

## Behavioral Addictions: Exploring Prevalence, Vulnerability Factors and Treatment Interventions

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### (Educational Objectives)

#### This training is designed to help you:

- Define process addictions and increase awareness of global and regional trends on behavioral/process addictions.
- Articulate an understanding of vulnerability factors for behavioral/process addictions.
- Recognize signs and symptoms of behavioral/process addictions and the ways addictive behaviors interact with one another.
- Apply objective goals and treatment interventions to utilize in a therapeutic setting
- Recognize the importance of specific support, coping strategies and aftercare resources to support process addiction recovery.

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## WHAT ARE PROCESS ADDICTIONS?



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## What are behavioral/process addictions?

A **process addiction** (behavioral addiction) is the repetitive occurrence of impulsive behaviors regardless of the negative consequences the behaviors may trigger.

- Behavioral science experts believe that all entities capable of stimulating a person can be addictive; and whenever a habit changes into an obligation, it can be considered as an addiction.
- Behavioral addiction is like drug addiction except that in the former, the individual is not addicted to a substance but addicted to the behavior or the feeling brought about by the relevant action.
- Behavioral addictions have certain symptoms and have similar consequences brought about by addiction to alcohol and drugs as well as other obsessive behaviors.

(Alavi, 2012)

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## What makes it a problem?

- Use larger amounts or longer than intended
- Have a desire or unsuccessful efforts to cut down (restless or irritable when attempting to cut down)
- Preoccupation
- Spend a great deal of time
- Craving
- Recurrent use despite work, home, school consequences
- Use despite interpersonal problems caused by or exacerbated by use
- Social, occupational, or recreational activities given up or reduced
- In situations which it is physically hazardous
- Continue despite knowledge that a physical or psychological problem is caused by or made worse by use
- Participate in behavior when feeling distressed (relief/avoidance seeking)
- Tolerance and/or withdrawal

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## Motives of Addictive Behavior

Psychic reward: 

Recreational reward: 

Instrumental achievement reward: 

(Donovan, 2008)

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**ASAM** [www.asam.org/](http://www.asam.org/)

- 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.
- Addiction is characterized by **inability to consistently abstain, impairment in behavioral control**, craving, diminished recognition of significant problems with one's behaviors and interpersonal relationships, and a dysfunctional emotional response. Like other chronic diseases, addiction often involves cycles of relapse and remission. Without treatment or engagement in recovery activities, addiction is progressive and can result in disability or premature death.

(ASAM, 2016)

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## Reward Area Limbic System

Prefrontal area – higher executive functions, judgment, acting with appropriate decorum.

**dopamine**

prefrontal cortex

nucleus accumbens

amygdala

VTA

Oh WOW!!!

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## Simplifying Brain Chemistry

Schizophrenia Anxiety Happiness

Depression Love Fight or Flight

Dopamine: The Reward/ Pleasure Molecule

Serotonin: The Confidence/ Self-Esteem Molecule

Oxytocin: The Bonding/Connection Molecule

Norepinephrine: The Danger Molecule

Epinephrine: The Energy Molecule

What feeling states are the ones your brain seeks compulsively?

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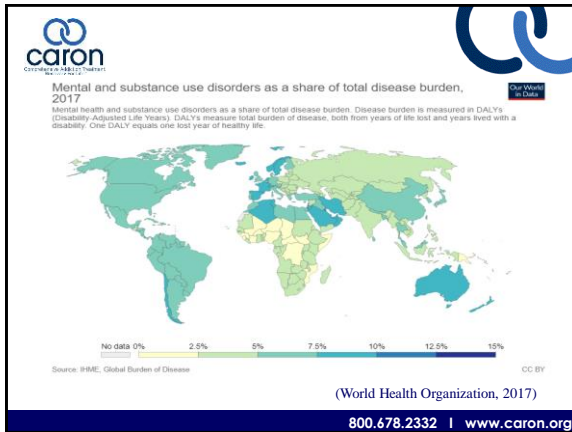
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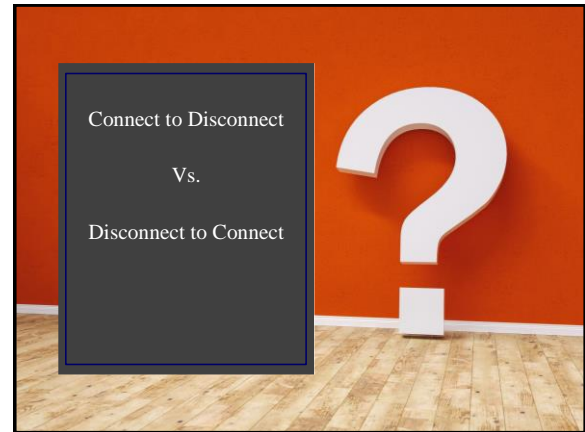
## BEHAVIORAL ADDICTIONS AND GLOBAL TRENDS

