

Chapter 1 : Understanding Addiction: How Addiction Hijacks the Brain

They absolutely do help a person fight depression and the ongoing war against negative thoughts; however they were designed as techniques to use when getting pulled into addictive behaviors.

Written by Kris Gunnars, BSc on June 9, Eating healthy and losing weight seems downright impossible for many people. Despite their best intentions, they repeatedly find themselves eating large amounts of unhealthy foods, despite knowing that it is causing them harm. What Is Food Addiction? Food addiction is, quite simply, being addicted to junk food in the same way as drug addicts are addicted to drugs. It involves the same areas in the brain, the same neurotransmitters and many of the symptoms are identical 1. Food addiction is a relatively new and controversial term and there are no good statistics available on how common it is. This is very similar to several other eating disorders, including binge eating disorder, bulimia, compulsive overeating and having an "unhealthy" relationship with food. How This Works Processed junk foods have a powerful effect on the "reward" centers in the brain, involving brain neurotransmitters like dopamine 2. The foods that seem to be the most problematic include typical "junk foods," as well as foods that contain either sugar or wheat , or both. Food addiction is not about a lack of willpower or anything like that, it is caused by the intense dopamine signal "hijacking" the biochemistry of the brain 3. There are many studies that support the fact that food addiction is a real problem. The way this works is pretty complicated, but this short video explains it in human terms: There is no blood test available to diagnose food addiction. Just like with other addictions, it is based on behavioral symptoms. Here are 8 common symptoms that are typical of food addicts: You frequently get cravings for certain foods, despite feeling full and having just finished a nutritious meal. When you give in and start eating a food you were craving, you often find yourself eating much more than you intended to. When you eat a food you were craving, you sometimes eat to the point of feeling excessively "stuffed. You sometimes make excuses in your head about why you should eat something that you are craving. You often hide your consumption of unhealthy foods from others. You feel unable to control your consumption of unhealthy foods, despite knowing that they are causing you physical harm includes weight gain. If you can relate to of these, then you probably do have a serious problem with food. If you can relate to 6 or more, then you are most likely a food addict. Food Addiction Is a Serious Problem Although the term "addiction" is often thrown around lightly, having true addiction is serious business. After I had been sober for several years, I started to develop an addiction to unhealthy foods. Nothing more, nothing less. The symptoms and thought processes are completely identical. Food addiction can cause physical harm. But you have even bigger reasons to quit than some unfamiliar disease in your distant future. Food addiction is also ruining your life It breaks your self-esteem, makes you unhappy with your body and can make your life a living hell like it did for me. The seriousness of being a food addict can not be overstated. This is a problem that ruins lives and kills people. The most important lesson I have ever learned is called the law of addiction: An alcoholic who has a sip of beer will relapse, with all the horrible consequences that follow. There is no way of getting around it. This is simply how addiction works. I am personally convinced that food addiction is no different. Of course, we all need to eat something. But no one needs to eat sugar , refined wheat flour or any of the modern junk foods that people tend to lose control over. Most food addicts will never be able to eat junk food like "regular" people again. But if they manage to avoid the "trigger foods," then they should be able to eat healthy and lose weight without problems. The sooner you accept that, the sooner you will recover. Although the "everything in moderation" message may work for some people, this advice is a complete disaster for food addicts. When it comes to addiction, moderation fails. This is the simple but not easy solution to addiction. Avoiding the addictive substance at all times. Completely avoiding junk foods may seem impossible. These foods are everywhere and are a major part of our culture. Most of these social dilemmas can be solved easily. Write everything down, no matter how peculiar or vain. Then put your two lists side by side and ask yourself: Is it worth it? If the answer is a resounding "yes" - then you can rest assured that you are doing the right thing. Prepare Yourself and Set a Date There are a few things you can do to prepare yourself and make the transition as easy as possible: These are the "trigger foods" you need to avoid completely. Write down a list of fast food

