



Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services

Addiction: A Primary, Treatable Disease

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ASAM Definition of Addicti

Short Definition of Addiction:

- Addiction is a primary, chronic disease of brain reward, motivation, memory and related circuitry. Dysfunction in these circuits leads to characteristic biological, psychological, social and spiritual manifestations. This is reflected in an individual pathologically pursuing reward and/or relief by substance use and other behaviors.
- Addiction is characterized by inability to consistently abstain, impairment in behavioral control, craving, diminished recognition of significant problems with one's behaviors and interpersonal relationships, and a dysfunctional emotional response. Like other chronic diseases, addiction often involves cycles of relapse and remission. Without treatment or engagement in recovery activities, addiction is progressive and can result in disability or premature death.



Addiction Is a Chronic Disease

- **Persistent risk and/or recurrence of relapse**, after periods of abstinence, is another fundamental feature of addiction. This can be triggered by exposure to rewarding substances and behaviors, by exposure to environmental cues to use, and by exposure to emotional stressors that trigger heightened activity in brain stress circuits.⁴
- As addiction is a chronic disease, periods of relapse, which may interrupt spans of remission, are a common feature of addiction. It is also important to recognize that return to drug use or pathological pursuit of rewards is not inevitable.
- Engagement in health promotion activities which promote personal responsibility and accountability, connection with others, and personal growth also contribute to recovery

<http://www.asam.org/for-the-public/definition-of-addiction>



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Behavioral manifestations and complications of addiction, primarily due to impaired control.

These can include:

- Excessive use and/or engagement in addictive behaviors, at higher frequencies and/or quantities than the person intended, often associated with a persistent desire for and unsuccessful attempts at behavioral control;
- Excessive time lost in substance use or recovering from the effects of substance use and/or engagement in addictive behaviors, with significant adverse impact on social and occupational functioning (e.g. the development of interpersonal relationship problems or the neglect of responsibilities at home, school or work);
- Continued use and/or engagement in addictive behaviors, despite the presence of persistent or recurrent physical or psychological problems which may have been caused or exacerbated by substance use and/or related addictive behaviors;
- A narrowing of the behavioral repertoire focusing on rewards that are part of addiction; and
- An apparent lack of ability and/or readiness to take consistent, ameliorative action despite recognition of problems.



Cognitive Changes in Addiction

Can include:

- Preoccupation with substance use;
- Altered evaluations of the relative benefits and detriments associated with drugs or rewarding behaviors; and
- The inaccurate belief that problems experienced in one's life are attributable to other causes rather than being a predictable consequence of addiction.

Emotional Changes in Addiction:

- Increased anxiety, dysphoria and emotional pain;
- Increased sensitivity to stressors associated with the recruitment of brain stress systems, such that “things seem more stressful” as a result; and
- Difficulty in identifying feelings, distinguishing between feelings and the bodily sensations of emotional arousal, and describing feelings to other people (sometimes referred to as alexithymia).

How Strong is Addiction?

- It is the reward circuitry where reward is registered, and w/ fundamental rewards such as food, hydration, sex, and nurturing exert a strong and life-sustaining influence
- Alcohol, nicotine, other drugs and pathological gambling behaviors exert their initial effects by acting on the same reward circuitry that appears in the brain to make food and sex, for example, profoundly reinforcing
<http://www.asam.org/for-the-public/definition-of-addiction>
- When men and women pour so much alcohol into themselves that they destroy themselves...[d]efying their instinctive desire for self-preservation, they seem bent on self-destruction. They work against their own deepest instinct.

(12 Steps and 12 Traditions, Step 6, p. 64, pub by Alcoholics Anonymous World Services)



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Recovery from Addiction

- Recovery from addiction is best achieved through combination of self-management, mutual support, and professional care provided by trained and certified professionals.
 - As in other health conditions, self-management, with mutual support, is very important in recovery from addiction.
 - Chronic disease management is important for minimization of episodes of relapse and their impact.
- Treatment of addiction saves lives

<http://www.asam.org/for-the-public/definition-of-addiction>



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Why people say they use heroin

"I use it to feel normal....."

