

When More isn't Enough: Women and Addiction

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Women and Addiction

Historical Overview

- Victorian era
- Women's movement
- Cultural perspective
- Today
 - ✓ Teenage girls, mothers, COVID

What is Addiction?

ABCs

- A. The person is not able to *abstain*;
- B. The person has reduced *behavioral* control;
- C. The person has a *craving* or increased “hunger” for drugs or addictive experiences;
- D. The person has *diminished* recognition of significant problems with her behaviors and interpersonal relationships; and
- E. The person has a problematic *emotional* response.

Substances

- Alcohol
- Heroin
- Opiates or opioids
- Caffeine
- Tobacco
- Sugar

Behaviors

- Shopping
- Exercising
- Working
- Gambling
- Having sex
- Viewing pornography
- Using social media

History of Services

- Addiction treatment services designed by men for men and boys
- Mental health services designed by men for women and girls
- Criminal justice services designed by men for men and boys

Gender-Responsive Treatment

- Creating an environment through:
 - site selection
 - staff selection
 - program development
 - content and material
- that reflects an understanding of the realities of the lives of women and girls (*men/boys/transgender*), and
- addresses and responds to their strengths and challenges.

Addiction

Women's Issues: An International Perspective

- **Shame and Stigma**
- **Physical and Sexual Abuse**
- **Relationship Issues**
 - Fear of losing children
 - Fear of losing a partner
 - Needing partner's permission to obtain treatment

Women's Issues: An International Perspective

- **Treatment Issues**
 - Lack of services for women
 - Not understanding treatment
 - Long waiting lists
 - Lack of childcare services
- **Systemic Issues**
 - Lack of financial resources
 - Lack of clean/sober housing
 - Poorly coordinated services

**Mental
Illness**

**Substance
Use Disorder**

Trauma

**Other
Health
Problems**

Poverty

Homelessness



Risk Factors

- Abuse and trauma in childhood
- Early use
- Environment with high use (family and friends)
- Depression, anxiety, PTSD, etc.
- Genetic predisposition

