Treatment and the Relapse Cycle of Addiction

Frank R. Snyder, PhD, LCSW

How many passes did you count?
Drug Addiction: A Complex Behavioral and Neurobiological Disorder

Historical
- Prior experience
- Expectation
- Learning

Environmental
- Social interactions
- Stress
- Conditioned stimuli

Drugs

Physiological
- Circadian rhythms
- Disease states
- Gender

Brain Mechanisms

Behavior

Environment

This is why addicts can’t just quit and
This is why treatment is essential and active engagement in peer support groups
Relapse

After starting a new diet I altered my drive to work to avoid passing my favorite bakery. I was determined to lose weight and keep my new plan. Despite my efforts, I couldn’t avoid passing the bakery. I got a sudden urge to visit it. A few minutes later, I arrived. I noticed a host of goodies in the window. I felt this was no accident, so I prayed, “Lord, it’s up to you. If you want me to have any of these delicious goodies, create a parking place for me directly in front of the bakery.”

And sure enough, on the eighth time around the block, there it was! God is so good!

What we are aware of:

Thoughts

Emotions

Sensations

Feelings

What do we do with these things bouncing around in our head?

Become aware of it

Made a judgment about it

Good

Neutral

Bad

Make plans

Go for it

Fuzz out

Avoid it

Boredom

Sleep
research by Benjamin Libert (1999) showed that people became aware of the intention to act after (350-400ms, to be exact) the brain has readied itself to act and before (200ms) motor activity. In other words, we can “veto” an action, but our intention to act is formulated in the brain before we become aware of it! (Germer, C.K (2005) p.23)

Learning and neurons

Unused neurons

Weak connection when act first leaned

Connections strengthen with practice

Practice makes perfect

As you practice the linkages become stronger.
As the linkages become stronger the sequence becomes faster.
As the sequence becomes faster it becomes a reaction.
You don’t think reactions;
You do reactions.
Cascade Effect

Smoking cigarettes

Drinking

Learning

Presentation of new stimulus

Click First Section Second Section Chocolate
Habit Activation

If you’re not confused, you’re not paying attention.
Tom Peters

Relapse Cycle

My Trigger(s) this time:

Cerebral cortex Basal ganglia

Only basal ganglia

Cerebral cortex Basal ganglia

If you’re not confused, you’re not paying attention.
Tom Peters

What made this a high risk situation for me?

1. _____________

2. _____________

3. _____________

Harmful act to self or others?

Feelings:

Negative Self Thoughts:

Later Feelings:

Early Feelings:

Feelings:

Reminds me of:

Afterwards I felt/thought:

So I just want to: