The Reality of Relapse

Word Association

Relapse

- Drug abuse
- Diabetes
- Asthma
- Heart Attack
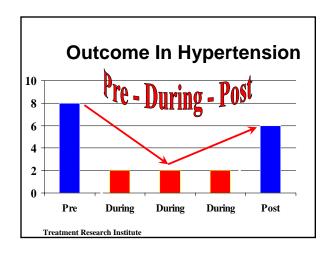

"It's easy to give up smoking. I've done it a thousand times."
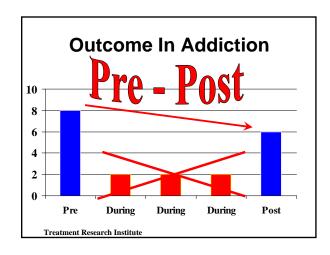
Mark Twain

Why Does Treatment Seem So Ineffective?

Outcome In Hypertension

Pre - During - Post

10				
8				
6				
4				
2				
0				
Pre	During	During	During	Post

Treatment Research Institute

Outcome In Addiction

Pre - Post

10				
8				
6				
4				
2				
0				
Pre	During	During	During	Post

Treatment Research Institute
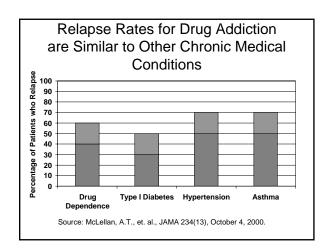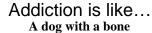
Is CD Treatment Effective?

- Many patients don't comply
- Many patients relapse
- Treatment doesn't cure people
- Compliance and relapse rates similar to those rates for treatment of: heart disease, asthma, diabetes, obesity, gingivitis.

Relapse Rates for Drug Addiction are Similar to Other Chronic Medical Conditions

Source: McLellan, A.T., et. al., JAMA 234(13), October 4, 2000.

What is Addiction?
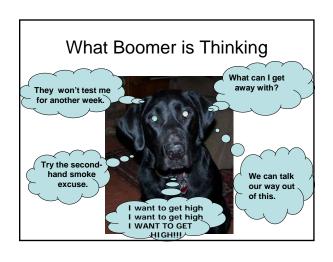
Addiction is like…
A dog with a bone

- The dog does not want to let go of the bone (addiction/ denial).
- It gets excited when it thinks its going to get its bone (craving)
- It always wants more bones (loss of control)
- Sometimes the dog takes you for a walk.

Treatment is like…
Obedience School for the Dog

- You teach the dog's owner to control the dog.
- You develop a variety of tools (relapse prevention) to help the dog be obedient.
- Some dogs are harder to train.

What Boomer is Thinking

They won't test me for another week.

What can I get away with?

Try the second-hand smoke excuse.

We can talk our way out of this.

I want to get high
I want to get high
I WANT TO GET HIGH!!!

Changing People Places & Things

I can hang out
With my old friends
And not chase the
fox

HEY GUYS!!
THERE GOES
THE FOX!!
LET'S GET'EM!

Why do people relapse?

- Poor recovery skills
- Loss of motivation
- Powerful cravings
- Lapse in Judgement
- Poor Brain Function

UNDERSTANDING RELAPSE

RELAPSE IS A PERSISTENT FEATURE OF ADDICTION.

Relapse *not an isolated event. It is part of a process of being unable to cope with living life on life's terms. The process may be marked by renewed return to active drug use, criminal behavior, physical or emotional collapse, or suicide. The relapse process is marked by predictable and identifiable warning signs that are evident long before use or collapse occurs.*

RELAPSE CLASSIFICATION

DRUG INVOLVED OFFENDERS CAN BE CATEGORIZED ACCODING TO THEIR RELAPSE/RECOVERY HISTORY.

Recovery prone – *continuous abstinence*
Brief relapse prone – *brief interruption of recovery process*
Chronic relapse prone – *despite their efforts to change, these individuals maintain dysfunctions that prevent continuous abstinence*

RELAPSE WARNING SIGNS

CHANGE IN ATTITUDE- *recovery no longer a priority*
CHANGE IN BEHAVIOR- *old survivor skills return*
CHANGE IN SITUATION- *a return to old people, places and things which support self defeating lifestyle*

SITUATIONS OF RELAPSE

- *Relapse as response to drug hunger*
- *Relapse as impulse*
- *Relapse as a cognitive test*
- *Relapse as flight*
- *Relapse or go crazy*
- *Relapse and loss*
- *Relapse as rage*
- *Relapse as self loathing*
- *Relapse as vacation*

How Relapse Happens

- The Steady Ride Downhill
- The Catastrophe
- The Surprise
- Craving

The Ride Downhill

- Miss meetings
- Stop caring about stuff
- Hang out with wrong people
- Hang out in wrong places
- Use

The Catastrophe

- Something bad happens
- Intense feelings
- Hard to handle
- Using will "help" deal with the pain.
- Life owes me this one

The Surprise

- You're trying to stay sober
- Someone asks if you want some___.
- Before you can think, your mouth (the dog) says "YES!!"

