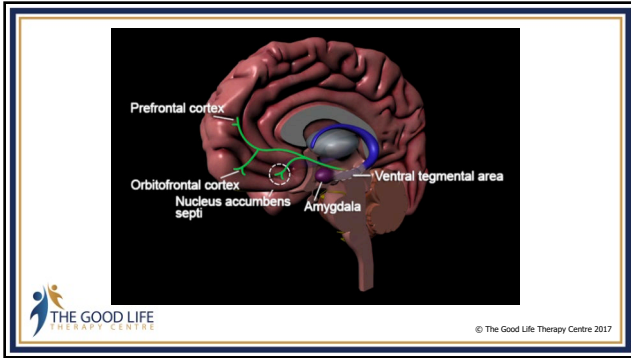
© The Good Life Therapy Centre 2017

Wired For Addiction

- It involves the nucleus accumbens, the amygdala and the ventral tegmental area, with projections into the pre-frontal cortex.
- These parts of the brain produce the neurotransmitter, dopamine, which is the primary neurotransmitter involved in addiction.
- Dopamine communicates: “I gotta have it” and it creates an insatiability in the system, that explains the loss of control all addicts experience.



© The Good Life Therapy Centre 2017



The Abnormalities of Addicted Brains

- The floodgates open up and dopamine pours into the system – creating a 'euphoric' feeling, while simultaneously reducing serotonin
- The process of dopamine flooding doesn't shut off.
- 'Normies' never have this problem. They don't pass out at a party. They don't puke all over their shoes. They don't black out.

THE GOOD LIFE
THERAPY CENTRE

© The Good Life Therapy Centre 2017

Normal Reaction	Abnormal Reaction

THE GOOD LIFE
THERAPY CENTRE

© The Good Life Therapy Centre 2017

It is a totally abnormal reaction to the drug alcohol

Dependency is a neuro-chemical imbalance that involves disruption of normal cell activity as it's basic cause - in the neurons. It is called **neurotransmitter dysregulation.**
(Erickson, 2007), (Vaillant, 2012)

THE GOOD LIFE
THERAPY CENTRE

© The Good Life Therapy Centre 2017

Sally realizing that she can't drink any more

■

THE GOOD LIFE
THERAPY CENTRE

© The Good Life Therapy Centre 2017

The Problem Gets Worse

- Changes in the brain in the form of dopamine receptor down-regulation create a vicious cycle of dependency.
- These brain adaptations now support the addict needing more of the drug of choice just to feel normal, and without it there is a low mood - depression, irritability, and restlessness.
- Something doesn't feel ok – which a drink, drug, or behavior can fix!

THE GOOD LIFE
THERAPY CENTRE

© The Good Life Therapy Centre 2017

Most importantly, because so much of what is happening in addiction is taking place below the neocortex and consciousness...

People don't know they are becoming addicted until it is too late!



© The Good Life Therapy Centre 2017

Assessing the 3 Categories of Users

- 1. Recreational Users** – don't have a problem
- 2. Abusers** – abuse their drug of choice from time to time, or during a period of their life; but can stop and do not have cravings, are not resentful about it, nor feel remorse, regret, or self-pity
- 3. Addicts** – have lost (some) control over the amount they use and are unable to stop entirely when they try



© The Good Life Therapy Centre 2017

WILLPOWER?

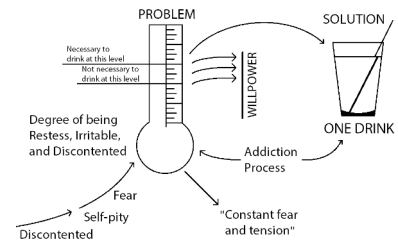
The idea that people lack 'willpower' or are somehow just 'weak' does not correspond with the science of addiction.