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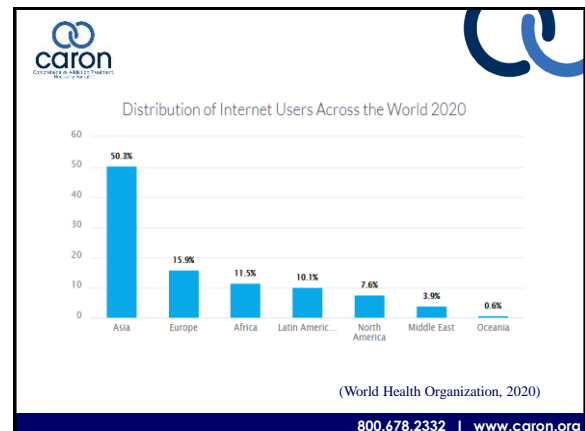
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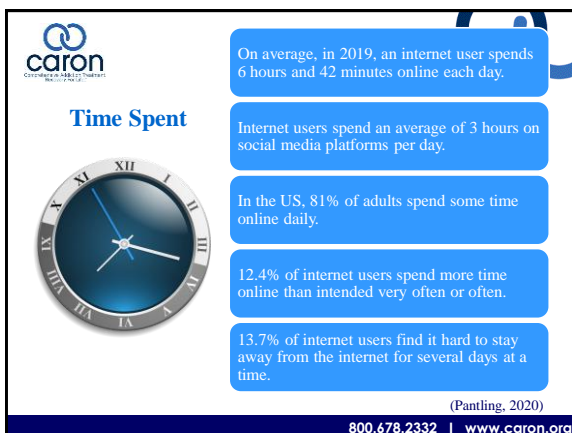
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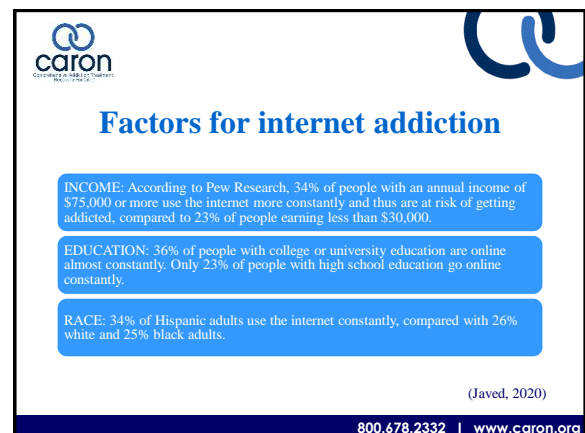
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## Internet Addiction: When it becomes a problem

- Studies show that internet addiction impairs various functions of life.
- Internet addiction can lead to internet gaming disorder, which in turn has adverse effects on psychological functions.
- Internet addiction is associated with mood disorders, poor sleep quality, impulsivity, low self-esteem, and suicide.
- Internet addiction has a negative effect on the part of the brain that's involved in decision making, executive attention, cognitive control, and emotional processing.
- Internet addiction causes 50% of workers today to suffer severe occupational impairment.
- 5.9% of internet addicts say that their relationships went south as a result of excessive internet use.

(D'Arienzo, 2019)

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## Internet Addiction: When it becomes a problem (cont.)

- 12.3% of internet addicts have seen the need to stop or regulate internet use at some point.
- 8.2% of technology or internet addicts are aware of their status, and so they try to hide non-essential use of the internet from friends, family, and employers.
- Common emotional symptoms: anxiety, depression, a feeling of guilt, isolation, dishonesty, agitation, mood swings, and defensiveness.
- Common physical symptoms: headaches, insomnia, carpal tunnel syndrome, backache, neck pain, poor nutrition, and dry eyes.
- 35.4% of high school students show signs of internet addiction.**

(Javed, 2020)

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**2,617** times per day  
The number of times average mobile phone users will tap, swipe, and click their phones

**75.4%** OF AMERICANS  
consider themselves addicted to their mobile phones

**25%** are dealing with problematic mobile phone usage

Sources: DIY Genius, 2020; DailyWireless, 2020; Reviews.org, 2020

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**Internet Addiction**

Dangers of Screen time:

- Connection versus disconnection
- Difficulties falling asleep
  - Somewhat due to light emission
  - Somewhat due to stimulation

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## 3 Technology Addiction Statistics You Must Know

