



Moral / Spiritual Models of Substance Abuse

Psychology 470

Introduction to Chemical Addictions

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Moral / Religious Models

- Have been around a long time
- Are different than other models. Relates to the human spirit
- The spirit is what makes us different from animals
- Has been discussed by many philosophers over the centuries.
- Addiction was the result of a spiritual flaw within the individual

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Early Models

- In the beginning most spiritual models were associated with alcoholism
- Contended that alcoholism was caused by a lack of morality.
- Alcohol does not cause the addiction, instead the person becomes addicted because of what they consider to be important and what they believe.
- Generally was a sin against God
- Also were associated with some character defect.
 - Person has some moral weakness and they drink

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Early Models

- Alcoholism does not have a biological or other cause
 - Disease models were for other diseases.
- Personality was the problem.
- Until about late 1800's addicted individuals were told to take responsibility for their actions, grow up, find God, etc.
- Find the spiritual aspect of living and the addiction will go away
- Problem, compounds caused the person to turn away from what was good or acceptable to society and God.

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Later

- Models contended the compounds impact you spiritually and psycho-socially.
- Result, the use of compounds becomes acceptable behavior
- Generally the person becomes morally insane
- Drugs become more important than all other aspects of behavior and commitments.
 - Person's life becomes totally self-centered around drugs.

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Result

- Person begins to use many defense mechanisms to justify the narrow range of interests to themselves and others
- Renounces more and more of themselves in favor of new beliefs and behaviors that allow them to use drugs.

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Internal communication

- Nothing is too great,
- No price is too high
- No behavior is unthinkable

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Result

- Person lies, cheats, steals to maintain their addiction.
 - Sells all of their possessions
 - Steals from parents, others
 - Takes medications from others
 - Everything is sacrificed including their body for drugs
- Everything revolves around the addict

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Four Defense Mechanisms

- Come from psychoanalytical models
- Are unconscious and unknown to the person
- Denial
 - Prevents the person from being aware of the problems associated with use.
 - Helps reduce anxiety
 - Person generally has selective perception.

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Four Defense Mechanisms

- Projection
 - Blame others for things you do.
- Rationalization
 - Justify the feelings, motives, and behaviors for things that are unreasonable.
 - Blame some incident for causing you to become an addict.
- Minimization
 - Uses techniques to minimize the amount of compounds you are using
 - Pour drinks into an oversized container.
 - Drink only in the evening

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Problem

- The person may not be addicted
 - If a person says they do not have a problem, counselors often assume they are in denial
 - Result – is a confirmation the person has a problem but in reality they may actually not have a problem.
- Need to have a solid and accurate assessment

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Other Problems

- Difficult to analyze spirituality
- Models often have problems with validity and reliability
 - Especially the use of psychoanalytic model concepts

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Result

- Two Groups
 - Spirituality is dismissed by most academics and therapists as the essential component of addiction.
 - Not dismissed by many individuals in society
Not dismissed by many addictions counselors
- Models still have an effect in creation of public policy, funding, etc. for substance abuse.