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The Relationship between Trauma and Addiction

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Learning Outcomes

- By the end of the webinar, the participants should be able to;
 - i. Define trauma and addiction
 - ii. Appreciate the complex connection between trauma and addiction
 - iii. Understand how Adverse Childhood Experiences(ACEs) affects persons with SUDs
 - iv. Adopt trauma informed approaches when dealing with clients with SUDs

Definition of Addiction

- Addiction is a treatable, chronic medical disease involving **complex interactions among brain circuits, genetics, the environment, and an individual's life experiences**. People with addiction use substances or engage in **behaviors that become compulsive** and often continue despite harmful consequences

ASAM 2019



Substance Use Disorder



- Impaired control
- Social impairment
- Risky use
- Pharmacological criteria
 - Tolerance
 - Dependence

DSM V



TRAUMA DEFINITIONS

- An emotional response to a terrible event e.g an accident, rape, or natural disaster
- Longer term reactions include unpredictable emotions, flashbacks, strained relationships and even physical symptoms like headaches or nausea
- A response resulting from **an event**, series of events, or set of circumstances that is **experienced by an individual** as physically or emotionally harmful or threatening and that **has lasting adverse effects** on the individual's **functioning** and physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being
- **Event + experience of the event + effects = Trauma**

APA

SAMHSA

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder(PTSD)

- An anxiety disorder caused by very stressful, frightening or distressing events

DSM V Criteria

Symptoms presenting **one month** after exposure

1. Exposure to stressor
2. Persistent effortful **avoidance** of distressing trauma-related stimuli after the event
3. **Intrusion symptoms**-Thoughts, nightmares, flashbacks, emotional distress etc

4. Negative **alterations in cognitions and mood** that are associated with the traumatic event

- i. Blame on self
- ii. Inability to recall
- iii. Overly negative thoughts and assumptions about oneself
- iv. Negative affect

Alterations in **arousal and reactivity** that are associated with the traumatic event- irritability, hyper vigilance, difficult concentrating, insomnia



Types of Trauma

- Acute trauma
- Chronic trauma
- Complex trauma
- Secondary trauma, or vicarious trauma
- Historical Traumatic Events
- Inter-generational Traumatic Events
- Collective Traumatic Events



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Examples of Traumatic Events

Human/man made

- War and Terrorism
- Divorce
- Accidents
- Parental abandonment
- Imprisonment
- Witnessing a death/Violence
- Abuse (sexual, emotional, physical)



Natural

- Death of family member, friend
- Serious illness
- Poverty/Drought
- Earthquakes
- Floods
- Fires





