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# Objectives:

- Understand the concept of addiction
- Understand specific cultural values/norms as at odds with addiction
- How to implement change

# Wounded Healer

- Carl Jung excerpt

# What Is Addiction?

- **Addiction:** *n.* a state of psychological or physical dependence (or both) on the use of alcohol or other drugs (APA Dictionary of Psychology)
- The term is often used synonymously with *substance dependency*
- NIDA, SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) definition
- **Substance dependency:**
- NSDUH: 19.7 million adults 12+ had a SUD in 2017
- 74% had ETOH use disorder
- 1/8 struggled with both alcohol and drugs
- 8.5 million co-occurring disorder
- Cost to America: \$740 billion to lost productivity, health-care, crime, and related costs

# Addiction – In a Word

- The Hebrew word for addict is *machur*
  - One who was sold
  - Someone with a very strong dependence, physically or mentally, on a particular substance and who finds it very difficult to quit
- The addict is “sold” to a substance or behavior; he is enslaved to it
- ‘Addict’ in Latin
- Helplessness

# Addiction

- 70% of individuals who work in addiction counseling have had a personal experience or family member who's had an experience with addiction.
- How I came to work in addiction

# David Courtwright

- Dark Paradise, a History of Opiate Addiction in America (2001)
- “What we think about addiction very much depends on who’s addicted.” 2001 p.4

# What Is Addictive Thinking? Rabbi Dr. Twerski

- The thought processes of an addict are unique, and similar to those of a schizophrenic person in that they are irrational
- Example of scotch/water
- Addicts are also similar to schizophrenics in that they may exhibit symptoms like delusions, hallucinations, extreme moods, and very abnormal behavior
- However, *addictive* thinking has the unique quality of superficial logic - that is, it seems to make a sort of sense - to the outsider and even sometimes to the addict themselves
- For example, an addict might think or say something like, “I realize that it is perhaps absolutely impossible for me to stop drinking without help.”
- What’s the illogic there? What’s the superficial logic?
- How might the addict and their loved ones be taken in by this kind of thinking?



# Addiction: Illness or Sin

- Addiction is the most stigmatized disease process out there
- Language used to describe people with the disease of addiction
- Addiction is a way of thinking, not of doing – “addictive thinking”
- Part of the disease process includes denial, manipulation, minimizing
- Denial of the illness is one of the hallmark diagnostic criteria

# Some History of Addiction

- 1930s: Dr. Silkworth, Charles B. Towns Hospital, NYC
- American medical doctor, specialist in treatment of alcoholism
- Dr. Allen Leshner
- Kushner 2010

# Jewish Thought & Addiction

- Noach as the first drunk in the Bible
- Judaism endorses rational use of wine – kiddush, etc.
- Some psychologists see addiction as the quest to fulfill a spiritual craving not limited to religion
- In the absence of meaning, addicts overfill on physicality, hoping the next high will fill a spiritual void
- Other researchers see addiction as an external way to solve an internal issue
- “What makes an addict an addict is the *combination* of *two* factors: (1) they are profoundly disturbed and unsettled with their own existence as an entity apart from God; and (2) for reasons unknown, they can somehow briefly simulate relief from this condition by taking their drug of choice” (Rabbi Shais Taub)

# Addiction as a Response to Childhood Trauma:

- Dr. Vincent Felitti's 1980s obesity program
- In 1998, Dr. Felitti joins Dr. Robert Anda of the CDC
- So addiction acts as an inappropriate coping mechanism/soothe/self-medication for childhood trauma, which is extremely important in understanding what drives addictions.
- Studies indicate that ¼ children will have an unwanted sexual touch before the age of 18
- Because of children's egocentrism, victims of abuse carry enormous amounts of shame

# Addiction and Links to the PAG:

- A neurological study done by Vazquez-Leon, et al., 2021 found links between addiction and the periaqueductal gray:
- We know that the PAG is involved in the integration and execution of **active and passive self-protective behaviors against imminent threats** (e.g., fight or flight).
- PAG activity is also associated with the integration of responses against physical discomfort (**e.g., anxiety, fear, pain, and disgust**)
- → **There is a strong neural connection between addiction and the PAG.**

# Spirituality and the Brain

- Neurological bases of spirituality
- We know that secular people can experience this kind of oneness with a greater purpose
- For example, scientists like Albert Einstein reported this feeling of oneness after an epiphany

→ So there is definitely a physical, neurobiological basis for spirituality.

# Spirituality and the PAG...

- What else is linked to the PAG?
- We turn to a 2021 study by Ferguson, et al., published in Biological Psychology tries to find a brain circuit associated with spirituality, defined as “the feeling of connecting to something larger than oneself”
- Used lesion network mapping to identify **an area in the periaqueductal gray**
- My hypothesis: PAG modulates the fear response, PAG modulates the spiritual response, trauma affects a person’s spirituality, trauma and addiction are linked, and addiction has been labeled a spiritual disease.

# **Addiction is a SPIRITUAL DISEASE.**

- This is why we've heard addiction referred to as a “spiritual disease,” for example, by Rabbi Dr. Twerski – the two are intimately connected
- Trauma informs addictions, which is tied to the spiritual center of the brain.
- What we need, then, in our approach to addictions, is to incorporate a spirituality-aware dimension to dealing with them.