**1. Video Gaming Addiction Statistics**

6 h 20 min: average time spent by "normal" video game players each week

80-100 h: average time spent by "problem gamers" each week

90%: gamers who do not play to ease that boredom

72%: addicts who are relatively hard to deter from gaming activities

18%: addicts who experience symptoms that affect other areas of life

10%: addicts who showed increasing levels of psychological game symptoms

**2. Internet Addiction Statistics**

75%: internet addicts who suffer from relationship problems

70%: internet addicts who also suffer from other forms of addiction

60%: increase in new cases of internet addiction due to rising cybersexual content

**3. Mobile Phone Addiction Statistics**

94.0%: share of global population who couldn't go a single day without their mobile phones

5.4%: Americans who consider themselves addicted to their mobile phones

30.0%: teens who feel they are addicted to their mobile phones

27.0%: parents who feel they are addicted to their mobile phones

25.0%: young people who are dealing with problematic mobile phone usage

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## Internet/Screen Addiction

- What we do online matters:
  - Time spent:
    - Pornography
    - Gambling
    - Gaming
    - Shopping
    - Social media
    - Work



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## Gambling Disorders



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**Gambling Disorder**

- 9 criteria
- 2 kinds: Active and passive
- 6 Types: casual social, serious social, relief/escape, pathological, antisocial, professional
- 4 phases: winning, losing, desperation, terminal


(DSM 5, 2019)

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**Internet Gaming Disorder**

- Must cause "significant impairment or distress" in several aspects of life. (DSM-5)
- Obsession and compulsion leading to significant interruption in other areas of life and healthy functioning
  - Time
  - Money
  - Relationships
  - Health and safety

(APA, 2019)



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## Internet Gaming Disorder

- Defined as an addiction by the Chinese government
- Also commonly referred to as: Internet use disorder, Internet addiction, or gaming addiction
- Under "Conditions for Further Study" in the DSM 5
- Comorbidity: MDD, ADHD, OCD

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## Gaming

- Stay-at-home mandates and quarantines have increased consumption of digital entertainment, particularly online gaming and related activities (e.g., esports viewing and videogame streaming) (Javed, 2020; Perez, 2020).
- Verizon, a US-based telecommunications provider, reported a 75% increase in online gaming activity coinciding with initial stay-at-home directives (Pantling, 2020).
- In Italy, a 70% increase in *Fortnite*-gaming-related Internet traffic was reported (Lepido & Rolander, 2020).
- Steam, a leading gaming distributor, reported more than 20 million concurrent active users, the most in its 16-year history, and live-streaming platforms *YouTube Gaming* and *Twitch* reported 10% increase in viewership (Stephen, 2020).

(Pantling, 2020)

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## Most commonly un-talked about addictions



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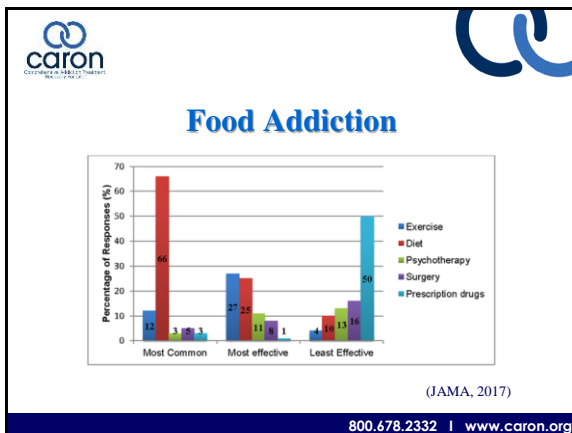




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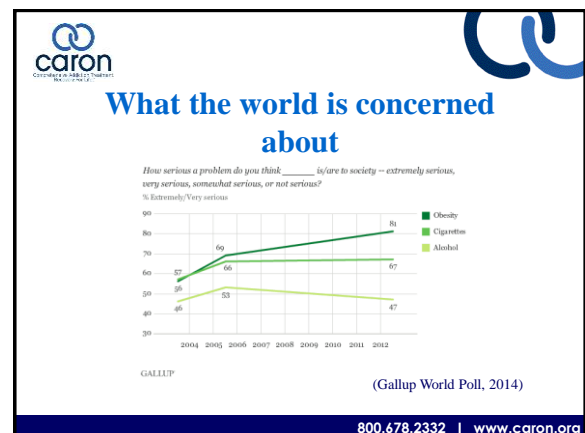
Sample Characteristics	Sample n=478 n=70	Sample n=478 n=70	Sample n=478 n=70
Age	30 (6.3%)	45 (9.4%)	21 (4.3%)
Gender	24 (5.0%)	24 (5.0%)	24 (5.0%)
Ethnicity	24 (5.0%)	24 (5.0%)	24 (5.0%)
Education	24 (5.0%)	24 (5.0%)	24 (5.0%)
Employment	24 (5.0%)	24 (5.0%)	24 (5.0%)
Marital status	24 (5.0%)	24 (5.0%)	24 (5.0%)
Health insurance	24 (5.0%)	24 (5.0%)	24 (5.0%)
Health status	24 (5.0%)	24 (5.0%)	24 (5.0%)
Healthcare access	24 (5.0%)	24 (5.0%)	24 (5.0%)
Healthcare use	24 (5.0%)	24 (5.0%)	24 (5.0%)
Healthcare cost	24 (5.0%)	24 (5.0%)	24 (5.0%)
Healthcare quality	24 (5.0%)	24 (5.0%)	24 (5.0%)
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Healthcare cost	24 (5.0%)	24 (5.0%)	24 (5.0%)
Healthcare quality	24 (5.0%)	24 (5.0%)	24 (5.0%)

