



Recovery from Addiction Possible with Due Diligence

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While the path of addiction usually begins with the voluntary act of taking drugs or alcohol, over time a person's ability to choose not to do drugs or alcohol becomes compromised; and seeking and using the drug becomes compulsive and counterintuitive.

This behavior results primarily from the effects of prolonged drug exposure on brain functioning. According to a 2012 report by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, "Addiction is a brain disease that affects multiple brain circuits, including those involved in reward and motivation, learning and memory, and inhibitory control over behavior."

Drug addiction and alcoholism is complex and characterized by intense and, at times, uncontrollable cravings, along with compulsive drug seeking and use that continues even in the face of devastating consequences. Many addicts and alcoholics experience problems in family relationships, employment, legal issues, along with a general sense of feeling unwell.

Because drug abuse and alcoholism have so many dimensions and disrupt so many aspects of an individual's life, treatment is not simple. Effective treatment programs typically include many components, each directed to a particular aspect of the illness and its consequences. Addiction treatment must help the individual stop using drugs, maintain a drug-free lifestyle, and achieve productive functioning in the family, at work, and in society.

Because addiction is typically a chronic disease, people cannot simply stop using drugs for a few days and be cured. Most addicts/alcoholics require long-term or repeated episodes of care to achieve the goal of sustained abstinence and recovery of their lives. However, according to Addiction Science & Clinical Practice, "the research evidence clearly demonstrates that a one-size-fits-all approach to addiction treatment typically is a recipe for failure."

Thus, it is extremely important that those seeking recovery have access to services as well as having the understanding that they need to be as steadfast in pursuing and attending treatment as they were compelled to use the drugs and alcohol. As much, if not more, energy and effort needs to be bestowed upon recovery efforts to counteract and correct motivation and thinking than was put into their active addiction.

The field of addiction treatment has progressed over the years. There are more options for treatment including more Evidenced Based Practices, ensuring that the consumer will receive a more individualized approach to care. While some of the basic components of treatment are constant, how they are applied and in what sequence varies among clients.

According to Dr. Prochaska's Stages of Change, "Studies of change have found that people move through a series of stages when modifying behavior. While the time a person can stay in each stage is variable, the tasks required to move to the next stage are not. Certain principles and processes of change work best at each stage to reduce resistance, facilitate progress, and prevent relapse."

It is through this understanding that providers can best serve their clients by developing an individualized treatment plan, which specifically outlines steps and concrete tasks for change, and applying it to the identified stage of change. By utilizing measurable tasks and goals, the client can track evidence of change. Likewise, identifying the areas where the client may be having more difficulty allows for those barriers to be specifically addressed and a new or modified plan to be put in place.

Although there are numerous treatment modalities, the first level of care is typically outpatient care. Outpatient behavioral treatment encompasses a wide variety of programs for consumers. Most of the programs involve individual or group counseling, ranging from 1 hour of service a week up to the Intensive Outpatient level of care at 9 hours of services a week.

The staff at Cooperative Care believes in a client centered, strength based approach to service and incorporates forms of behavioral treatment such as:

- Cognitive-behavioral therapy, which seeks to help clients recognize, avoid, and cope with the situations in which they are most likely to abuse drugs. This also includes negative thought identification and restructuring to improve coping skills and managing daily living that promotes an environment for recovery.
- Motivational interviewing, which capitalizes on the readiness of individuals to change their behavior and engage in treatment. In the overall treatment approach, Motivational Interviewing looks to access and build upon a client's strengths as the means for success in recovery.
- Motivational incentives (contingency management), which uses positive reinforcement to encourage abstinence from drugs. Positive reinforcement comes in many forms and is best when it is based on subtle positive lifestyle changes the client is making. An example of a reward would be the client learning to acknowledge feeling physically better

on days they are abstinent than they recall feeling on days when they were actively using.

- Trauma-Focused Therapy (CBT and/or EMDR), which addresses some of the trauma/abuse based issues that have either occurred prior to or during one's addiction that often contribute to relapse. This is usually addressed in the 'maintenance' phase of recovery once abstinence is established.

Recovery is about taking responsibility for one's own well-being and wellness and being proactive on a daily basis to insure another day of abstinence. Ongoing sobriety doesn't mean the addict can let their guard down, or "now they're cured." Addiction can be put into remission, but it never goes away. Staying sober, though, becomes easier with time. Keep in mind after having a relapse it isn't about "trying harder." It's about looking at what happened and making specific changes to decrease the likelihood that it will happen again. Addiction can be completely baffling and overwhelming at times for the addict/alcoholic and other family members affected. Recovery is possible. The option of getting well only escapes you when you stop working towards it.

You can reach out to a local provider, access state wide resources by dialing NJ-2-1-1 or contact the staff at Cooperative Care Partnership. We will assist you in accessing services.