

**WITH THE EYES TO SEE
AND EARS TO HEAR:
DISTINGUISHING NON-ADDICTED
SOCIAL USERS FROM ADDICTS IN
THE INITIAL PHASE OF ADDICTION**

Dr. Bradford Price, PC, LICDC-CS: Townhall II, Kent, Ohio
Methodist Theological School in Ohio, Delaware, Ohio

Julie Curtis, LPCC-S, LICDC-CS: Townhall II, Kent, Ohio

AOCC – November 4, 2016

Beliefs, Attitudes and Values
Binary Patterns Prevail!

"Good" "Bad"

Beliefs, Attitudes and Values
Binary Patterns Prevail!

"Good" "Bad"
Safe, Legal, Soft Dangerous, Illegal, Hard

Beliefs, Attitudes and Values

Binary Patterns Prevail!

- ▣ No or mood-altering chemicals (MACs)
- ▣ Any MAC will do – few exclusive users among addicts in 2016
- ▣ The *principles* and *criteria* used to create such hierarchies interfere with identification and motivation to help

Principles and Criteria

1. Personal using history
2. Social Comfort Level

Addiction: A Working Definition

- ▣ **Chemical Dependency is:**

to recreate

the experience of intoxication

- ▣ **The Overwhelming Urge**
Quiet, subtle, passive
NOT earth-shaking!

- ▣ **To Recreate**
Do-over...

- ▣ **The Experience of Intoxication**
Individual, NO standardized description or definition

- ▣ **Chemical Dependency is**

the pathological love relationship

that exists between an individual

and the reward produced by MACs
(Mood-Altering Chemicals)

- ▣ *transcends* all other needs and relationships

- ▣ It is *multidimensional*

- ▣ Initiated by a biochemical *moment*

- ▣ The individual makes *meaning* of this and *commits* to its nurture and preservation

It is the *commitment* to this meaning-filled relationship that establishes the foundation of addiction and provides the motivation to do whatever is necessary to sustain the relationship.

▣ This relationship becomes the most fundamental and significant focal point for the person's spiritual reality and functioning

Human Spirituality

It is defined by and composed of that which is of

Ultimate Concern

- 1. What is most powerful*
- 2. What is most meaningful*

*All other dimensions of human existence
adjust to accommodate whatever is at
each person's spiritual core*

Physical
Cognitive
Social
Volitional
Affective

*Each individual develops committed relationships with
whatever is regarded as powerful and meaningful,
relationships that form the core of the person's existence*

*The relative quality of these relationships falls on a continuum
from*

Alienation to Belonging

*As we move through time, the quality shifts along this
continuum*

*We have at least one common purpose for
living...*

to make more power and meaning...

*Our spiritual relationships are most clearly
reflected in and exhibited by our behavior*

Our behavior is guided by

Ethics Morals Values

Individuals experience spiritual distress and tension most frequently when there is a lack of consistency and congruence between their behavior, growing from their commitment to what is of ultimate concern, and the ethics, morals and values they espouse.

Addicts then, are persons whose primary spiritual relationship is grounded in their commitment to the pathological love relationship with the reward produced by MACs. Their behavior supports and protects this relationship causing them great emotional pain unless they modify, compromise or violate their ethics, morals and values.

As a result, addicts will hear others say,

What happened to you?

This isn't like you.

You aren't the same person I once knew.

The awareness that the behavior violates personal ethical standards results in

GUILT

Other pain follows...sadness, loneliness, disappointment, shame, fear...

Therefore, the second dimension of the person's humanity violated by addiction is the affective

The other dimensions suffer in turn as they attempt to accommodate the addiction that consumes the individual's core.

Cognitively, the person becomes preoccupied with MACs and their use, developing a thick, complex set of psychological defenses to numb the increasing emotional pain. The individual's intelligence, imagination and creativity are all used in this process. Eventually other cognitive abilities are compromised such as memory, attention/concentration and psychomotor coordination. In some, the temporary cognitive impairment of intoxication becomes permanent.

Socially, an addict's world is composed of those people willing to support their addiction, ACTIVELY. This group is divided into 2 subgroups. The largest is other addicts. The other is much smaller, those persons still willing to tolerate the addict's increasingly erratic, destructive behavior.

Volitional. The person's strength of will and willpower are compromised by addiction as well. Contrary to popular belief an addict's will is NOT weakened by MAC use. Rather, it is focused. Focused on preserving, protecting and maintaining the most important relationship in the addict's life – the relationship with addiction.

