



Coming to grips with family systems theory in a collaborative, learning environment.

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Ideas to assist in dealing with addictive patterns

Substance use or addictive behaviour may start as a way of feeling more independent -- ultimately leading to more dependence and sensitivity to others

Focus on self responsibility

- Rather than put all the focus on the addictive behaviour it may be helpful to focus on maintaining the best functioning possible in all parts of your life.
- Examples of functioning or self management are: organizing adequate bedtime, eating healthily, exercising and relaxing, being responsible for appointments and medical care, fulfilling role responsibilities at work and in the household.

Focus on managing relationship anxiety

- Does the behaviour help you lower your anxious reaction to others?
- Consider whether the unregulated behaviour is part of a pattern of distancing from others to feel free of what you perceive they expect of you. If a person is feeling like an outsider in important relationships this can increase their vulnerability to addictive patterns.
- Consider reviewing the way you manage your balance of having closeness with others as well as space from others.
- Is a lot of energy going into dealing with the sense that others want to change your behaviour. This sensitivity to others critical judgments makes it much harder to take responsibility for managing self in a way that enhances health and life functioning.
- It may be helpful to let others know that the more they monitor your behaviour and make suggestions, the harder it becomes for you to work on making changes for your self. You can affirm their good intentions but express the effect their responses have on you.
- Substance use or addictive behaviour may start as a way of feeling more independent---ultimately leading to more dependence and sensitivity to others.
- Substances like alcohol can be used to promote connection by easing tension and providing a social connector....if this becomes a person's chronic coping mechanism, tensions in a relationship start to replace the "benefits".
- Be aware that "Recovery" often upsets the family equilibrium. For a time this can be more stressful than the original pattern in which addiction or drinking is embedded. After a time the relationships can adjust to the new ways of relating.

Focus on self regulation

- Is the behaviour a way of calming self. Any behaviour that gets linked to reducing stress is likely to become patterned. Experiment with ways of managing stress that come from within self.
- Is the behaviour viewed as a reward after a stressful time? This tends to give the behaviour more prominence in life.
- Addictions can be a way of giving up your self. A person comes to use the addictive behaviour as a way of managing their vulnerability rather than finding a way to address this insecurity and resolve it for them self.
- Equally those in relationship with the person with the addiction can also de- self by focusing their attention on the other and not on their own self awareness and own issues.
- It may be that a person who is seen as highly capable and is carrying a lot of responsibility for others may start being under responsible for their own health care through over use of substances.

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