(JAMA, 2017)


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## Sex and Pornography

- Online pornography use **increased significantly** in each country across the world as those countries closed down to quarantine, starting with Italy.
- Typical increase was from **4%-24%** (as measured the last week in February until the third week in March).
- In areas where Pornhub made its premium services free, increases were significantly higher: **57%** in Italy, **38%** in France, and **61%** in Spain.
- US pornography traffic changes started to spike significantly around the end of March, typically **up 18%-21%**. Broken down by day, there was **more pornography traffic** Tuesday through Saturday with dips in traffic Sunday and Monday.
- On Aug 24, 2020, Zoom experienced a major outage in the UK and East Coast of the U.S. Pornhub traffic increased in both of those areas by **5.6-6.2%** during that time. (Likewise, in March 2019 both Facebook and Instagram were down for several hours, during which time Pornhub saw a **19% surge** in traffic.)

(Pornhub, 2021)

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## The Science of Porn

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Ya67aLaaCc>

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## VULNERABILITY FACTORS AND CONTRIBUTORS: WHAT WE KNOW

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## Vulnerability Factors

Nature	Nurture
• Genetics	• Cultural norms
• Neurochemical irregularities	• Family dynamics
• Dopamine in brain reward regions	• Social circumstances
• Developmental trajectory	• Trauma factors
	• Environmental factors (diet, etc.)

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## Neuroscientist Casper Schmidt on compulsive sexual behaviors

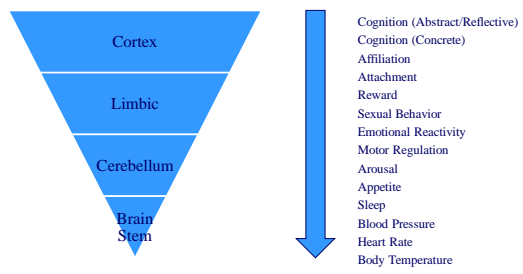
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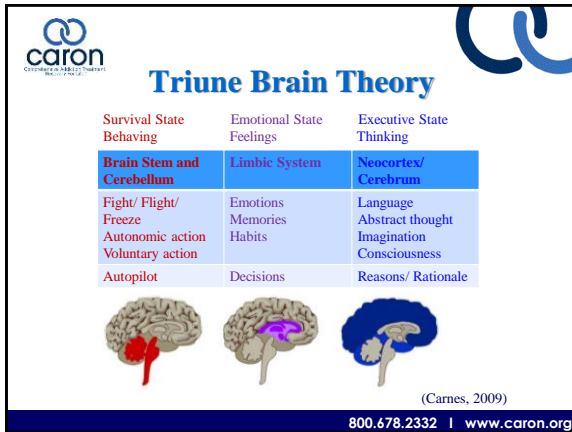