Physical. This is the last dimension of the human being to experience debilitation and deterioration as a result of addiction. By the time an individual exhibits physical signs and symptoms of addiction, they are hollow inside. The other dimensions of life suffering and grossly diminished.

❖ *Chemical Dependency is the pathological love relationship that exists between an individual and the reward produced by mood-altering chemicals (MAC)*

❖ *Spiritually, this relationship is the most important element in the person's life from which the person derives all power and meaning*

❖ *This relationship transcends ALL other human needs and relationships*

Experimentation: Where it begins
Discovering the mood swing

- ❑ Learned by Experience
- ❑ Feeling Identified as Pleasant, Positive
- ❑ Amount Used, Mood Shift – *Controllable (Germ of the Illusion of Control)*
- ❑ *Trust Relationship Begins to Develop*

The Changing Face of Addiction

- ❑ Once the commitment to and relationship with the MAC-induced reward is made, it remains
- ❑ What changes over time is the *identity* of the reward

Initial Stage: Pursuit of Pleasure

- ▣ Few addicts are identified, diagnosed or even noticed at this stage because they appear to the casual observer as behaving *exactly like true social/recreational users of MACs*

**Non-Addicted Social User
(NO Addiction)**

Definition: The use of MACs is to *enhance* an *already* pleasurable experience

- Use is anticipated and planned
- Follow rules, own and society's
- Behavior is appropriate
- Amount of MAC used and mood can be controlled
- On a *rare* occasion the person may use too much but, "experience was worth it"

Non-Addicted Social Use (cont.)

- MACs are associated with
 - good times
 - fun
 - relaxation
- NOT bothered by the absence of MACs
- No emotional costs

First Phase of Addiction: Pursuit of Pleasure

Definition: The use of MACs is to *create* a pleasurable experience

- Use is anticipated and planned
- Follow rules, own and society's
- Behavior is appropriate (usually)
- Amount of MAC used and mood can be controlled, *at times with difficulty*
- Occasions when too much is used increase

First Phase: Pleasure (cont.)

- Good times, fun and relaxation are associated with:

MACs

- *Bothered* by the absence of MACs although others may not be aware
- Emotional costs are experienced, *at least as frustration and irritation because of the absence of MACs*

Second Phase: Pursuit of Relief

- Addicts notice, as we all do, that living comes with occasional *stress, pressure and pain*
- MAC use is *instrumental*, used to relieve the experience of stress, pressure and pain
- Notice *Happy Hour* and pharmaceutical ads

Third Phase: Pursuit of Normalcy

- Perception of time is compressed
- Addicts notice that stress, pressure and pain are *not* occasional but seem *constant*
- To function normally and experience at least minimal quality life, *MACs are used*
- MACs are identified as the *reason* life is worth living, allows the addict to function and perform in all areas of life

Fourth Phase: Pursuit of Oblivion

- Qualitatively different than the first three phases – *no longer life-oriented*
- Addict wants *out* of life
In search of the eternal high
- Extremely small percentage of addicts
- Over-represented in media presentations

Common Behaviors

Addicts develop and engage in typical behaviors and patterns of behavior *for the purpose of protecting the relationship with the addiction*. Remember, the fundamental source of *power* and *meaning* for an addict is found in the pathological love relationship with the *reward* produced by MACs. The addict's commitment to this relationship supersedes all others.

Trouble? *How to determine*

Harmful Involvement

A person is harmfully involved with mood-altering chemicals if they experience ANY interference in ANY important area of life.

- Useful as a working definition of abuse
- Can be used effectively by non-professionals, *not diagnostic*
- Data-driven
- Affirms the reality of the individual
- Non-judgmental
- Non-threatening
- Can begin the process of gross discrimination of addictive behavior vs. abusive behavior

“Abuse” Vs. Dependence

- | | |
|---|---|
| • MAC use interferes with life... and use changes or ceases to stop interference | • MAC use interferes with life... and use continues without change |
| • Suffer harmful consequences... and use changes or ceases to stop consequences | • Suffer harmful consequences... and use continues without change |
| • Change use to accommodate lifestyle... “I didn’t like what it was doing to me so I quit.” | • Change lifestyle to accommodate MAC use... |
| • Human needs and relationships are more important than the reward produced by MACs | • The relationship with the reward produced by MACs <i>transcends</i> all other needs and relationships |

Now What?

Always a pertinent question

1. Recognition
2. Willingness
 - Honesty
 - Openness
3. *Talk! About everything....*

4. Reach out
 - Beyond own comfort zone
 - To others
 - To professionals
5. Be aware of own feelings –
especially fear
