

Facilitator Lesson Notes Addiction and the Brain Video

Overview: This is a supplemental lesson you can use as often as you feel necessary. Generally, you might want to show the video once a quarter or if you have several new people attending. The following are some guidelines for leading a discussion after the video. Please note the link is provided for the video, however, due to potential Wi-Fi issues, it will be more effective to download the video to your laptop/computer and then connect that to a smart TV or projector to show the video.

Notes:

Potential Opening Questions:

1. What was the most important thing you took away from this video?
2. What stood out most to you, either something you did not know or something that helped you understand this topic?
3. How does this help you in how you are trying to navigate this journey with your loved one?
4. What specifically did you take away from this video that is useful to you?
5. How does this help you understand your loved one's behavior?
6. What did you hear that surprised you?

Driving Points Home:

You can use the following to follow up with the above questions. These are all optional, and you may not be able to cover all of these in one meeting.

1. Dr. Geyer spent some time describing the difference between using the word “addiction” and the term “substance use disorder.” What was the difference? (Addiction is the highest form of SUD, but not all SUD is addiction.)
2. Dr. Geyer explained that addiction is defined as a chronic disorder. What does that mean? (It typically involves relapses and is something that can re-occur, which leads to the need for ongoing efforts in recovery.)
3. Which drug covered in this video causes the highest dopamine spikes? (Methamphetamine leads to spikes of over 1,000% above normal pleasure levels, while morphine and other opioids range between 250–300%. What does this tell us about how our loved ones respond to normal pleasurable activities?)
4. We know that many people who abuse drugs typically misuse multiple substances. How does this help us understand why someone might use both an opioid and a methamphetamine-related drug? (Opioids tend to make a person drowsy, while amphetamines have a stimulating effect, leading some to use one drug to counteract the effects of the other.)

5. Dr. Geyer discussed the psychological, sociological, and spiritual “manifestations” of drug addiction. However, she explained that these are not the “drivers” of addiction. What is the true driver, and in your own words, what does this mean? (The primary driver is biological—the behaviors we observe result from the brain being hijacked by drugs, which directly “manifests” in (causes) those behaviors.)
6. How does this help you understand addiction as a disease versus, for example, a moral failing? (There may have been an initial bad choice, but the biological effects took over, impairing the executive function of the brain.)
7. How can this help us respond with compassion while maintaining boundaries? (Although this may help us recognize that the brain has been hijacked, actions still have natural consequences. This does not mean the behavior is excused, but it does help us understand it.)

Additional Information:

Book: Ending the Crisis: Mayo Clinic’s Guide to Opioid Addiction and Safe Opioid Use, Holly L. Geyer, M.D.