## Vulnerability Factors: Brain Development Contributors

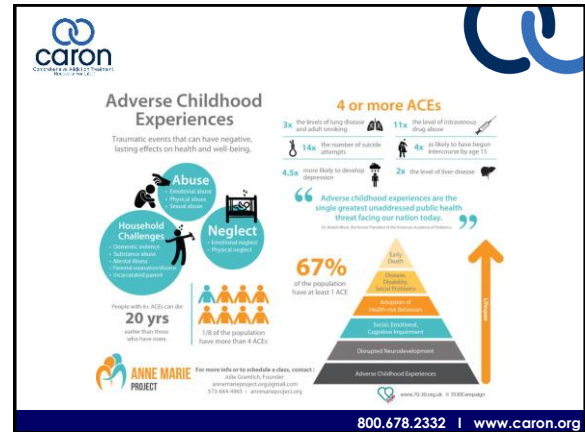


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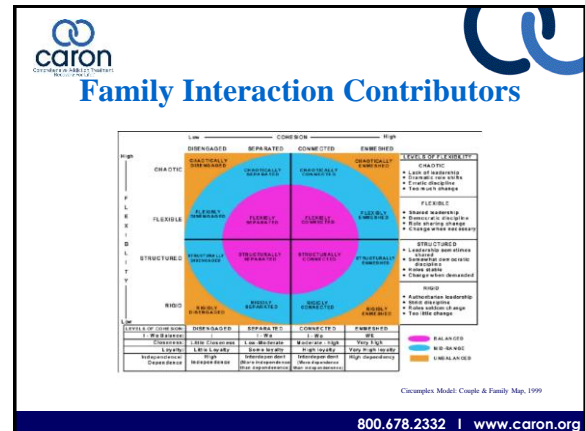
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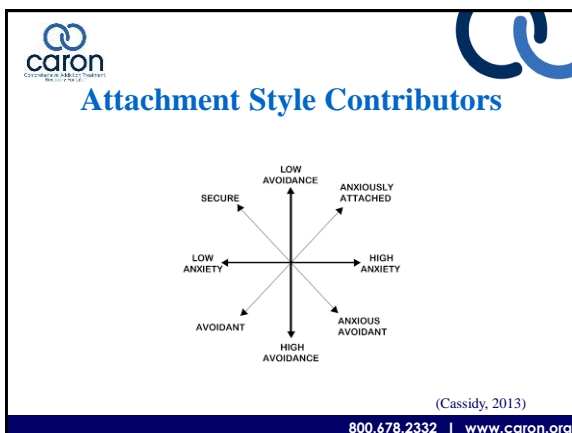
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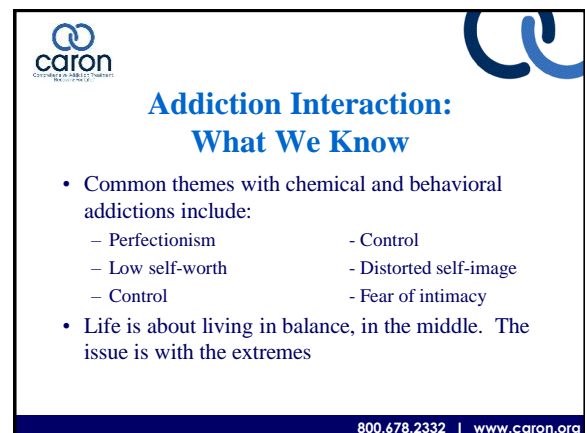
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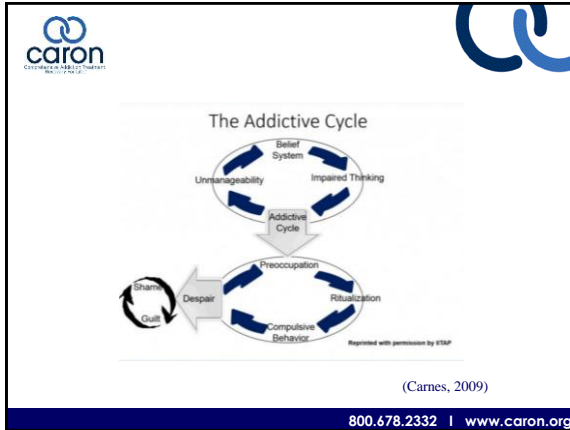


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### Possible Workplace Contributors

- High stress
- High demand, low control situations
- Low job satisfaction
- Long or irregular hours
- Fatigue

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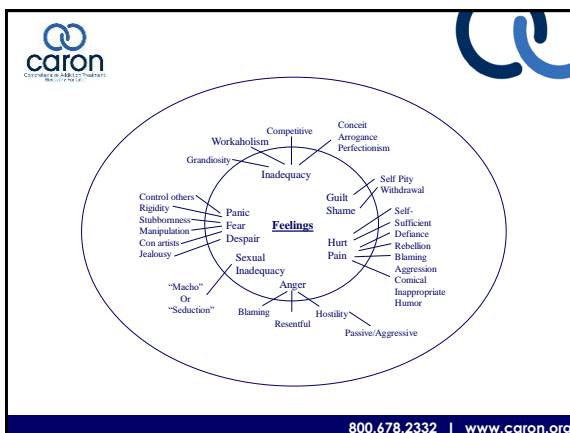
### Possible Workplace Contributors

- Repetitious duties
- Periods of inactivity or boredom
- Isolation
- Lack of opportunity for advancement

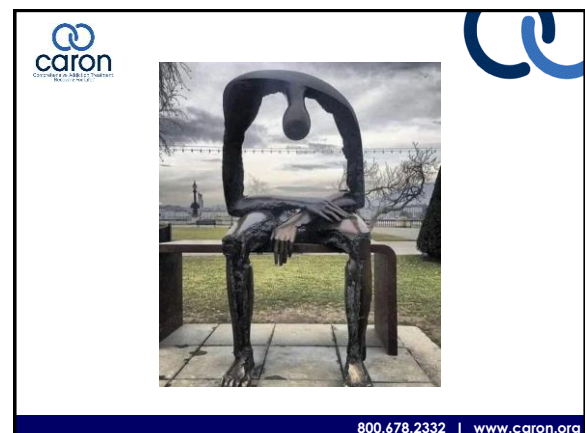
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### Sex Addiction

- Normal versus healthy
  - Normal is that which happens most of time
  - Normal does not mean healthy
  - Healthy is “that which supports the growth and wellbeing of the organism, and its adaptability to survive”
- What is healthy sex?
  - Healthy for me, my partner, AND my health?
  - Physical, mental, spiritual connection
  - Is there shame and guilt associated? Secret keeping?

