Gender Differences: Treatment and Recovery

Kate Appleman MA, CAADC, CCS, CMAT
Erin Goodhart LPC, MA, CAADC, CCS, ACRPS, C-SAT Candidate

Objectives

- Gain knowledge of biological differences between men and women
- Understand how societal expectations and norms impact development
- Gain insight into gender specific treatment barriers
- Process common treatment themes
- Increase practical application of relapse prevention skills and considerations

Nature vs. Nurture: Biological Factors

Prenatal Development

- Differences by gender are seen at 26 weeks
- Hyperarousal = hair-triggering reaction
- Male infants startle 5x more quickly than female infants and are provoked by less stimulation

Linguistic differences

- Corpus callosum is thicker for women
- Increased linguistic skills for girls
- Girls outperform boys in language and fine motor skills until puberty

Nature vs. Nurture: Biological Factors
Nature vs. Nurture: Biological Factors

Emotional Development

- Frontal cortex is more organized with women
- Ability to identify and control emotions varies
- Women tend to be faster to ID emotions
  - Encoding facial differences
- Women tend to be better at controlling emotions
  - Use more control to navigate aggression and anger responses

What about stress?

- Performance under stress: Studies show male enhanced performance under stress, while women are more likely to be impaired or reduced
- Cognitive tasks under pressure: Women use more verbal strategy than men when performing a cognitive task

Nature Vs. Nurture: Biological Factors

What about stress?

- Stress has been found to induce an increase in serotonin, norepinephrine and dopamine levels within the amygdala of male rats, but not within that of female rats.
Nature vs Nurture: Social Factors

- Nurture
  - Identity Development
  - Familial expectations
  - Gender roles

Nature vs Nurture: Social Factors

- Nurture
  - Societal norms
  - Socialization

Treatment Barriers

- Women
  - Family pressure
  - Stigma
  - Self-Esteem
  - F.E.A.R.

Treatment Barriers

- Men
  - Employment/$
  - Family Pressure
  - Self-image: pride
  - Self-reliance & self-efficacy
  - SHAME
Women

“I can’t leave my family”

Self Esteem

FEAR

“Box of Masculinity”

Treatment Themes for Men

Men

“I have to get back to work”

Self Reliance

SHAME

800.678.2332 | www.caron.org
“Box of Masculinity”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KYvWhzSKoc4

“Box of Masculinity”

- Masculinity is a multidimensional, culturally bound, fundamental aspect of a man’s identity (Englar-Carlson, 2006)
- Western social expectations for men include being emotionally restrictive, competitive and self reliant (Englar-Carlson, 2006)

It is important to recognize that gender role strain and gendered expectations may influence men’s addiction, their personal development, and the treatment process (Woodford, 2012)

- For many men, the use of drugs and alcohol may mark the rite of passage into manhood during expected life transitions (CSAT, 2013)

Relationships
• The male-female disconnection is the biggest single factor in the soaring divorce rate. Some 80% of divorcees say they "grew apart." (Love, 2007)
• Research shows the single biggest sex difference in emotions is the frequency and intensity of fear (more in women)
• At the core, men react to hyperarousal and shame

• Hyperarousal = hair-triggering reaction;
  – male infants startle 5x more quickly than female infants and are provoked by less stimulation
  – Men have greater strength and muscle mass, ore likely to fight off predators = hyperarousal has a distinct survival advantage
• What does this mean? – men have discomfort of overstimulation which impacts relational factors

• Guarded response \implies Lack of interest
• Men behaviorally show love and affect, while women verbalize it (think about neurological differences between men and women)

• Where did I come from? (Dad)
• Where am I going? (Me)
• What is my legacy? (Son/Child)
Vulnerability & Shame

- Shame - is so painful for men that they will go to great lengths to avoid it.
- “All you have to do for a man to become physically or verbally aggressive is to threaten him with shame.” (Love, 2007)

Vulnerability & Shame

- Self Efficacy & control
- Weakness and vulnerability: inconsistent with demeanor and societal expectation
- Compartmentalization
- Insides matching outsides: Who we are vs. who we think others want us to be

Grief and Loss
Grief and Loss

- The silence of grief
- “Swallow the pain”
- Expectation to be strong for others
- “Big boys don’t cry

