



Workers' Compensation Seminar

Substance Abuse - Gambling, Alcoholism, Dependency, and Other
Disorders

Doug Althouser, Esq.

Lewis Center, OH

Recognizing and Reacting to “Dependency”

Dependency has three elements:

1. The inability to predict the magnitude of a behavior, once the behavior starts
2. The inability to predict consequences once the behavior starts
3. Those other two elements are permanent

Chemical Dependency

- Once consumption starts, one can't consistently predict the amount of
 - time,
 - money or
 - quantity.
- Once consumption starts, one can't consistently predict how drinking or drug use will affect
 - finances,
 - relationships,
 - health,
 - legal concerns,
 - occupation/academics, or
 - spirituality.
- Chemical dependency develops over years and is maintained through subtle lifestyle changes that become permanent characteristics that promote the above-noted unpredictability

Pathological Gambling

- Once gambling starts, one can't consistently predict the amount of time or money that will be expended during the experience
- Once gambling starts, one can't consistently predict the consequences that would not happen but for the gambling (finances, relationships, health, legal concerns, occupation/academics or spirituality)
- Opportunities to gamble are maintained through lifestyle choices

Eating Disorders

- An individual cannot guarantee that an appropriate type and/or amount of food will be consumed once eating begins (too much or too little)
- An individual cannot predict how the inappropriate eating will affect health, finances, relationships, occupation/academics, legal concerns or spirituality
- The above-noted unpredictability is permanent and lifestyle-based (under- and over-eaters often take responsibility for purchasing and preparing food for themselves and others, and are adept at consuming of food in ways that others won't perceive)

“Sex Addiction”

- An individual consistently pursues sexual experiences when it would be more appropriate to engage in other pursuits (forgoing other commitments, pursuing intimacy in dangerous circumstances, engaging in sex after it becomes injurious, spending money on sex budgeted for other purposes)
- An individual's sexual pursuits leads to unwanted health, occupational/academic, legal, relational, health or spiritual consequences
- The above characteristics become so ingrained into the individual's sexual expression that the individual is uncertain as to how to pursue less extreme sexual experiences- and may be sincerely unaware that there are options

“Internet Addiction”

- Remaining online when it is unnecessary to be online, or when time should be spent addressing other commitments
- Unexpected consequences that would not happen but for the inappropriate internet use (job, relationships, health...)
- The above-noted characteristics are such that the individual can rarely get online without it becoming something akin to obsessiveness

Recovery also has three elements

- Abstinence from the problem behavior
- Lifestyle changes that promote the abstinence
- Support network that supports the lifestyle changes

We work in a high-risk profession

- We know how to convincingly argue a questionable fact
- We know how to keep our personal secrets from others
- We are reluctant to ask for help
- ...and we have more chemical dependency than other professions

Treatment seems better if it's voluntary rather than required.

- Ohio Lawyers Assistance Program
- (800) 348-4343
- www.ohiolap.org