

# Understanding The Cultures of Addiction and Criminality

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# Cultures of Addiction and Criminality

- The cultures of addiction and criminality are an informal social network in which group norms (prescribed patterns of perceiving, thinking, feeling and behaving) promote excessive drug use and involvement in criminal activity.
- They build relationship with those persons whose values beliefs and attitudes mirror their own

# Cultures of Addiction and Criminality

- They start in small groups that overlap creating a broader network that shares common goals and attributes, when looked at in its totality it constitutes a fully organized culture.
- White, William, L. (1996). *PATHWAYS from the Culture of Addiction to the Culture of Recovery*. Center City, MN. Hazeldon

# Addictions and Criminality

- Therefore: Any act of deviance can make sense, all it needs is a group of people and a philosophy to support it. (Mike Johnson)
- Persons enter addiction and criminality through multiple pathways...meaning they come from everywhere

# Addictions and Criminality

- All communities, each ethnic group, religion, gender etc.
- Question : What is the primary driving forces surrounding criminal activity and addictive behavior.
- Answer: Choice, opportunity and reinforcement for the choice.

# Initiation: Here We Go

- For some it is a “rights of passage” a community expectation
- Testing the boundaries or demands of adults, parents, teachers, etc.
- The glamour and seductiveness of drug use and criminal activity
- The drive for status and a need to belong, to be a part of something

# Progression of Criminal and Addictive Behavior

## Pre-Criminal Stage

- Juveniles 5 to 16 years
- Arrests for Nuisance, Vandalism, Larceny, Burglary & Auto Theft
- Looking For Excitement
- Best Prospect For Change
- Begins experimentation with substances



# Sustaining Forces for Reinforcement

- As the person proceeds from drug and criminal experimentation they must have reinforcement to condone the activity.
- The first of which is to be with or seek out like-minded persons



# Sustaining Forces for Reinforcement

- The attitudes and rationalizations must now be developed to condone the use of drugs and the involvement in addictive/criminal behaviors
- Rewards associated with use and involvement in criminal activity are now greater than consequences
- Wrong is cool, backwards makes sense

# What Else is Happening?

- “My mother was on crack and my father was in prison, when he came home he started raping my sister, I shot him, and that’s how I went to prison”
- “I started selling drugs as a form of ‘baby-sitting’ for my mother so I could keep an eye on her”.
- I started getting high with my mother when I was sixteen”.
- When I was 17 my mother told me to come get in the bed with her and we had sex until I was 23 when I went to prison, I don’t even want to see her anymore”.

# Progression of Criminal and Addictive Behavior

## Early Criminal Stage

- 16 years to mid 20's
- Consider Crime As A Way of Life
- Money Used For Drugs/Material Items
- Thrill Seeking
- Status/Peer Acceptance Declines



# Sustaining Forces - Reinforcement

- Has found a new network of peers and has gained status within the group
- Avoids reference: anyone who will challenge the lifestyle
- Has acquired a tolerance for the substances and may now have a drug of choice.

# Sustaining Forces - Reinforcement

- Question: What is the culture of addiction and criminality providing that the structure of home does not?
- Answer: Love, belonging, praise, status, recognition, support, empathy plus ..., the entrance exam is easier to pass

# Sustaining Forces- Reinforcement

- The creation of the “them and they “ victim mentality
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- The “if it wasn’t for\_\_\_\_\_” belief system is concrete
- The use of substances is being used to avoid dealing with internal conflicts

# Sustaining Forces-Reinforcement

- Drug and alcohol use is providing an illusion of well being coupled with the criminal acts reinforces a full sense of being in control
- The only way to maintain this logic is with more drugs and more crime

# What Else is Happening?

- Is the war on drugs a war on the people in disguise?
- The U.S is 4% of the worlds population which houses 25% of the worlds incarcerated persons among industrialized nations.
- Population incarcerated in the U.S. exceeds those of all industrialized countries – currently topping 2 million and climbing.
- Highest incarceration rate in the world
- Over the last 23 years from 1984 to 2014 it has increased by 400%