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### Comparison

<b>Addiction</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fantasy</li> <li>• Secrets</li> <li>• Lies/dishonesty</li> <li>• Shame</li> <li>• Ego</li> </ul>	<b>Recovery</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connection</li> <li>• Vulnerability</li> <li>• Intimacy</li> <li>• “Emotional sobriety”</li> </ul>
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### Stages of Courtship



1. Attraction
2. Flirtation
3. Demonstration
4. Romance
5. Touching
6. Foreplay
7. Intercourse
8. Intimacy
9. Renewal

(Carnes, 2009)

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### ADDICTION INTERACTION

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## The one addiction illusion.

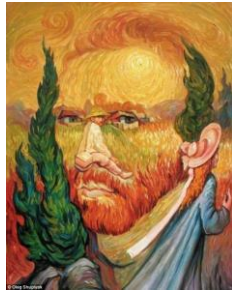


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## The one addiction illusion.



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## Addiction is complex and messy.



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## Addiction Interaction

- Looking at the complexity of how addictions interact and complicate recovery.
- Addictions do more than coexist. They in fact interact, reinforce, and become part of one another.

Patrick Carnes, Ph.D.



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## Withdrawal Mediation

- One addiction is used to moderate, relieve, or avoid withdrawal from another.
- Interaction occurs when one addiction is used to stop another.

Example: Benzodiazepines assist with tech withdrawal

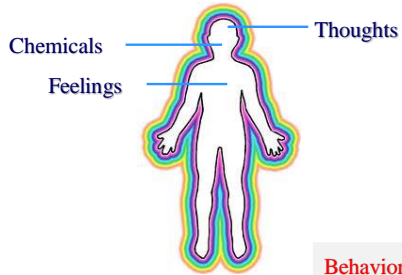


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## Withdrawal Mediation



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## Replacement

- One addiction replaces another with all the behavioral features.
- Replacement happens after withdrawal subsides.

Example: Excessive exercise replaces alcohol. Lying, secretiveness, denial, unmanageability continues...



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## Cross Tolerance

- Two or more addictions increase the addict's ability to engage in more addictive behavior.
- Tolerance can be high with added addictions.

Examples: Cocaine/stimulant can provide energy/arousal to have sex, work, make investments, etc.




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## Alternating Cycles

- Addictions cycle back and forth in a patterned systematic way.
- Examples: Alcoholism is put into remission; food addiction becomes out of control. Drinking resumes and out of control eating subsides. Over and over...




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## Masking

- One addiction is used to cover up for another, perhaps more problematic addiction.
- Example: Blame sexual behavior on drinking. Person stops drinking and sexual acting out continues.




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## Rituals

- Addictive behavior of one addiction serves as a ritual pattern to engage another.
- Activates the pleasure center of the brain.
- Example: rituals related to work; specific drinks while gambling



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## Fusion

- Two or more addictions are used simultaneously and become one entity.



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## Inclusion

- One addiction serves as a background for all other addiction.
- Example: Addict drinks while engaging in sex, gambling, and work.




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## TREATMENT GOALS AND INTERVENTIONS

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## #1 Raise Awareness

- Secondary assessments
  - SOGS, GA-20, SAST, EAT-26, IAT
- First Step Prep
- Assess for support groups
- Explore DSM 5 Criteria for Addiction
- Educate on the Neurobiology of Behavioral Addictions

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## #2 Identify Addictive Behaviors



(Carnes, 2011)

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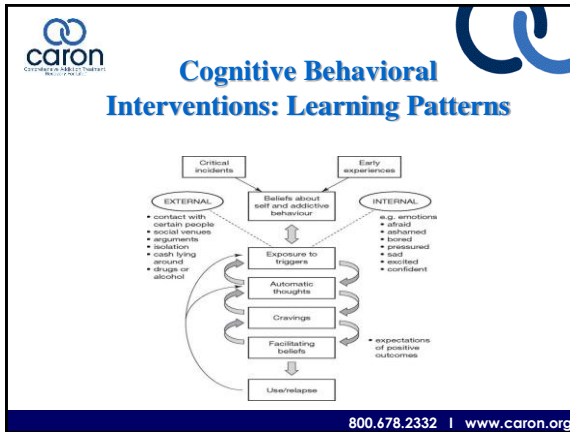
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## Cognitive-Behavioral Interventions: Awareness building