THE CONNECTION BETWEEN TRAUMA AND ADDICTION

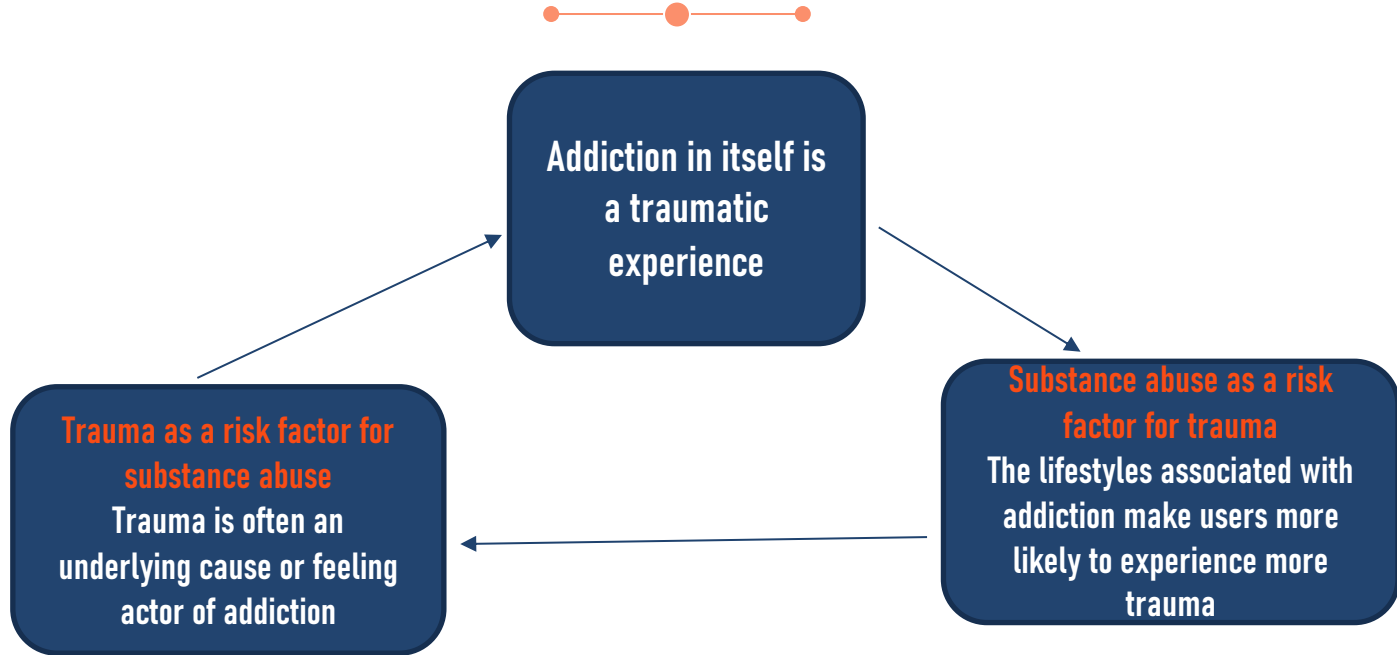


Common Symptoms in Trauma and Addiction

- 
- **Cognitive Disturbance**
 - **Mood disorders (depression)**
 - **Difficulties in affect regulation e.g anger**
 - **Identity disturbance**
 - **Chronic interpersonal difficulties**
 - **Loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities**
 - **Compulsive behaviours/sense of powerlessness**
 - **Anxiety**
 - **Tension reduction activities (suicidality, self-mutilation)**
 - **Survival**
 - **Pain (physical, social and emotional)**



Why addiction and trauma go hand in hand?:The cyclic relationship



STATISTICS

- Rates of witnessing serious injury or death of others and experiencing physical assault are two to three times higher in substance-using individuals than in the general population (Cottler et al., 2001; Kessler et al., 1995).
- Over two-thirds of people seeking treatment for substance use disorder report one or more traumatic life events (Back et al., 2000)
- 22-43% of people living with PTSD have a lifetime prevalence rate of substance use disorders and the rate for veterans is as high as 75% (Jacobsen, Southwick, & Kosten, 2001).

Gambling and PTSD

- Studies of people with gambling problems have found that up to 34% also have PTSD.
- People with gambling problems who also have PTSD are more likely to experience problems such as anxiety, depression, substance use, impulsivity, and they may even attempt suicide.
- People with PTSD more likely to gamble to escape from their problems or their symptoms of PTSD.

Green CL, Nahhas RW, Scoglio AA, Elman I. [Post-traumatic stress symptoms in pathological gambling: Potential evidence of anti-reward processes. *J Behav Addict.* 2017;6\(1\):98-101](#)

Studies on Childhood Traumas and SUD

- **Teens with trauma history (physical or sexual abuse/assault) were three times more likely to report past or current substance abuse than those without (*Kilpatrick, Saunders & Smith 2003*)**
- **More than 70% of adolescents received treatment for SUD had history of trauma exposure (*Funk et al., 2003*)**
- **Compared to physical and sexual abuse, childhood emotional abuse and neglect were more predictive of adult depression (*Powers, Ressler & Bradley, 2009*)**

- **A study on substance use, childhood traumatic experience, and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in an urban civilian population found out that**
 - Significant relationship between exposure to emotional abuse in men to heroin use.**
 - Cocaine use associated with levels of childhood physical, sexual, and emotional abuse as well as current PTSD symptoms**
 - Sexual abuse in women linked to marijuana and cocaine**
 - Strong association between cocaine dependence and PTSD symptoms**

B.S, Lanya & Tang, Yi-Lang & Bradley, Bekh & Ph.D, Joe & Ressler, Kerry. (2010). Substance use, childhood traumatic experience, and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in an urban civilian population. *Depression and Anxiety*. 27. 1077 - 1086. 10.1002/da.20751.