Eventually, loss of plasticity of neuronal responses in these centres renders abstinence beyond the reach of willpower, beyond the reach of conditioning and beyond the reach of psychoanalytic insight. (Valliant, 2012)



© The Good Life Therapy Centre 2017

The Emotional Barometer & Willpower Gap



© The Good Life Therapy Centre 2017

Treating the Addict



© The Good Life Therapy Centre 2017

Treating the Addict:

It's a Disease Not a Disgrace

- Once an addict, always an addict - not a death sentence
- It's an acceptance of your physiological state as a way to find peace
- The key to understanding is to remember that Addiction is not in the substance or behavior – it's in the brain - it's not just about tolerance or withdrawal, it's about when we are trying to stop and can't



© The Good Life Therapy Centre 2017

Cognitive/Perceptual Distortions

There are common ways in which the addict thinks and perceives the world that predict ongoing problems with emotional sobriety if not addressed.

These include:

- All or nothing thinking - "I will never laugh again"
- Intense self loathing - "I'm a waste of space"
- Tendency to catastrophize - "There's a mole, I must be dying of cancer"
- Overall negative world view - "We're all going to hell anyway"
- Oppositional - (You can tell an alcoholic, you just can't tell her much)



© The Good Life Therapy Centre 2017

Cognitive/Perceptual Distortions

- Delusional Thinking – "What problem, I don't have a problem."
 - Full of Fear - "the very fabric of our existence was riddled with it..."
 - Ongoing self absorbed behavior: "I can go to as many meetings as I want and I don't care if you like it or not."
 - Thin-skinned – highly sensitive to criticism/Defensive
- Most importantly:
- Fundamentally Dishonest – lie even when it would be just as easy to tell the truth – The Saboteur – feeds off the lies of addiction



© The Good Life Therapy Centre 2017

The Audit & Cage

Simple & reliable test to confirm whether someone has crossed the line into addictive use of alcohol or drugs.

Gives objective evidence that is not 'your opinion.'

Can help open the dialogue for what is next.



© The Good Life Therapy Centre 2017

The AUDIT Test for Alcohol Addiction (Alcoholism)

To correctly answer some of these questions you need to know the definition for a drink. For this test one drink is:
One can of beer (12 oz or approx 330 ml of 5% alcohol), or
One glass of wine (5 oz or approx 140 ml of 12% alcohol), or
One shot of liquor (1.5 oz or approx 40 ml of 40% alcohol).

1. How often do you have a drink containing alcohol?
Never (score 0)
Monthly or Less (score 1)
2-4 times a month (score 2)
2-3 times a week (score 3)
4 or more times a week (score 4)

2. How many alcoholic drinks do you have on a typical day when you are drinking?
1 or 2 (0)
3 or 4 (1)
5 or 6 (2)
7-9 (3)
10 or more (4)

3. How often do you have 6 or more drinks on one occasion?
Never (0)
Less than monthly (1)
Monthly (2)
Weekly (3)
Daily or almost daily (4)

4. How often during the past year have you found that you drank more or for a longer time than you intended?
Never (0)
Less than monthly (1)
Monthly (2)
Weekly (3)
Daily or almost daily (4)

5. How often during the past year have you failed to do what was normally expected of you because of your drinking?
Never (0)
Less than monthly (1)
Monthly (2)
Weekly (3)
Daily or almost daily (4)

6. How often during the past year have you had a drink in the morning to get yourself going after a heavy drinking session?
Never (0)
Less than monthly (1)
Monthly (2)
Weekly (3)
Daily or almost daily (4)

7. How often during the past year have you felt guilty or remorseful after drinking?
Never (0)
Less than monthly (1)
Monthly (2)
Weekly (3)
Daily or almost daily (4)

8. How often during the past year have you been unable to remember what happened the night before because of your drinking?
Never (0)
Less than monthly (1)
Monthly (2)
Weekly (3)
Daily or almost daily (4)

9. Have you or anyone else been injured as a result of your drinking?
No (0)
Yes, but not in the past year (2)
Yes, during the past year (4)

10. Has a relative, friend, doctor, or health care worker been concerned about your drinking, or suggested that you cut down?
No (0)
Yes, but not in the past year (2)
Yes, during the past year (4)

11. Have you ever felt annoyed when people have commented on your drinking?
No (0)
Yes, but not in the past year (2)
Yes, during the past year (4)

12. Have you ever felt guilty or badly about your drinking?
No (0)
Yes, but not in the past year (2)
Yes, during the past year (4)