- 1 Identify 10 examples of powerlessness and 10 examples of unmanageability as it relates to a specific AID related behavior
- 2 Identify personal examples of each 11 criteria for addictive disorder and coping skills to manage each
- 3 Identify the payoffs and consequences of a specific AID related behavior and share in session 1x
- 4 Attend the medical disease lecture and AID lecture. Identify 10 new awarenesses of how I can relate to brain chemistry playing a role in addictive behaviors

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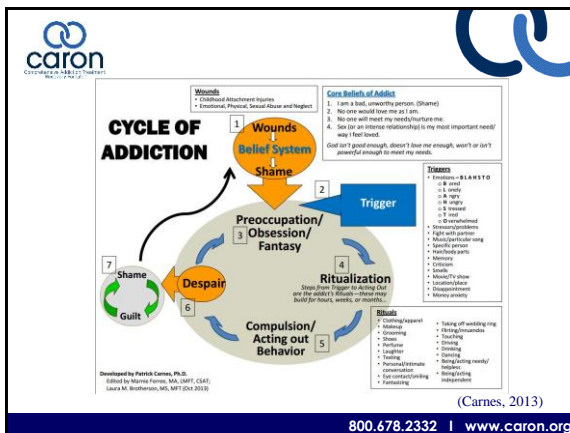
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**Cognitive-Behavioral Interventions**

- Journal feelings and experiences with \_\_\_\_\_ (betting, sexual fantasy, masturbation, checking stocks, etc.) and process what you're becoming more aware of.
- Make a 5-day abstinence commitment from \_\_\_\_\_ (betting sexual fantasy, masturbation, checking stocks, etc.) and process your experience.
- Complete a cravings journal
- Complete an Addiction Cycle Handout

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**#3 Explore Payoffs & Consequences**  
*It's not about the "what" but about the "why"*

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**#3 Explore Payoffs & Consequences**

Gambling for example:

- Passive gambling is about...
  - Escaping
  - Relief
  - Being someone else, someplace different
- Action gambling is about...
  - Winning
  - Ego
  - Being on top
- Gambling is not about money. If there's money involved, it's not about the money; it's about what money means...(power, stature, control)

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**#4 Help them think about "Abstinence-based" vs "Bottom-line" Recovery**

- How do you know when you have relapsed on substance addiction?
- How do you know when you have relapsed on behavioral addiction?

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**ADDICTIVE BEHAVIORS:  
WHAT ARE THEY?**

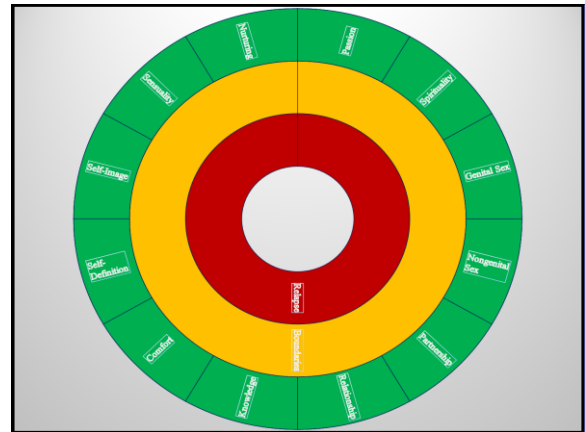
**HIGH RISK BEHAVIORS:  
WHAT ARE THEY?**

**HEALTHY BEHAVIORS:  
WHAT ARE THEY?**



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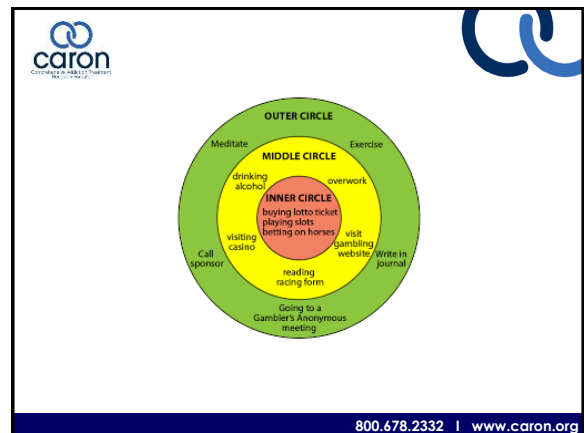
## Cognitive-Behavioral Interventions: Relapse Prevention

Identifying abstinent vs. bottom line behaviors



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## #5 Build Resilience: the ability to adapt well to stress

Emotional Regulation: The ability to control our emotions, attention, and thus our behavior


Reaching Out: The continued drive to take on more opportunities and challenges

Empathy: Able to read others behavior, to understand their states, and build relationships

Impulse Control: The ability to manage expression of our feelings.

