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# **Adolescents ADHD and Addiction**

# Looking Down at the Problem



# AD/HD symptoms

- Problems focusing attention
- Problems controlling impulses
- Problems with activity level
- Irregular sleep
- Visual, auditory, kinesthetic, emotional sensitivity

# Accurate Diagnosis of all Co-existing Conditions

- Mental health diagnosis (s)
- Learning disabilities
- Addictions
- Physical conditions
- Life situations

# Contributions to AD/HD

- Genetics
- Prenatal exposure
- Head Injury

# Co-occurring Conditions

- Substance use disorders
- Depression
- Obsessive Compulsive disorder
- Bipolar disorder
- Impulse control disorder

# AD/HD traits that are self-medicated:

- Restlessness of the brain
- Activity level: hyperactive to hypoactive
- Attentional difficulties
- Impulsiveness
- Feelings of shame
- Emotional overload and rage attacks



# Substances

- Alcohol
- Marijuana
- Cocaine
- Meth
- Opiates
- Prescription medication

# Continuum of Use

- Abstinence
- Experimental
- Social
- Abuse
- Addiction

# What is an Addiction?

- Obsessive thinking
  - “I want to have a drink”
  - “I want to play computer games.”
- Compulsive actions
  - Buying a bottle and drinking it
  - Playing Poker on line

# An Addiction Affects Any of the Following

- Work or school
- Finances
- Relationships
- Health
- Self-esteem
- Legal issues

# Two Types of Addiction

- Substances: alcohol, drugs, sugar
- Behaviors: gambling, internet, sex, thinking, work, spending, gaming

# Primitive Brain (AKA) Reptilian

- Meets basic needs
- Food, water, sex, pleasure
- Purpose: to keep us alive
- Without moderating from pre-frontal cortex it can kill us
- “I WANT”

# Cortex

- Reasoning
- Judgment
- Thinking, rational part of the brain
- Job to mediate with the the primitive brain
- “I know you want, but do you need?”

# Addiction

- Primitive or reptilian brain hijacks the cortex
- Addiction over rules the cortex's attempt to reason, through consequences



# Meth

- The most addicting drug ever
- Can cause serious physical and emotional damage after weeks of use
- The profound euphoria is favored by many with ADHD
- Meth is easy to make and inexpensive to buy

# Dopamine Disruption

- All addictive substances increase dopamine
- Increased dopamine provides sense of well being and pleasure
- Decreased dopamine contributes to poor attention, impulsivity, decreased sense of well being

# The AD/HD Brain Seeks Out Stimulating and Novel Events

- People with AD/HD can become over focused on anything
- The rush of behaviors captivate the AD/HD brain
- Behaviors can become a form of self-medicating
- The primitive brain wants “MORE”

# Internet Addiction

- Can participate in almost all addictions without leaving home
- Those with AD/HD don't have to get organized to go out and gamble, shop, day trade, attend auctions

# Internet Gaming

- World of War “crack”, Halo.
- Some become so addicted to these games that:
  - They don't work or go to school
  - Have only virtual relationships
  - Rarely leave their computer

# Consequences of Untreated AD/HD and Addiction

- Success deprivation
- Self-medicating
- Depression, anxiety, PTSD
- Criminal behavior

# COMPREHENSIVE TREATMENT PROGRAM

- Regular visits with doctor and close medication management
- Therapy or counseling regarding AD/HD and recovery issues
- Involvement in addiction recovery programs
- Family and relationship counseling when needed and possible
- Concurrent treatment for coexisting conditions if they are present (bipolar, anxiety disorders, obsessive thought patterns)

# Treatment

- Coaching
- 12 Step programs
- Medication
- Family and relationship
- Treat all co-occurring conditions



# How 12 Step Programs Help Heal the Brain

- Education
- Repetition
- Telling ones story
- Internalization

# 12 Step Programs and Healing

- Spirituality
- Relationships
- Belonging

# Strengthening Cortex Functioning

- Education
- Repetition
- Internalization

# Internalizing Recovery Information

- Thinking will not change overnight
- Took many years to over ride cortex
- Time to internalize consequences
- Truth about addiction

# PHYSICAL

- Aerobic activity promotes the release of serotonin, dopamine, and norepinephrine
- Physical activity aids in releasing energy and can result in feeling calm
- Aerobic activity increases blood circulation to the brain

# Non-therapeutic Relapse

- Adolescent doesn't learn anything about behavior or addiction
- Little or no changes in attitude and behavior

# Therapeutic Relapse

- Adolescent learns from the relapse
- Has a change in attitude and behavior
- May smash reservations about the consequences of his or her behavior

# Medication to Treat AD/HD

- Stimulants
  - Ritalin, Concerta
  - Adderall
  - Dexadrine
  - Vyvanse



# Non-stimulants

- Wellbutrin
- Strattera
- Provigil

# Vyvanse

- Can not be diverted
- Can only be taken orally
- May be safer for addicts

# Stay Active

- Aerobic activity promotes the release of serotonin, dopamine, and norepinephrine
- Physical activity aids in releasing energy and can result in feeling calm
- Aerobic activity increases circulation to the brain

# HELP ADOLESCENTS FOCUS ENERGY

- Organized sports
- Biking, surfing, skate boarding, hiking, swimming, rock climbing
- Music, drama, dance, art
- Working out

# The Components of Change Are:

- Awareness
- Willingness
- Tools
- Practice
- Patience

# Live a Stimulating Life

- Many with AD/HD have higher needs for novelty and stimulation.
- Boredom can contribute to substance abuse
- Try a new hobby, sport, travel, meet new people, learn something new
- Keeping young people stimulated is an important part of treating AD/HD & substance abuse

**Those who succeed**

**Get help for their limitations**

**IF YOU TRY YOU MAY  
FAIL**

**If You Fail  
You May Learn**



**NEVER GIVE UP!**