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- **Strong correlation between trauma and addiction among adolescents with up to 59% of young people with PTSD developing substance use problems with girls being more affected (*Deykin, & Buka, 1997*)**
- **Strong association between childhood traumatic events (CTEs) and adult health problems and psychosocial functioning two times the risk for PTSD, current tobacco use, alcohol dependence, injection drug use, sex work and other physical health problems, as well as reduced overall quality of life (*Wu et al., 2010*)**

- **A study on the Impact of Exposure to Childhood Maltreatment on Transitions to Alcohol Dependence in Women and Men showed the following results:**
 - More than half of all women seeking treatment for substance use disorders report at least one lifetime trauma.**
 - People who abuse substances and have experienced trauma have worse treatment outcomes than those without trauma histories.**
 - People who experienced childhood maltreatment initiate drinking earlier than those who do not, and women who experienced childhood maltreatment have a shorter time period between drinking onset and alcohol dependence (telescoping).**

Attachment Theory and Intergenerational Trauma

- Attachments and relationships with the child's primary caregivers in the earliest years of life play a primary role in organizing the child's response to fear and threat and the child's the ability to:
 - Regulate bodily feelings
 - Regulate the expression of emotion
 - Feel worthy of love and care
 - Feel free to explore the world around them
 - Learn to accurately appraise and cope with risk

- **Our response to relationships according to attachment theory is based on attachments (secure, avoidant, anxious-resistant) with people that surround us—either helpful or self-destructive (Bowlby 1958)**
- **When trauma wounds transcend generational gaps, they foster perpetuation of coping skills which could include substance use and other impulsive behaviours progressing to addiction**

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

- ACEs, are potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood (0-17 years),
 - ACEs are linked to chronic health problems, mental illness, and substance misuse in adulthood.
 - Can negatively impact education and job opportunities
- Those who experience trauma in their early years often develop survival mechanisms that are less than helpful in adulthood such as addiction

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)



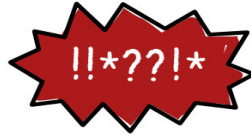
Abuse



Physical abuse



Sexual abuse



Verbal abuse



Emotional neglect



Physical neglect

Growing up in a household where:



There are adults with alcohol and drug problems



There are adults with mental health problems



There is domestic violence



There are adults who have spent time in prison



Parents have separated

THE ACE STUDY

& WHAT IT TELLS US ABOUT ADDICTION

64%

percent of adults have faced one adverse
childhood experience (ACE)

40%

have faced two or more adverse
childhood experiences

ACEs affect brain development, increasing the likelihood of
cognitive defects and mental disorder.

A person with four or more ACEs is

5 TIMES MORE LIKELY

to develop substance
use disorder

A boy with four or more ACEs is

46 TIMES MORE LIKELY

to become an IV drug user
in later life



- **Study in 2019 by the University of Tennessee Health Science Center and the University of Memphis University on the relationship between ACEs and opioid relapse showed that ACEs increase risk of relapse by 17% and ACEs informed treatment reduced it by 2%**

Awareness of ACEs Can Help;

- i. Promote screening assessment of trauma among those seeking treatment with treatment goals being;
 - 1. Shift reliance on survival instincts to healing better coping skills**
 - 2. Self regulation**
 - 3. Regaining of personal power through self control and success****
- ii. Shift the focus from individual responsibility to community solutions.**
- iii. Reduce stigma around seeking help with parenting challenges or for substance misuse, depression, or suicidal thoughts.**
- iv. Promote safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments where children live, learn, and play.**
- v. Promote trauma informed care**

TRAUMA INFORMED CARE

- Remember the three E's of Trauma: Events, Experiences and Effects.
- When working with people affected by trauma we need to keep in mind the following on trauma informed care:

- Core values of trauma informed care

- Safety
- Trustworthiness
- Choice
- Collaboration
- Empowerment

- 4Rs of Trauma Informed Approach

- Realize
- Recognize
- Respond
- Resist traumatization

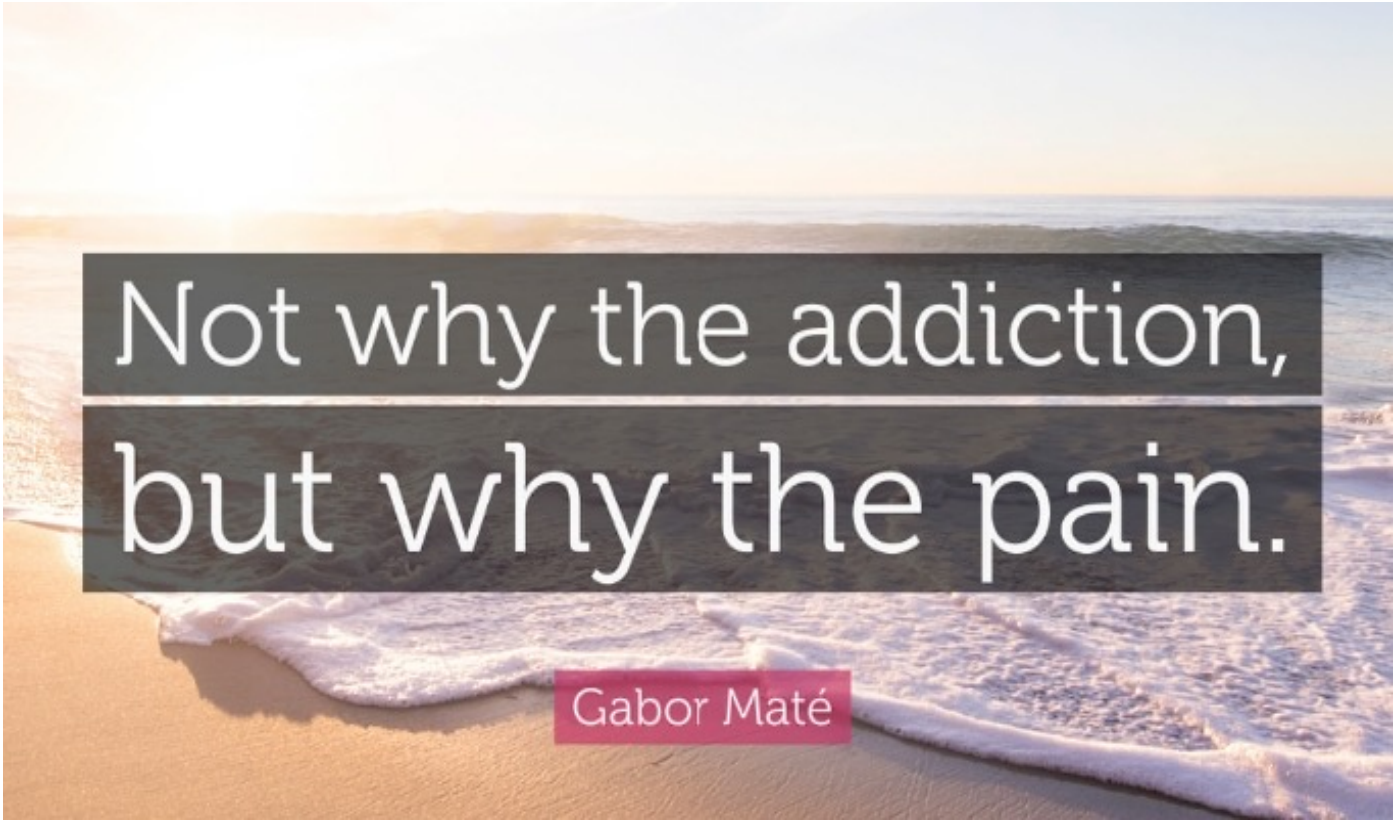


Trauma informed care in SUD Treatment

- ❖ **Screening and assessment for trauma**
- ❖ **Educating Individuals with SUD About Trauma**
- ❖ **Educate Individuals with SUD About the Cognitive Impact of Trauma**
- ❖ **Teach about the triggers**
- ❖ **Avoid traumatization**

Conclusion

- Trauma is associated with a higher risk of later substance use, and substance use predisposes people to higher rates of trauma.
- Understanding relapse contexts for those experiencing PTSD symptoms can help us to understand why there is a poor clinical outcome between the two
- Increased awareness of the comorbidity between trauma, PTSD and addiction is critical both in understanding mechanisms of substance addiction as well as in improving prevention and treatment.

A background image of a beach at sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm, golden glow over the ocean and the sandy shore. Gentle waves with white foam are washing onto the beach.

Not why the addiction,
but why the pain.

Gabor Maté



Catherine Mutiani

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QUESTIONS?

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KENYA chapter 

Thank you!