Accurate Identification: of the cause of adversity

Self-efficacy: The sense that we can solve problems and succeed



(Alavi, 2012)

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*"Out of suffering have emerged the strongest souls; the most massive characters are seared with scars."*



**Resilience**  
The Courage to Come Back

- Kahlil Gibran

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## #6 Help them make a mind/body connection



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## Mindful awareness

“The state of receptive awareness that enables us to pay attention to what is happening right now without judgment.”  
- Jon Kabat Zinn

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## Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) Interventions

- Awareness of thought and attention
- Daily seated meditation
- Body scan to identify tension in areas of the body
- Allowance for letting go of thoughts and craving
- Increasing non-judgmental self view
- Impulse control: creating space between the thought/urge and the action

(Gard, 2016)

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## MBSR Meditations for Process Addictions

- Body Scan
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QS2yDmWk0vs>
- RAIN (recognize, allow, investigate, nurture)
  - <https://palousemindfulness.com/meditations/RAIN.html>
- Urge Surfing
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pXWQXDxXg5U>

(Gard, 2016)

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## #7 Give them a visual to remember

- Personal Crazyness Index
- Therapeutic Art interventions
- Experiential interventions

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## What does your addiction look like?



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Mysteriously perfect. Something behind this mask lays quiet. Hidden. To the world she is beauty but underneath is pain beyond her years. She uses this as a defense but at the same time, she is yearning to be known. Everyone assumes who she is and she plays along because if you really knew her, you just might not like her. She is broken and fragile, but she is determined to break through the perfection so that she may build herself up from within. One day, her heart of gold will shine from within and she will conquer rather than be defeated.

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## Experiential Interventions

- Emotions Exercise (with hypo vs. hyper arousal)
  - What emotion do you struggle with?
  - Do you amp up or shut down to avoid?
  - What emotion do you respond well to?
  - Choose a bank; connect with others
- Asking defiance what the agenda is:
  - Defiance, hurt or essence

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## Experiential Interventions

Life is about living in balance, in the middle. The issue is with the extremes:

Over eating ----- malnutrition  
Sexual acting out ----- sexual anorexia  
Over spending ----- hoarding money

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## Behavioral Addictions: Health vs. Unhealthy

Healthy vs Unhealthy

HEALTHY	LIFE ON LIFE'S TERMS	UNHEALTHY
VULNERABILITY	Exploring Purpose	Disconnect
INTIMACY	Loneliness	Removed
	Pain	Surreal
	Emotional Discomfort	Numb
	Shame	Secrecy
	Accepting Change	Fantasy
		Escape

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## #7 Give them tools and Resources

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## Books and Resources

- Out of the Shadows by Patrick Carnes for Sex Addiction
- Mending a Shattered Heart by Stephanie Carnes for significant others of sex addicts
- Cyber Junkie by Kevin Roberts to learn about escaping the gaming and internet trap
- Closer Together, Further Apart by Rob Weiss on the effect of technology and the internet on parenting, work and relationships
- The Nine Domains of Integration article by Dan Siegel
- Articles by Bessel Von Kolk promote understanding of trauma repetition
- Books by Louis Cozolino help explain the parallels between neuroscience and psychotherapy

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## #8 Empower them to make continuing care decisions:

- Recovery Action Plan
- Home contracts
- Relapse prevention planning
- CSAT referral
- Family integration and involvement
- Bridging the gap of services
- Recovery Support Groups

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## Food Addiction

- Overeaters Anonymous – <http://www.oe.org/>
- Food Addicts Anonymous – <http://foodaddictsanonymous.org/>
- Overeaters Anonymous – <http://www.oea.org/>

## Gambling Addiction

- Gamblers Anonymous – <http://www.gamblersanonymous.org/>
- Bettors Anonymous – <http://www.bettorsanonymous.org/>

## Spending Addiction

- Debtors Anonymous – <http://debtorsanonymous.org/>
- Spenders Anonymous – <http://www.spenders.org/>

## Work Addiction

- Workaholics Anonymous – <http://www.workaholics-anonymous.org/>

## Sex Addiction

- Love Addicts Anonymous – <http://www.loveaddicts.org/>
- Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous – <http://www.slaaether.org/>
- Sex Addicts Anonymous – <http://www.sesaa.org/>

## Internet Addiction

- Internet and Technology Addicts Anonymous – <http://www.internetaddictsanonymous.org/>

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## In Conclusion..

- Addictive behaviors are common.
- Increased awareness is the first step to change.
- Comprehensive assessment and treatment may be needed.
- Our goal is to increase awareness and provide recommendations and support

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