# What Else is Happening?

- Those numbers represent millions of lives changed forever as well as families and communities
- 41% of juveniles are arrested before the age of 23
- Children as young as 13 year of age have been sentenced to die in prison
- No other country incarcerates or sentences juveniles the way the U.S. does
- Our prisons violate international law
- Prisons are regulated by prison officials, with state intervention when something goes awry

# What Else is Happening?

- Difficult to find employment with a felony on your record:
- Felons are ineligible for: welfare, student loans, public housing and food stamps
- Which leads to high rates of homelessness, suicide, recidivism and returning to substance use
- Often feel and are ostracized from communities
- Unspoken and unwritten policy, “if you have committed a crime we have given up on you

# What Else is Happening?

- The war on drugs and the war on crime, get tough on criminals has a 75 billion dollar per year price tag.
- 2010 was the first year in 40 years that incarcerated numbers dropped
- Policy makers are starting to recognize the magnitude of this failure.
- If you cannot keep drugs out of a country and its prisons, how do you attempt to stop drug use?
- You give up and move to mental illness as the primary problem

# What Else is Happening?

- Approximately one third of all black males age 20-29 are incarcerated, or on probation or parole.
- In the past two decades (20 years) nothing has altered the state of the black community as much as the incarceration of its youth.
- If one were to continue to look the numbers for young whites and Latinos is also on the rise.
- The percentage of incarcerated women has also increased since

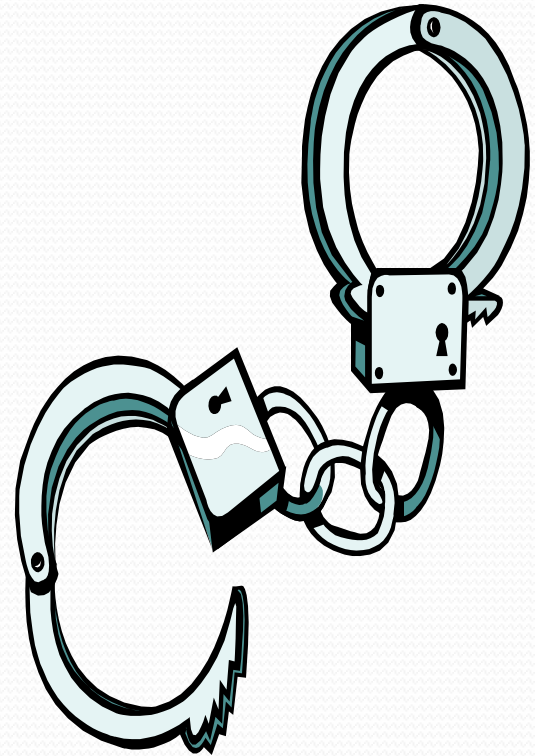
# What Else is Happening?

- Police officers: selling cocaine, robbing dealers, conducting illegal raids and perjury to secure convictions.
- Two Illinois governors are currently serving time in federal prison on corruption charges.
- School teachers having sexual relations with their underage students.
- Catholic priests with long-standing incidents of molestation within the church.
- A rise in mothers killing their children and boyfriends and husbands killing their spouses, the children and themselves.