# Addiction, Spirituality, and Our Community

- What is the difference between spirituality and religion?
- Characteristics of religion:
  - Religion is collective
  - Religion is a faith represented by man (men)
  - Religious belief is customs, laws, and rituals
- Characteristics of spirituality:
  - Individual
  - No leader necessary
  - Meaning
  - sensual

# Addiction Rates in Orthodoxy

- According to Rabbi Zvi Gluck, CEO of Amudim, overdoses and suicides in the frum community have been at an all-time high in recent years
- No known studies have recorded these statistics

# Addiction Stigma in Orthodoxy

- Anecdotal evidence has suggested that, in past years, stigma surrounding addiction and other issues deemed taboo in *frum* culture inhibited access to recovery resources
- In recent years, perhaps due to the explosion of Jewish media content across digital platforms, or perhaps due to the rapid expansion of crisis organizations like Amudim, the Orthodox community is more comfortable discussing addiction, according to Rabbi Zvi Gluck

# Our Clients, Ourselves - The Spiritual Perspective and Social Work Practice

- Dr. Pat Sermabeikian (March 1994)
- Why do we need spirituality in social work?
- Spirituality as a coping mechanism
- Carl Jung posited a universal concept of spirituality
- To incorporate spirituality there is a need to reverse usual ways of thinking
- Spirituality and humanism - importance noted by Frankl, Fromm, Maslow, Rogers
- Spirituality is a human need that requires that client and worker create comfort to share spirituality
- Practical implications of spiritual practice

# Basic Tenets of Judaism

- Describing Judaism on one foot: Love your fellow as yourself (R' Hillel, R' Akiva)
- Posit that Judaism is all about elevating the physical into the spiritual
- Everything that a Jewish individual does during their day is based on this goal
- This philosophy is found in many areas of Judaism: Tanya, the concept of the good/evil inclination
- Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, *A Lonely Man of Faith*

# Lonely Man of Faith

- Written in 1965 by Rabbi Soloveitchik
- Looks at the first 2 chapters of Bereishis
- Perek aleph: Adam is created
  - Image of G-d
  - Created with Eve
  - Told that he rules the fish, the fowl, and the beasts
  - Has dominion over the world; procreate and fill it
- Perek Bet:
  - Adam starts from a lump of clay/dust
  - HaShem has to breathe life into him, or he is nothing
  - Created without a partner
  - Put into Gan Eden, commanded to “guard and work” it
  - G-d decides he is lonely, put into a deep sleep, has to give his rib in order to create a helpmate

# Lonely Man of Faith Contd.

- Adam I asks one question: HOW
- Adam II asks one question: WHY
- Which Adam is the Adam of mankind?
- Constant struggle from birth between Adam I and Adam II.
- We are an Adam I society. We place great emphasis on Adam I.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MILWTeApqIM&pp=ygUgZGF2aWQgYnJvb2tzIGxvbmVseSBtYW4gb2YgZmFpdGg%3D>

# Addiction Stigma in Orthodoxy

- Anecdotal evidence has suggested that, in past years, stigma surrounding addiction and other issues deemed taboo in *frum* culture inhibited access to recovery resources
- Jewish philosophy appears to be in direct contradiction to the disease of addiction
- Addiction is misunderstood, stigmatized
- Addiction resembles *ta'avah*, desire
- We are commanded not to be *ba'alei ta'avah*
- Continued stigmatization enforces that idea
- Stigma and shame abound in the Jewish community
- Orthodox Jews do not get treatment as quickly as their non-Jewish counterparts



# Mental Health in the Orthodox Jewish Family

- Jews in America are not only a minority in numbers – 2.5% of the American population and 1/100 of 1% of world population. Although America is 83% white, it is 95% Christian, making Judaism a more uncommon phenomenon than non-whiteness. (Straussner 2001 citing Brody 1997). Although these numbers are old, the size of the population we're talking about is still veritably microscopic.
- So we need to tailor our understanding of stigma to the particular community we're talking about. According to SAMSHA, quoting Castro (1998), culture is defined as:
  1. A common heritage and history that is passed from one generation to the next
  2. Shared values, beliefs, customs, behaviors, traditions, institutions, arts, folklore, and lifestyle.
  3. Similar relationship and socialization patterns.
  4. A common pattern of style of communication or language
  5. Geographic location of residents
  6. Patterns of dress and diet.
- For many years, society operated under the myth that religious people were somehow immune to negative influences like mental health issues and substance abuse. There are, in fact, studies that support the idea of low alcoholism rates in the Jewish community (Levav, Kohn, Golding & Weissman, 1997). These studies have shown Jews at a significantly higher risk for major depression among males, and there *is* an inverse relationship between rates of depression and alcohol abuse/dependence.
- However, mental illness seems to occur at the same rates in the Orthodox community and out of it (and the conception that addiction does not exist among us may have more to do with the stigma surrounding it.)

# What is Stigma?

- Stigma is a combination of inaccurate or distorted beliefs, negative attitudes, and discriminatory behaviors, which includes stereotyping and separating of the “us” and “them” (Knifton, 2012)
- **Internalized**
- **Structural**
- **Courtesy stigma**

# Study Question

- Surveyed directors of Orthodox mental health agencies in the tri-state area
- Studied for denial, stigma, and knowledge of addiction
- 43.6% participation rate
- Out of respondents, 75% responded that their clinicians did not know how to treat nor assess for addiction.

# Conclusion

- Community has made great strides (Nefesh 2008)
- But there is still a lot of work to be done
- This necessitates confronting our own discomfort, both in the area of rates of molestation in our community and our own judgments about addiction.
- Actual numbers are still not known because of the tremendous amount of under-reporting
- One of the limitations of the study was the lack of literature surrounding this topic
- Time for meaningful, constructive dialogue regarding molestation and addiction as numbers in our community continue to grow.

# 12 Steps

- What are the 12 steps?
- Do they work?
- Why do they work?
- The Rooms fellowship – principles of program
- Success stories – what is success?
- Spirituality and addiction – our unifier and our hope