

Facilitator Lesson Notes Understanding Addiction & the Brain Part 2

Overview: In this two-part lesson, attendees will gain an understanding of the biological roots that drive addiction and how the term ‘addiction’ differs from ‘substance use disorders’ (SUD). They will discuss how early SUDs may start by drugs to get high or experience euphoria or using them to alleviate pain and or mental health anguish. These early stages of SUDs often involve very poor choices. But with chronic drug exposure (weeks to months), changes in the brain start to occur where the individual using drugs begins to lose their ability to control their use. These brain changes reflect what we call ‘addiction’ and medicine now recognizes addiction as a treatable medical disorder. The lesson will emphasize that people who struggle with addiction are very much trapped inside a mind that won’t allow them to process life’s problems or solutions effectively. Evidence-based treatments can help people with addiction retrain their brain so that they can be back in control.

Notes:

- Blanks: r = recreational, c – chronic (exposure), c = chemical (coping), four C’s: first C = craving, second C = compulsion, third C = consequences, fourth C = control
- This lesson builds on part one and is designed to follow part one as it goes into the specific ways we get to addiction.
- The lesson content was provided by an addiction expert from the Mayo Clinic and is based on the latest research.
- This lesson differentiates the terms substance use disorder (SUD) and addiction; these terms are not interchangeable. For example, all substance addiction is an SUD, but not all SUD is Addiction.

Driving points home:

There are several questions you can use for this discussion. You may ask only some of these questions each time you facilitate this lesson.

- **What did you learn in this lesson about addiction and substance use disorder (SUD) that you did not know prior?**
- **What stood out to you as you read this lesson?**
- **Does this help you understand the difference between SUD and addiction, can you describe this in your own words?**
- **Are the words Addiction and use disorder (SUD) interchangeable?** (Answer: technically no, Addiction is the severest form of SUD.)
- **When looking at the graphic, which of the three pathways seems to describe what you saw in your loved one?**
- **How long after your loved one was using substances was it that you feel they reached the addiction stage of SUD?**
- **What types of behaviors do you remember or are seeing if you believe your loved one just started using substance? Follow with What about now if you feel they are in the addiction stage of SUD?** (looking for answers that in early stages the issues are not as serious, but in addiction stage consequences for example do not seem to affect the person,

i.e. they just cannot seem to quit even when they have very negative consequences to their health or are arrested or lose relationships etc.)

- **Which of the four C's have you seen in your loved one, what did it look like?**
- **How does this lesson help when people are judgmental about their loved one using substances?**
- **What does the benefit of treating addiction with a bio, psycho, social, spiritual model?**
- **Ask the group to describe what each of these four areas represent, bio, psycho, social, spiritual.**
- **Why do you think that the v Are the words Addiction and use disorder (SUD) interchangeable?** (Answer: technically no, Addiction is the severest form of SUD).
- **What do you think the reason is that most individuals that were asked what was important to them in recovery - that they listed dealing with the spiritual aspect (regardless of their personal beliefs?)** - (possible answers: they realize they need something bigger than themselves to help them out of their situation, AA principles cover this extensively, people want purpose in their life and they see that as spiritual)

Cross-reference material:

Please see Dr. Geyer's book: Ending the Crisis: Mayo Clinic's Guide to Opioid Addiction and Safe Opioid Use.