"I always felt different... and then I took my first... and suddenly I felt like I thought everyone else had been feeling all along."

Anticipatory Reward and Triggering

- Knutson, B et. al. Anticipation of Increasing Monetary Reward Selectively Recruits Nucleus Accumbens. J. Neuroscience, 09/2001. 21(16):RC 159
- Childress, AR et. al. Limbic Activation during cue-induced cocaine craving. Am J. Psychiatry 156: 11 – 18.
- May be applicable to patients who take medications and those who do not



Issues

- Parity
- Stigma
- Fluidity
- Advocacy (being a voice)
- What does outcome mean?
- Disability
- Bias
- Time; AND over time Things Change
- Recovery Medicine, integration, Paying attention
- The underlying disease is still present years later
- Families, Friends, Colleagues, Children and others
- Does everybody need treatment to get sober?
- What about “dry drunks?”
- Can we partner more with the recovering community? (Rochester tradition)



Recovery

Recovery is ...

- ... being honest with myself
- ... being able to enjoy life without drinking or using drugs like I used to
- ... living a life that contributes to society, to your family or to your betterment
- ... being the kind of person that people can count on
- ... about giving back
- ... striving to be consistent with my beliefs and values in activities that take up the major part of my time and energy.

<http://whatisrecovery.org/>.

Kaskutas, L. A., Borkman, T. J., Laudet, A., Ritter, L. A., Witbrodt, J., Subbaraman, M., Stunz, A., & Bond, J. (November 2014). Elements that define recovery: The experiential perspective. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, 75(6), 999-1010. <http://www.jsad.com/doi/abs/10.15288/jsad.2014.75.999>
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Talk 2 Prevent

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Talk2Prevent underage drinking and drug use.
Parents: Get tools and tips at Talk2Prevent.ny.gov.

NEWS & NOTICES

03/30/16

[NYS OASAS Launches New Problem Gambling Initiative](#)

The New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services today announced a new, multi-year program to train counseling professionals to better enable them to deliver problem gambling treatment and support services. Many individuals seek private practitioners for help to address problem gambling and this new training program ensures that private practitioners are knowledgeable about problem gambling and will increase access to treatment and support services. The Problem Gambling Training Partnership, funded by NYS OASAS, will offer training on assessment and treatment for a gambling disorder to social workers, mental health counselors, marriage and family therapists and psychoanalysts throughout New York State.

03/21/16

[NEW! Justice Center Resources and Guidance Documents](#)

New and revised guidance documents and resources related to mandated reporter requirements and Code of Conduct have been posted on the Justice Center's website and may be accessed via links on the OASAS Justice Center [webpage](#).

03/17/16

[NYC & ROS Adult BH HCBS Provider Designation Lists Available](#)

The lists of NYC & ROS Adult BH Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) designated providers are now available. The designation lists contain the names of NYC and ROS providers designated to provide Adult BH HCBS, along with their location and which services they have been designated to provide.

03/17/16

[BHSAC Meeting on March 24](#)

The Behavioral Health Services Advisory Council to the Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) and the New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH) will meet on March 24, 2016.

03/09/16

[Call for Proposals for the 2016 NPN Conference](#)

NYS OASAS today announces that a call for proposals has been issued for the 29th Annual National Prevention Network (NPN) Conference in Buffalo, NY this fall. The conference, to be held Sept. 13 – 15, 2016, provides a forum for prevention professionals, coalition leaders, researchers, and federal partners to share information, best practices and promising evaluation results for the purpose of integrating research into prevention practice. There are also opportunities for various [levels of support](#). Don't forget to mark your calendars to attend the conference in Buffalo!

03/07/16

[Loan Forgiveness and Scholarship Programs](#)

Applications and Technical Assistance Webinars are available now for those organizations that meet the eligibility criteria. Primary care medical, dental and mental/behavioral health clinicians can get up to \$50,000 to repay their health profession student loans in exchange for a two-year

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