Psychological Theories of Substance Abuse:

Social Learning and Cognitive Models

Psychology 470

Introduction to Chemical Additions

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Several Models

- Past talked about
  - Classical Conditioning
  - Operant Conditioning
- This section will discuss
  - Social Learning
  - Cognitive Models
  - Other models

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Social Learning

- Also called Modeling or Imitation
- Underlying concept
  - Person becomes an alcoholic or substance abuser by observing the drinking or drug use by others
  - Often relates to group theories of sociological models

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Examples - Alcohol

- Mom, Dad, and community (e.g., religious groups) only drink ritualistically at formal ceremonies
  - Does not get drunk
  - Child learns it is ok to drink at these ceremonies but not outside of these settings
  - Child learns that becoming drunk is inappropriate

- Mom and Dad drink sometimes and moderately at home
  - Child learns it is ok to drink but only in moderation

- Mom and /or Dad drinks heavy at home,
  - May have domestic violence, fighting, etc
  - Child learns this is how you drink
    - Also learns this behavior is ok when you drink

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The Community and Peer Groups

- Have a major impact on drinking patterns.
- If the community encourages drinking (county fairs, etc), the child is more likely to drink
- If the child's peer group drinks, the child is more likely to drink, and also drink at the same levels (or greater) of the peer group.

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Other Substances

- Some substances take a while to learn the effects – Marijuana
- When first use, usually nothing happens
  - Have to watch others to learn how to behave
  - After several times, begin to engage in similar behaviors
    - Munchies, feeling small, etc.

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Nicotine

- Is delivered through cigarettes
- If you observe "cool" people smoking, there is an increased likelihood you will smoke.
- Movies
  - When cigarette smoking was decreasing, fewer younger people were beginning to smoke
  - As more movies portrayed smoking was cool, more younger people began to smoke

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General Theme

- Basically you learn through observational learning about drinking or drug taking behavior
- More often you observe a person do a behavior, the higher the probability you will perform the behavior

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Variables that Influence Modeling Behavior

- Characteristics of the Model
  - Age
  - Sex
  - If model is seen as strong or weak
- If the model is reinforced or punished
  - If the model is rewarded the observer is more likely to perform the behavior
  - If the model is punished, the observer is less likely to perform the behavior

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Way the Model is Presented

- Video is very similar to real life
- Bandura studies

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Conclusions

- Social Learning is very important in the development of addictive behavior.
- How to use, behaviors after use, lifestyle, etc. are all influenced by social learning

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