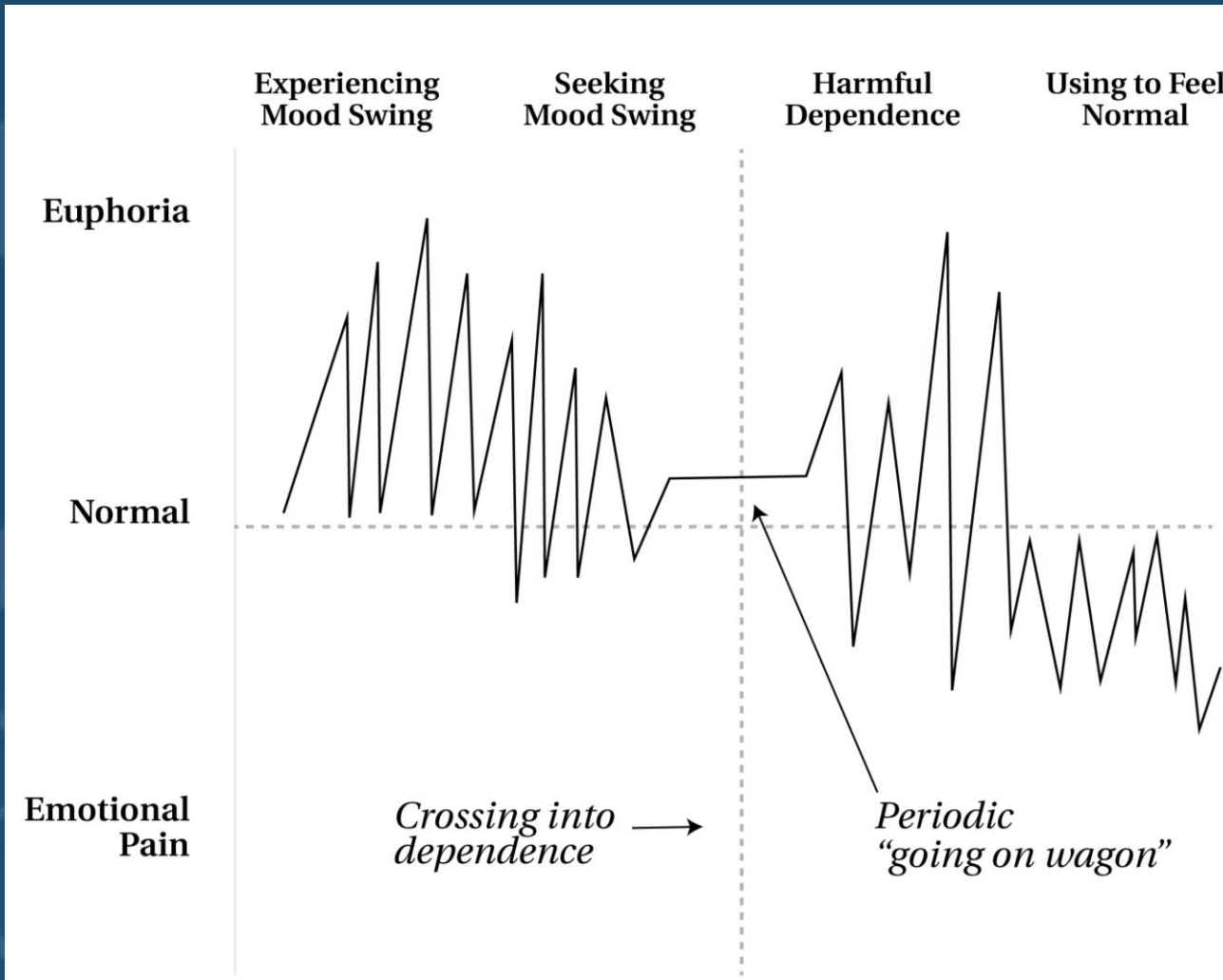
Prescription Drugs

- Historically, a greater risk for women
 - Use more healthcare
 - Prescribed drugs vs. other services

Opioids and Women

- Women have been disproportionately affected by the “opioid epidemic”; they represent a 400% increase in prescription opioid-related deaths compared to a 237% increase for men. (Hedegaard, Warner, & Miniño, 2017)
- For women, childhood sexual abuse and parental separation are highly correlated with opioid use. (Conroy, Degenhardt, Mattick, & Nelson, 2009)

Feeling Chart



Addiction

- Brain disease
 - Hijacks pleasure center
- French: “Nailed to”
- Buddha: “Attachment is source of suffering”

Some Women Use Drugs:

- To maintain a relationship
- To fill in the void of what's missing in a relationship
- To self-medicate the pain of abuse in relationships

Addiction as a Relationship



Love



Love-Hate

Reoccurring Themes

Trauma & Abuse

Abuse, Trauma, and Substance Use

	Percentage of Women who Misuse Substances	
	Women Who HAVE Experienced Abuse	Women Who HAVE NOT Experienced Abuse
Physical Abuse	75%	25%
Emotional Abuse	95%	5%
Sexual Abuse	65%	35%

Gender and Abuse

Childhood

- Girls and boys at equal risk from family members and people they know

Adolescence

- Young men at risk from people who dislike or hate them. Boys at greater risk if they are gay, young men of color, gang members, or transitioning.
- Young women at risk from lovers or partners – people to whom they are saying, “I love you.”

Adulthood

- Men at risk from combat or being victims of crime
- Women at risk from those they love
- Transgender – highest risk

Resources

Self Assessment

- Stop for thirty days
- “Dry” January
- Then compare your response to green beans.