13. Have you ever used drugs to ease withdrawal symptoms, or to avoid feeling low after using?
No (0)
Yes, but not in the past year (2)
Yes, during the past year (4)

14. Have you ever used drugs to ease withdrawal symptoms, or to avoid feeling low after using?
No (0)
Yes, but not in the past year (2)
Yes, during the past year (4)

15. Have you ever used drugs to ease withdrawal symptoms, or to avoid feeling low after using?
No (0)
Yes, but not in the past year (2)
Yes, during the past year (4)

16. Have you ever used drugs to ease withdrawal symptoms, or to avoid feeling low after using?
No (0)
Yes, but not in the past year (2)
Yes, during the past year (4)

17. Have you ever used drugs to ease withdrawal symptoms, or to avoid feeling low after using?
No (0)
Yes, but not in the past year (2)
Yes, during the past year (4)

18. Have you ever used drugs to ease withdrawal symptoms, or to avoid feeling low after using?
No (0)
Yes, but not in the past year (2)
Yes, during the past year (4)

19. Have you ever used drugs to ease withdrawal symptoms, or to avoid feeling low after using?
No (0)
Yes, but not in the past year (2)
Yes, during the past year (4)

20. Have you ever used drugs to ease withdrawal symptoms, or to avoid feeling low after using?
No (0)
Yes, but not in the past year (2)
Yes, during the past year (4)



© The Good Life Therapy Centre 2017

8. How often during the past year have you been unable to remember what happened the night before because of your drinking?
Never (0)
Less than monthly (1)
Monthly (2)
Weekly (3)
Daily or almost daily (4)

9. Have you or anyone else been injured as a result of your drinking?
No (0)
Yes, but not in the past year (2)
Yes, during the past year (4)

10. Has a relative, friend, doctor, or health care worker been concerned about your drinking, or suggested that you cut down?
No (0)
Yes, but not in the past year (2)
Yes, during the past year (4)

11. Have you ever felt annoyed when people have commented on your drinking?
No (0)
Yes, but not in the past year (2)
Yes, during the past year (4)

12. Have you ever felt guilty or badly about your drinking?
No (0)
Yes, but not in the past year (2)
Yes, during the past year (4)

13. Have you ever used drugs to ease withdrawal symptoms, or to avoid feeling low after using?
No (0)
Yes, but not in the past year (2)
Yes, during the past year (4)

14. Have you ever used drugs to ease withdrawal symptoms, or to avoid feeling low after using?
No (0)
Yes, but not in the past year (2)
Yes, during the past year (4)

15. Have you ever used drugs to ease withdrawal symptoms, or to avoid feeling low after using?
No (0)
Yes, but not in the past year (2)
Yes, during the past year (4)

16. Have you ever used drugs to ease withdrawal symptoms, or to avoid feeling low after using?
No (0)
Yes, but not in the past year (2)
Yes, during the past year (4)

17. Have you ever used drugs to ease withdrawal symptoms, or to avoid feeling low after using?
No (0)
Yes, but not in the past year (2)
Yes, during the past year (4)

18. Have you ever used drugs to ease withdrawal symptoms, or to avoid feeling low after using?
No (0)
Yes, but not in the past year (2)
Yes, during the past year (4)



© The Good Life Therapy Centre 2017

The CAGE Test for Alcohol Addiction

This simple test is surprisingly accurate. Answer yes or no to each question.

1. Have you ever felt you should **cut down** on your drinking?
2. Have you ever been **annoyed** when people have commented on your drinking?
3. Have you ever felt **guilty** or badly about your drinking?
4. Have you ever had an **eye opener** first thing in the morning to steady your nerves or get rid of a hangover?

Your score:
Score one point for each yes answer (2)

If you scored 1, there is an 80% chance you're addicted to alcohol. If you scored 2, there is an 89% chance you're addicted to alcohol. If you scored 3, there is a 99% chance you're addicted to alcohol. If you scored 4, there is a 100% chance you're addicted to alcohol.

The Modified CAGE Test for All Addictions
Most self-test questionnaires apply to alcohol addiction, but can be easily adapted to any addiction.

1. Have you ever felt you should **cut down** your use of drugs?
2. Have you ever been **annoyed** when people have commented on your use?
3. Have you ever felt **guilty** or badly about your use?
4. Have you ever used drugs to **ease withdrawal symptoms**, or to avoid feeling low after using?