Recovery is A Skill

- It must Be Learned
- Some people Learn faster than others
- Some people learn better by listening
- Some people learn better by watching
- Some people learn better by doing
- The best learning happens when all 3 are used
- Doing it well takes practice
- People make mistakes

What Do They Need to Learn?

- Cravings management
- Refusal skills
- Leisure Recreation activities
- Coping strategies
- Problem solving
- Crisis management
- Doing the responsible thing

Dealing with mistakes

- Is the person trying?
- Did they get honest about the mistake?
- What was the nature of the mistake?
- What can be learned by the mistake?

Ambivalence and Motivation

- Many participants have mixed feelings about having to stop using.
- Motivation levels wax and wane
- The "expectation" is that everyone will always be motivated.
- The reality is somedays you feel motivated somedays you don't
- Motivation drops when people are frustrated (known as the F***its).
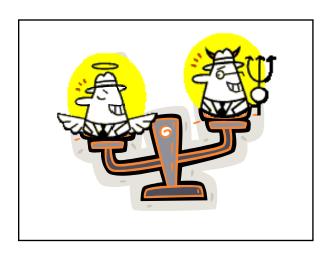
Motivation:
Sober Me vs. Using Me

Sober Me

- **Wants to be sober**
- **Doesn't want to relapse**
- **Likes not having hangovers**
- **Wants to stay out of jail**
- **Likes keeping a job**
- **Likes having people trust them.**

Using Me

- **Likes being high**
- **Likes hanging out in fun places**
- **Says "One won't hurt!"**
- **Doesn't mind lying to people**
- **Doesn't really care about job (except for the $$)**
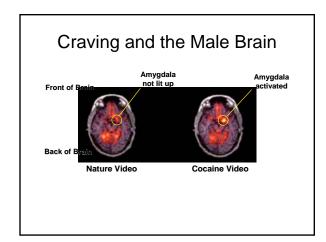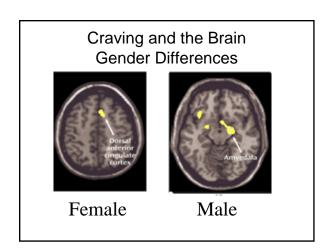- **Doesn't think they can get caught**

Native American Story

- Inside of me live the Spirits of two wolves, a good wolf and a bad wolf. They constantly fight, with the battle raging back and forth. Which one will eventually win:
- The one that I feed.
- Feed Sobriety – Meetings, reading, talking, etc.

The Craving

Why can't I stop thinking about gettin' high???

Craving and the Male Brain

Front of Brain

Amygdala not lit up

Amygdala activated

Back of Brain

Nature Video   Cocaine Video

Craving and the Brain
Gender Differences

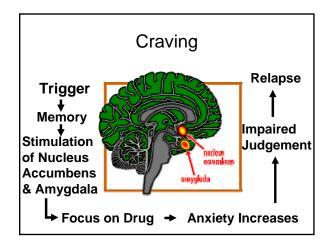Dorsal anterior cingulate cortex

Amygdala

Female   Male

What's a Craving?

- A "trigger" causes a reaction.
- The reaction is more emotional than rational
- The intensity of the reaction can reduce the ability to reason logically
- The dog keeps barking louder and louder – thinking eventually it will get what it wants.
- We give in – to shut up the dog.

Craving

Trigger
↓
Memory
↓
Stimulation of Nucleus Accumbens & Amygdala
↓
Focus on Drug → **Anxiety Increases**

nucleus accumbens

amygdala

Relapse
↑
Impaired Judgement
↑

Relapse Triggers

Circuits Involved In Drug Abuse and Addiction

All of these must be considered in developing strategies to effectively treat addiction
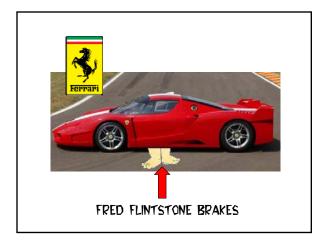
Go & *Stop*

- Craving elicits *Go!!*
- Powerful
- Activity in limbic system not frontal cortex
- Feeling/reacting vs. thinking/planning
- Thinking initiates *Stop!!*
- Addicts have "bad brakes" – *Stop!*
- Hard to stop this fast moving car.

FRED FLINTSTONE BRAKES

Preventing relapse

- Develop skills
- Saying no
- Figuring out where not to go who not to see
- Support networks
- Emergency plans
- Safe place to live

Relapse Risk factor assessment

- Motivation
- Environment
- Impulsivity
- Stress