# Progression of Criminal and Addictive Behavior

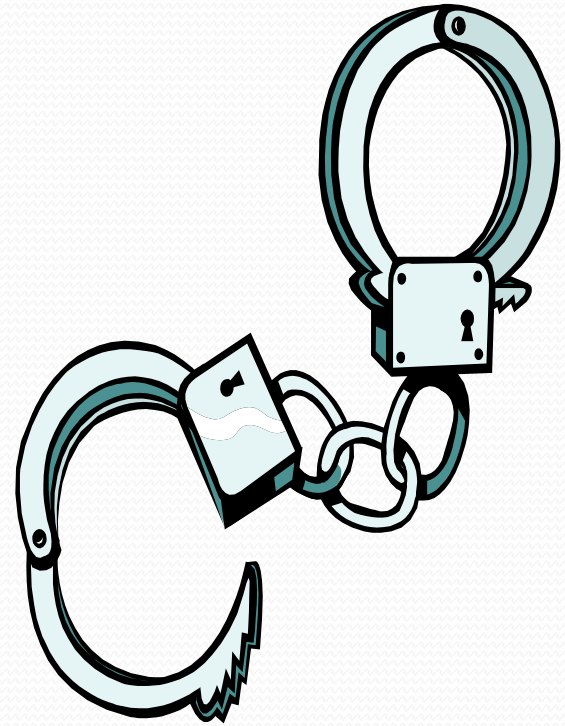
## Middle Criminal Stage

- Late 20's to Early 40's
- Totally Committed To Criminal Lifestyle



# Progression of Criminal and Addictive Behavior

- Anger/Resentment & Power/Control are Primary Motivations
- Life Is Out of Control
- Violence Potential Increases



# Sustaining Forces- Reinforcement

- Not only has a drug of choice but has a crime of choice
- Total disregard for the welfare, rights and boundaries of others
- “Punishment” is not a consequence it is an expectation



# Sustaining Forces- Reinforcement

- Has low frustration and tolerance levels, easily agitated by “outsiders”
- Sensitive to criticism, will be “set off” easily, has a constant edge
- Has a true “alter-ego” what is the nickname and what does it mean

# Progression of Criminal and Addictive Behavior

## Middle Criminal Stage

- Crimes Become More Extreme/Impulsive
- Begin To “Bank” on The “Big Score”
- Dangerous To Self & Others



# Sustaining Forces - Reinforcement

- Has had multiple arrest, treatments and incarcerations
- The person is more addicted to the lifestyle and the avoidance behavior than the drugs
- May have an attitude that “the streets owe me”

# Sustaining Forces - Reinforcement

- A true “loose cannon” all relationships have the potential of “opportunity” ruled by despair and impulsivity - a dangerous combination

May now show signs of long-term use of substances  
medical or psychological issues present

# What Else is Happening?

- The child has been fostered within a drug induced/criminalized culture – “gangster-ism”.
- Symbolic portrayals of what they see within the family, community and culture at large. A new American “norm” that needs serious study.

# Progression of Criminal and Addictive Behavior

## Late Criminal Stage

- Begins Early 40's
- Negative Consequences & Age Are Primary Factors For Change
- Re-evaluation of Life's goals/Priorities
- Burnout Inevitable



# Progression of Criminal and Addictive Behavior

## Late Criminal Stage

- Decrease in Physical Strength, Stamina & Activity
- Fear of Growing Old, Dying in Prison or Alone



# Consequences Taking Their Toll

- Too old to run
- Change is now a matter of mathematics
- Consideration of recovery and abstinence is strong
- May give up drug use and continue criminal activity or vice versa



# Consequences Taking Their Toll

- Have now become victims of the culture and suffer from “time loss”
- Multiple losses due to lifestyle may cause depression and further or continued use of substances
- Question “How do I salvage my life?”

# Consequences Taking Their Toll

- Physical ,spiritual and psychological deterioration
- Grief and remorse is high
- Life can become a living form of suicide
- They can recover

# Addiction's and Crime Are "Solution Oriented"

Solutions	Problems	Excuses	Consequences
Alcohol	Anger/Bitterness	Family/Loved Ones	Jail
Drugs	Guilt/Shame	Friends/"Homies"	Death
Lying	Approval/Acceptance	Wife/Husband (Ex)	Unemployed
Stealing	Recognition	Child Support	Loss of Employment
Dealing	Excitement	Parole Agent	Homeless
B & E	Boredom	Probation Officer	Divorced
Gambling	Frustration	IRS	Insanity
Strip Clubs	Annoyance	Tickets	
Guns/	Disappointment	Baby's Mama/Daddy"	
Weapons	Rejection	Employer	
Assault	Failure	Deaths/Births	
Murder	Impatience	Illness	
Domestic Violence	Impulsiveness	The Neighborhood	
Suicide	Belonging	Holidays	
Truancy		Paydays	

# Addiction/Criminality As An Assessment Component

- Each clients involvement in the addictive or criminal culture is different (it is NOT the same)
- We should assess not only the drug use or criminal activity but delve into the chronic nature of these lifestyles
- What is the clients involvement, enmeshment or “investment” within addictive and criminal cultures

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THANK YOU