The AUDIT (Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test) was developed by the World Health Organization (WHO). The test correctly classifies 90% of people into either alcoholic or non-alcoholic. It was tested on 2000 people before being published [1]



© The Good Life Therapy Centre 2017

SEXUAL ADDICTION SCREENING TEST PURE DESIRE

SAST - v.02.0
© 2008, J. Carnes, Sexual Addiction Screening Test - Revised
The Sexual Addiction Screening Test (SAST) is designed to assist in the assessment of sexually compulsive or "addictive" behavior. Developed in cooperation with therapists, treatment programs, private therapists and community groups, the SAST provides a profile of responses that help to determine whether addictive and non-addictive behavior.

To complete the test, answer each question by placing a check mark in the appropriate parenthesis column.

- ... YES ... NO 1. Have you sexually abused or stalked someone?
- ... YES ... NO 2. Did your parents have trouble with sexual behavior?
- ... YES ... NO 3. Do you often feel preoccupied with sexual thoughts?
- ... YES ... NO 4. Do you ever feel that your sexual behavior is not normal?
- ... YES ... NO 5. Do you ever feel bad about your sexual behavior?
- ... YES ... NO 6. Has your sexual behavior ever caused problems for you and your partner?
- ... YES ... NO 7. Have you ever sought help for sexual behavior you did not like?
- ... YES ... NO 8. Has anyone been hurt emotionally because of your sexual behavior?
- ... YES ... NO 9. Are any of your sexual activities against the law?
- ... YES ... NO 10. Do you ever react when you're in a tight spot of sexual activity and fear?
- ... YES ... NO 11. Do you have some of your sexual activities on your own?
- ... YES ... NO 12. Have you ever attempted to stop some part of your sexual activity?
- ... YES ... NO 13. Have you felt disappointed by your sexual behavior?
- ... YES ... NO 14. When you have sex, do you feel depressed afterwards?
- ... YES ... NO 15. Do you feel controlled by your sexual appetite?
- ... YES ... NO 16. Have important parts of your life (such as job, family, friends, leisure activities) been impacted because you were spending too much time on sex?

Sex Addiction Assessments

- ... YES ... NO 17. Do you ever think your sexual desire is stronger than you are?
- ... YES ... NO 18. Has sex (or sexual fantasies) been a topic for you to discuss your partner?
- ... YES ... NO 19. Has sex (or sexual fantasies) been a topic for you to discuss your parents?
- ... YES ... NO 20. Are you ever sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 21. Are you ever sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 22. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 23. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 24. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 25. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 26. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 27. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 28. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 29. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 30. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 31. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 32. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 33. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 34. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 35. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 36. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 37. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 38. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 39. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 40. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 41. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 42. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 43. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 44. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 45. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 46. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 47. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 48. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 49. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 50. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 51. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 52. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 53. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 54. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 55. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 56. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 57. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 58. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 59. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 60. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 61. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 62. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 63. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 64. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 65. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 66. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 67. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 68. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 69. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 70. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 71. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 72. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 73. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 74. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 75. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 76. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 77. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 78. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 79. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 80. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 81. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 82. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 83. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 84. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 85. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 86. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 87. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 88. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 89. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 90. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 91. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 92. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 93. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 94. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 95. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 96. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 97. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 98. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 99. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?
- ... YES ... NO 100. Do you ever feel sexually aroused by people you don't know?