Anger
Sarcasm
Depression
Sadness
Hurt
Loss

Asking for Help

Treatment Themes for LGTBQ
LGBTQ Community

- Health Disparities in LGBT Community
  - Increase tobacco & SUDS
  - Increase mental health concerns
  - Increase Cancers
  - Increase of violence and abuse
  - Increase in IV/AIDS
  - Decrease in insurance coverage
  - Decrease in access to preventative screenings

LGBTQ Population

- Needs to focus on substance use. However, also needs to focus on feelings about sexual orientation and gender identity
- Greater predisposition to substance use among LGBTQ individuals as substance use is often part of the social culture
- Important to be aware of clinicians’ own biases regarding LGBTQ individuals and in group settings the facilitator needs to have the ability to have strong verbal direction that homophobia and hostility will not be tolerated.

LGBTQ Clinical Issues

- Lesbian clients: higher rates of SUD that heterosexual woman. 21% sexually abused as children and 15% abused as adults.
- Gay Male clients: Bars & parties important part of social life. Must address loss, increase intimacy & decrease shame.
- Bisexual clients: Often feel alienated from heterosexual & homosexual community.
- Transgender clients: high rates of SUD, abuse and many clinical issues. Societal and internalize transphobia, violence, discrimination, family problems, isolation, lack of access to resources and self-esteem must be addressed. Focus on hormone therapies. Clinical teams needs to be aware of their biases and not make assumptions.
Emotional Regulation

- Reduce emotional suffering...not get rid of emotions
- What do they do for us?
  - Give us info
  - Communicate and influence others
  - Motivate and prepare use for action
- Goal is to improve ability to identify, experience and express emotions

Treatment Themes for Women

Women and Relationships

DBT Basic Assumptions

1. Patients are doing the best that they can
2. Patients want to improve
3. Patients need to do better, try hard, and be more motivated to change
4. Patients may not have caused all their own problems but they have to solve them anyway
5. The lives of suicidal, borderline individuals are unbearable as they are currently being lived
6. Patients must learn new behaviors in all relevant contexts
7. Patients cannot fail in treatment
8. Therapists treating patients need support

- How would you describe the relationships with women in your life?
- Most women do not have a history of healthy relationship
- Women need women in their life who will empower, support and encourage them. This needs to be fostered in a treatment setting
- Partners and family are essential to the treatment process
- Women are defined based on their roles and relationships
Women and Shame

- Treatment providers need to be aware of their own biases about women and addicts.
- The issue of women being the nurturer and caregiver needs to be addressed as addiction tends to violate values around motherhood.
- We can’t “get rid” of shame…therapy is about working through shame
  - Experiential activity

Motherhood

- 66% of caregivers are women.
- Stats from 2015 show a baby is born addicted to opioids every 19 minutes.
- Women are more likely to seek out and stay in treatment longer if they are able to maintain their role as caregiver.
- Fear around children being taken away.
- Expectations of motherhood vs reality of motherhood.
- Empty nest and changing roles.

Trauma
### Common Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance</td>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td>Achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>Beauty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change</td>
<td>Comfort</td>
<td>Commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation</td>
<td>Courtesy</td>
<td>Creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecology</td>
<td>Excitement</td>
<td>Fame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Fitness</td>
<td>Flexibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generosity</td>
<td>Genuineness</td>
<td>G-d’s Will</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helpfulness</td>
<td>Honesty</td>
<td>Hope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>Inner Peace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>Leisure</td>
<td>Loved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindfulness</td>
<td>Moderation</td>
<td>Monogamy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>Order</td>
<td>Passion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Rationality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk</td>
<td>Romance</td>
<td>Reality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Esteem</td>
<td>Self-Knowledge</td>
<td>Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solitude</td>
<td>Spirituality</td>
<td>Stability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtue</td>
<td>Wealth</td>
<td>World Peace</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Other Themes**

- Creativity
- Dependability
- Duty
- Faithfulness
- Friendship
- Growth
- Humor
- Intimacy
- Mastery
- Nurturance
- Popularity
- Self-Acceptance
- Self-Control
- Sexuality
- Simplicity
- Tolerance
- Tradition
- Trust

---

**Relapse Prevention**

- Work
- Family & Relationships
- Physical Health
- Social
- Self
- Spirituality
- Money

---

**Contact Information**

800.678.2332 | www.caron.org
• “So often times it happens that we live our lives in chains and we never even know we have the key”

– The Eagles

References


