Relapse and Recovery:
A crash course on the basics of addiction.

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About the Presenter

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Christopher O’Reilly joined Caron Treatment Centers in 2004 and has held numerous clinical positions within the organization. He currently serves as Clinical Supervisor of the Relapse Unit at Caron Pennsylvania. Christopher is also an adjunct professor in an undergraduate Behavioral Health program at Alvernia University, in Reading, PA.

Christopher earned a bachelor’s degree in psychology, with a minor in addiction studies, Magna Cum Laude, from Alvernia University in 2004 and his master’s degree in community counseling from Alvernia University in 2009. Christopher became a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) in Pennsylvania in 2011. Christopher has obtained several certifications that are pertinent to his role as an addiction professional including Certified Advanced Alcohol and Drug Counselor (CAADC), Advanced Certified Relapse Prevention Specialist (ACRPS) and Certified Sex Addiction Therapist (CSAT).
Goals

• Gain a basic understanding of addiction
• Define relapse as it relates to addiction
• Discuss denial as a factor that complicates recovery efforts
• Identify addiction as a family problem
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.
The Doctor’s Opinion, 1934

“I do not hold with those who believe that alcoholism is entirely a problem of mental control. I have had many men who had, for example, worked a period of months on some problem or business deal which was to be settled on a certain date, favorably to them. They took a drink a day or so prior to the date, and then the phenomenon of craving at once became paramount to all other interests so that the important appointment was not met. These men were not drinking to escape; they were drinking to overcome a craving beyond their mental control.”

pg. XXIX- XXX, AA Big Book
Why do people become addicted?
It’s all about Behaviors

Those recovering from chemical dependency can increase their chances of relapse if they do not change their addictive behaviors.
What does your addiction look like?
What does your addiction look like?
What does your addiction look like?
Relapse

What is relapse?
An event or a process?
Simple or complex problem?
World English Dictionary:

relapse — *vb*

1. to lapse back into a former state or condition, esp one involving bad habits
2. to become ill again after apparent recovery — *n*
3. the act or an instance of relapsing
4. the return of ill health after an apparent or partial recovery
Terence T. Gorski on Relapse

“Relapse is more than just using alcohol or drugs. It is the progressive process of becoming so dysfunctional in recovery that self-medication with alcohol or drugs seems like a reasonable choice.”

“The relapse process is a lot like knocking over a line of dominoes. The first domino hits the second, which hits the third, and soon a progressive chain reaction has started.”

GORSKI-CENAPS Web Publications
(www.tgorski.com; www.cenaps.com; www.relapse.org)
Dry Relapse vs. Wet Relapse

• Dry Relapse - the process of becoming increasingly dysfunctional while abstinent.

• Wet Relapse - actual use of chemicals by a formerly recovered person.

• Wet relapse follows a dry relapse as it is a process.
Relapse Cycle

1. **Loss of Control**
2. **Addictive Thinking**
3. **Pain and Problems**
4. **Old People, Places Things**
5. **I Start Isolating**
6. **I Return to Old Behavior**
7. **I Have Stress Problems**
8. **Return to Old Thinking**
9. **I Stop Growing**
10. **I am Cured**

**Drugs and Alcohol**

**Commit to Stabilize**

**Utilize 12-Step Recovery**

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Addiction & Belief Systems

Bad Getting Good?

OR

Sick Getting Well?
Barrier to Recovery: Denial

Denial is:
- Error in thinking
- Self-deception
- Deception of others
Levels of Denial

1. Lack of Information - Wrong information about addiction & recovery

2. Defensiveness - Knows something is wrong, yet does not want to face the pain

3. Denial - Unconscious defense mechanism to guard against pain and helplessness

4. Delusion - Deeply mistaken belief held in spite of overwhelming evidence to the contrary
Denial & Family

Denial impacts the family too!
Common Family Distortions

“It is his/her problem, I don’t need help.”

“Why don’t you just stop drinking?!?”

“I have had enough, I’m done.”
Family
Relapse Cycle

I return to the obsessive, destructive behaviors

I commit to stabilize

I utilize 12-Step recovery

I am cured

I stop growing

I return to my old thinking

I have stress

I return to my old behaviors

I start isolating

I begin to feel overwhelmed and rushed

I believe I can influence others

I feel inadequate, thoughts of control

I am resentful, filled with blame and shame

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Step 1: Admit Powerlessness

“We perceive that only through utter defeat are we able to take our first steps towards liberation and strength.”

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, pp. 21

“We learned that we had to fully concede to our innermost selves that we were alcoholics. This is the first step in recovery.”

Alcoholics Anonymous, pp. 30
In Conclusion

• Addiction is a complex brain disease
• Relapse happens after a period of recovery
• Addiction is characterized by denial
• The entire family needs recovery
References


Caron Treatment Centers
Comprehensive Addiction Treatment. Recovery for Life.

To help individuals and families achieve Recovery for Life, Caron offers:
- Residential Primary and Extended Care Treatment Programs
- A Residential Relapse Program
- Residential Assessment Programs
- Family Education Programming
- Aftercare Programs
- Outpatient Treatment Options
- Breakthrough at Caron Personal Growth Workshop

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Thanks for attending!

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