© The Good Life Therapy Centre 2017

Sex Addiction Assessments

SEXUAL ADDICTION SCREENING TEST (CONTINUED)		SEXUAL ADDICTION SCREENING TEST (SAST) SCORING	
...YES ...NO	35. I have changed in intimate relationships after they became emotionally abusive.	SCALES	ITEM #
...YES ...NO	36. I have become an alcoholic or addict.		OUTLIER (NUMBER OF "YES" RESPONSES)
...YES ...NO	37. I have had multiple episodes of sexual relationships at the same time.		HOW MANY "YES" RESPONSES DID PATIENT ANSWER CORRECTLY
...YES ...NO	38. After sexually acting out I sometimes regret how I feel for a significant period.	Core Item Scale	1-10
...YES ...NO	39. I have regularly engaged in unprotected sex.		
...YES ...NO	40. I feel sexual self-loathing, self-hatred or self-loathing as part of my regular sexual activity.	RELATIONSHIP	
...YES ...NO	41. I have engaged in sexual "trips" that were through "hook ups" or casual sex.	Wife's Items	24-27
...YES ...NO	42. I have engaged in public sex, sex in parks or public restrooms.	Man's Items	28-33
...YES ...NO	43. I have engaged in sexual acts that have led to STD's, HIV/AIDS or other infections.	Woman's Items	34-39
...YES ...NO	44. My sexual behavior has put me at risk for arrest for lewd conduct or public indecency.	Relationship Items	40-43
...YES ...NO	45. I have been sued for sex.	RELATIVE DISTRIBUTION	

RELATIVE DISTRIBUTIONS OF ADDICT & NON-ADDICT SAST SCORES
 This assessment has been based on a surveying of tens of thousands of people. This particular version is a diagnostic tool only and is not intended for clinical use. It is not a clinical tool. Please be aware that clinical checks on results should be made before using this tool for clinical purposes.

Patrick J. Carnes, © 2008, R. J. Carnes, Sexual Addiction Screening Test - Revised.
 SAST is a registered trademark of the publisher.



© The Good Life Therapy Centre 2017

Addressing the Addiction: Balance Recovery & Therapy

1. Refer them to a 12 step group: Superior in the following ways:

1. External Supervision
2. Substitute Dependency
3. New Love Relationships
4. Spirituality

(Valliant, 2012)



© The Good Life Therapy Centre 2017

Give options if they don't want 12 Step recovery

Include a relapse prevention plan that incorporates the best of what works:

- ❖ people to call/connect with
- ❖ Inspirational/spiritual daily reading
- ❖ Basic meditation time/self soothing strategies
- ❖ Activities that are fun, creative, novel – that stimulate dopamine in a healthy way



© The Good Life Therapy Centre 2017

3 Strategies to Overcome Resistance

1. Explore their plan to control & enjoy their drinking without interfering with their relationship work; create system for monitoring.
2. Ask for a 3 month hiatus from their drug of choice and create a system for monitoring.
3. Offer a 'quid pro quo' so that if their plan is unsuccessful, you have an agreement to try your plan.



© The Good Life Therapy Centre 2017

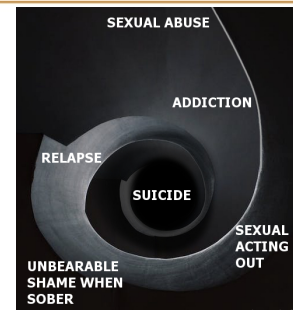
The Role of Trauma & the Emotional Barometer

- Majority of addiction is propelled by underlying trauma - early developmental trauma, or later events
- Willpower will be insufficient to manage the emotional dysregulation, and negative cognitive distortions that drive the need to numb out
- Addiction creates more trauma in a vicious cycle



© The Good Life Therapy Centre 2017

The Vicious Cycle of Addiction & Trauma



© The Good Life Therapy Centre 2017



Treating the Spouse

THE GOOD LIFE
THERAPY CENTRE

© The Good Life Therapy Centre 2017

Treating the Spouse

- Not necessarily an ally – so not always easy to manage
- Attention to FOO issues – & what is being reenacted; trauma triggers stimulated by addiction
- Timely confrontation to illuminate their contribution to the relationship problems

THE GOOD LIFE
THERAPY CENTRE

© The Good Life Therapy Centre 2017

Case Examples:

1. Richard & Sara
-The need for a 'perfect' wife.
2. Katerina & Joe
-She wanted him to change, but not that much.
3. Carla & Don
-His recovery placed her in absolute hell.