Intervention

- Work with a professional to help conduct
- Think of 3-5 behavioral indicators of addiction
- Your feelings in each instance
- Want her to seek help
- What changes you are making

Gender-Responsive Materials

Women and Girls

- *Helping Women Recover*
- *Beyond Trauma: A Healing Journey for Women*
- *Healing Trauma: A Brief Intervention for Women*
- *A Woman's Way through The Twelve Steps*
- *Beyond Anger and Violence*
- *Women in Recovery*
- *Voices: A Program of Self-Discovery and Empowerment for Girls*

Gender-Responsive Materials

Staff

- *Becoming Trauma Informed*
- *Moving from Trauma-Informed to Trauma-Responsive*
- *Women and Addiction: A Gender-Responsive Approach*

Self-Help Books

- *Leaving the Enchanted Forest: The Path from Relationship Addiction to Intimacy* (relationships)
- *Awakening Your Sexuality: A Guide for Recovering Women* (sexuality)
- *A Woman's Way through The Twelve Steps* (addiction and recovery)

Women-Only Treatment Long-Term Outcomes (10 year follow-up)

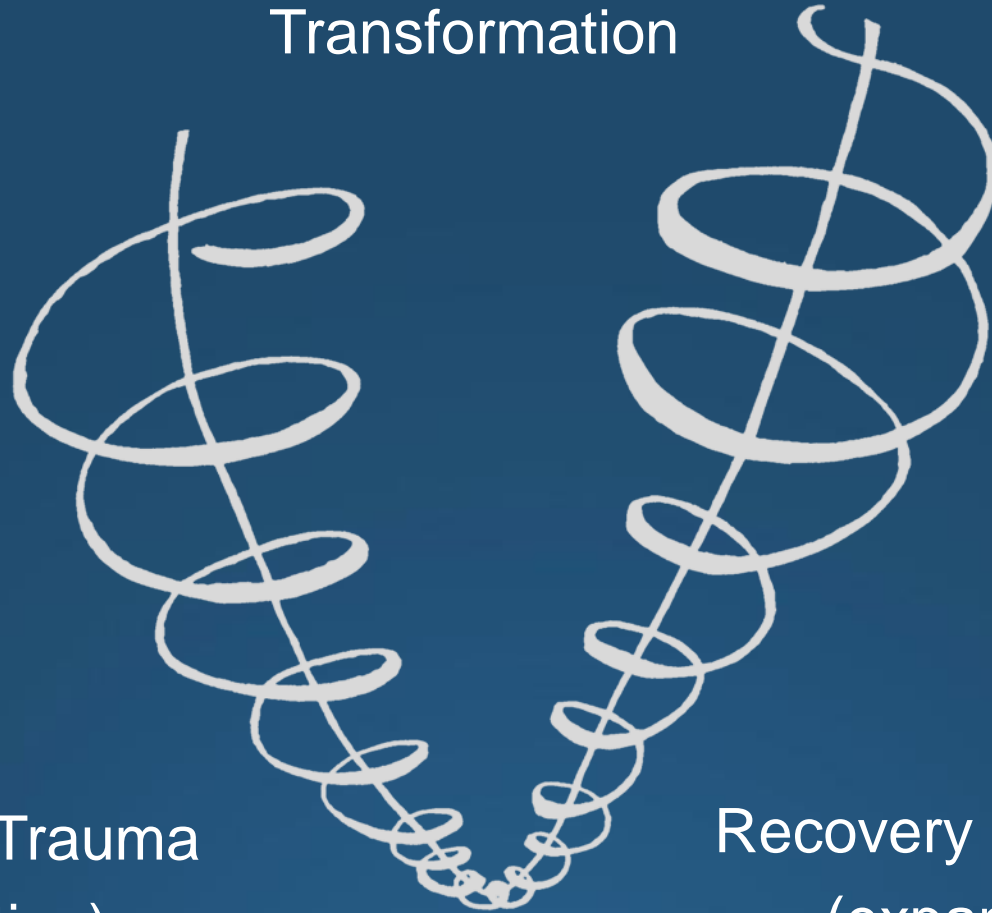
- Women-only (WO) treatment compared to mixed-gender (MG)
- WO increased odds of successful outcome by 49%
 - Substance use
 - Mental health
 - Criminal justice

Definition of Recovery

The definition of **recovery** has shifted from a focus on what is deleted from one's life (alcohol and other drugs, arrests for criminal acts, hospitalizations) to what is added to one's life (the achievement of health and happiness).

Upward Spiral

Transformation



Addiction & Trauma
(constriction)

Recovery & Healing
(expansion)

For More Information

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