

APTPG ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONALS
TREATING PROBLEM GAMBLING

THE LEARNING CENTER

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CROSS ADDICTION:

In the field of addiction research and treatment, it has long been recognized that there are numerous “common denominators” that exist within the nature and symptomatology of addictions. Or, to put it another way, all true addictions share a surprising number of clinical similarities – even though the substances may be different or when there are no substances at all, such as in the case of a Gambling Disorder, or Sex, or Power. Knowledge of these common symptoms can have major implications in the treatment of these disorders, as well as expertise in the area of Cross Addictions.

There is little disagreement about the fact that an addiction, like many diseases, prevents the victim from effective functioning as a human being in our society. The range of affliction extends from simple maladjustment, to complete breakdown of family ties and personal integrity. The result is all too often a miserable existence or premature death, stemming from physical, psychological, moral and spiritual deterioration. Treatment providers in the frustrating field of addictions are only too familiar with the insidiousness of this “disease”, and are quick to grab onto any knowledge or technique which can help them in their demanding task.

The following major symptoms can be easily applied to almost any addiction:

- Excessive use of a substance, or engaging in any type of addictive activity.
- Preoccupation with the activity preventing normal thought.
- Impaired control of the substance or behavior.
- Denial of problem's existence—to self or others.
- Progression of the amount used or activity engaged in.
- Withdrawal (pain, discomfort, sickness, anxiety, etc.)
- Guilt and/or remorse usually present, affecting normal function.
- Moral and ethical deterioration causing major consequences.

In addition, where a substance such as alcohol or other drug is involved, there are symptoms such as tolerance, black-outs, and physical deterioration to consider.

Ever-present knowledge and awareness of this symptomatology are, of course, vital in the effective treatment of addictions, whether a substance is involved or not. However the question of Cross Addiction is also an important treatment issue, and familiarity with some of its ramifications is another tool in the treatment or provider's expertise. For example, the following considerations could, in some cases, make the difference between resolving a client's problem, and only partial solution:

1. Is the client suffering from more than one addiction (with one condition exacerbating the other)?
2. Is the seeming progress in overcoming an addiction (if put to closer scrutiny) actually accomplished by increasing dependence on a different one?
3. Can one addiction be replaced by a "dormant seed", which is waiting to blossom?

4. In treating the underlying causes of the client's addiction, would it not be prudent to prepare the client for his/her unconscious transfer to another affliction, since the causes and symptoms are so similar for most addictions?

Cross Addiction, then, can have numerous implications for treatment. Some of them are: a) accurate identification of an addiction; b) differentiating between substance and non—substance addiction; c) recognition of differences between extreme abuse and true addiction; d) complete abstinence and relapse “triggers” as a part of the mix; e) a gambling disorder as perhaps the dominating addiction—lurking in the background.

Is there such a thing as “an addictive personality”? This often proposed hypothesis certainly takes on new significance in the light of Cross Addiction.—Allan D. Wright, MA, ICADC, ICGC

Our next Newsletter will be published in March 2017. It will begin a series of articles pertaining to “Behavioral Addictions”. Each newsletter will discuss a specific behavior addiction (i.e., Gambling Disorders, Food Addiction, Internet Addiction, Sex Addiction, and Texting and E-mail Problem Use).

Our next A.P.T.P.G. meeting is on January 14, 2017 at the New Jersey Law Center. Helen Varvi, M. Ed, CPS will be presenting on: Risk, Award and the Teen Brain. If you would like to attend this presenting please contact me at: algesregan@gmail.com