THE GOOD LIFE
THERAPY CENTRE

© The Good Life Therapy Centre 2017



Developmental Couples Therapy With Addicts

THE GOOD LIFE
THERAPY CENTRE

© The Good Life Therapy Centre 2017

Stages of Couples Development

- 1) Symbiotic - Symbiotic
- 2) Symbiotic - Differentiating
- 3) Symbiotic - Practicing
- 4) Differentiating - Differentiating
- 5) Practicing - Practicing
- 6) Practicing - Rapprochement
- 7) Rapprochement - Rapprochement

THE GOOD LIFE
THERAPY CENTRE

© The Good Life Therapy Centre 2017

SYMBIOTIC – SYMBIOTIC CONFLICT-AVOIDANT

- Sweep things under the carpet, sometimes for decades.
- Avoid anything that creates tension and so never get past the initial stage of couples development.
- Can be really nice or can be exuding tension and stress whenever you are around them.
- Difficult to work with – as P. Pearson says, "getting them motivated is like lighting a fire underwater."
- The addict 'uses' to avoid both the pain of the past and the fear of intimacy in the present.
- The spouse is often an over-functioner who "goes along to get along" and is filled with resentment.

THE GOOD LIFE
THERAPY CENTRE

© The Good Life Therapy Centre 2017

SYMBIOTIC - SYMBIOTIC HOSTILE- DEPENDENT



THE GOOD LIFE
THERAPY CENTRE

- Fighting constantly; very hostile over almost everything
- Often did not have a 'honeymoon' period in their relationship
- Difficulty self-soothing and soothing the one another
- Blaming; shaming and finger pointing
- Very little personal accountability

© The Good Life Therapy Centre 2017

SYMBIOTIC- PRACTICING



THE GOOD LIFE
THERAPY CENTRE

- One partner wanting to stay in denial and a return to the 'comfort' of the familiar
- Feels threatened by the new-found life of the partner in recovery
- Partner in recovery feels 'smothered' by the partner
- Long repressed feelings of resentment and disillusionment begin to surface
- "Don't leave me – Leave me Alone"

(Bader-Pearson Developmental Model)

© The Good Life Therapy Centre 2017

Interrupting Symbiosis Supports Principles of Recovery

PUSH DIFFERENTIATION:

- Tell the truth
- Reveal More
- Own the fears that drive defensiveness
- Learn to be vulnerable
- Learn to be more giving; positive & appreciative
- Develop independent sources of support alongside one another



THE GOOD LIFE
THERAPY CENTRE

© The Good Life Therapy Centre 2017

EMOTIONAL SOBRIETY



THE GOOD LIFE
THERAPY CENTRE

- Ongoing work of diminishing denial, regression & enabling behaviors
- Quieting the 'saboteur' in both addict & spouse – encouraging truth-telling to replace the fantasy of addiction dynamics
- It is long term and difficult work – weaving the principles of recovery – **honesty, open-mindedness and willingness to change** into the process of ongoing differentiation-shifting alliances from symbiotic dependency to healthy relationship growth

© The Good Life Therapy Centre 2017

Resources & References

- Addiction & Trauma (T. Dayton, 2000)
- Alcoholics Anonymous: Cult or Cure? (G. Valliant, 2011) Keynote. Vancouver Conference.
- Audit/Cage Test: <http://www.addictionsandrecovery.org/addiction-self-test.htm>
- Complex Integration of Multiple Brain Systems, Vancouver training. (A. Sheldon & B. Winstanley 2014).
- The Craving Brain (R. Rudin, 1997)
- Emotional Sobriety: From Relationship Trauma to Resilience & Balance (T. Dayton, 2010)
- The Mindful Brain (D. Siegel, 2007)
- Healing the Addicted Brain: (H. Urschel, 2009).
- In Quest of the Mythical Mate: A Developmental Approach. (E. Bader & P. Pearson, 1988)
- Sexhelp.com; CHS – Centre for Healthy Sex
- The Neuroscience of Addiction (Walker, 2008 - Center on Drug & Alcohol Research). http://cdar.uky.edu/Downloads/The_Science_of_Addiction_-_Mar_2008_-_NKY.pdf
- The Science of Addiction (C. Erickson, 2007)
- Treating the Alcoholic Family System (S. Brown, 1999)
- When Your Brain Can't Say No (M. Lemonick) in TIME - Your Brain: A User's Guide, 2009.



THE GOOD LIFE
THERAPY CENTRE

© The Good Life Therapy Centre 2017