places that serve healthy foods. This is important and can prevent a relapse when you find yourself hungry and not in the mood to cook. Preferably healthy foods that you like and are already eating regularly. Consider making several copies of your "pros and cons" list. Overcoming food addiction is hard enough as it is, by adding hunger and additional restrictions to the mix you will just make things even harder and set yourself up for failure. From this day and onward, you will never touch the addictive foods again. Not a single bite, ever. Relapses are the rule when it comes to addiction, not the exception. Most people have a history of several failed attempts before they manage to succeed in the long run. But if you relapse often, then there really is no point in trying to do it on your own again. Luckily, help is not far off There are health professionals and support groups that can help you overcome this serious problem. You can seek professional help Try to find someone who has actual experience in dealing with food addiction. Just go to their websites, find a meeting they also have online Skype meetings and go to it. Or you can use google to find treatment options in your area. Look for something like "food addiction treatment [name of city]" - chances are that you will find something that suits you. **Whatever You Do, Do Something!** Food addiction is a problem that will rarely resolve on its own. Unless you deal with it, chances are that it will just get worse over time. If you have this problem, then you have to do something about it now, or it will end up ruining your life.

Chapter 2 : Do-It-Yourself Addiction Cures? - Scientific American

Don't wait to get a handle on your addictive behaviors. It's a myth that you have to hit rock bottom before you can put your addiction behind you. You may have a personality that craves living large, but it doesn't have to be unhealthy.

While some are able to use recreational or prescription drugs without experiencing negative effects, others find that substance use takes a serious toll on their health and well-being. Abusing drugs can leave you feeling helpless, isolated, or ashamed. When does drug use become drug abuse or addiction? People start using drugs for many different reasons. Some experiment with recreational drugs out of curiosity, to have a good time, because friends are doing it, or to ease problems such as stress, anxiety, or depression. Prescription medications such as painkillers, sleeping pills, and tranquilizers can cause similar problems. In fact, next to marijuana, prescription painkillers are the most abused drugs in the U. And addiction to opioid painkillers can be so powerful it has become the major risk factor for heroin abuse. Drug abuse and addiction is less about the type or amount of the substance consumed or the frequency of your drug use, and more about the consequences of that drug use. If your drug use is causing problems in your life—“at work, school, home, or in your relationships”—you likely have a drug abuse or addiction problem. Recognizing that you have a problem is the first step on the road to recovery , one that takes tremendous courage and strength. Facing your problem without minimizing the issue or making excuses can feel frightening and overwhelming, but recovery is within reach.

Risk factors for drug addiction While anyone can develop problems from using drugs, vulnerability to substance addiction differs from person to person. While your genes, mental health, family and social environment all play a role, risk factors that increase your vulnerability include: Family history of addiction Abuse, neglect, or other traumatic experiences Mental disorders such as depression and anxiety Early use of drugs Method of administration—“smoking or injecting a drug may increase its addictive potential Drug addiction and the brain While each drug produces different physical effects, all abused substances share one thing in common: This includes commonly abused prescription medications as well as recreational drugs. Taking the drug causes a rush of the hormone dopamine in your brain, which triggers feelings of pleasure. Your brain remembers these feelings and wants them repeated. When you become addicted, the substance takes on the same significance as other survival behaviors, such as eating and drinking. Changes in your brain interfere with your ability to think clearly, exercise good judgment, control your behavior, and feel normal without drugs. The urge to use is so strong that your mind finds many ways to deny or rationalize the addiction. While frequency or the amount of drugs consumed do not necessarily constitute drug abuse or addiction, they can often be indicators of drug-related problems. If the drug fulfills a valuable need, you may find yourself increasingly relying on it. You may take illegal drugs to calm or energize yourself or make you more confident. You may start abusing prescription drugs to relieve pain, cope with panic attacks, or improve concentration at school or work. To maintain a healthy balance in your life, you need to have positive experiences and feel good about your life without any drug use. Drug abuse may start as a way to socially connect. People often try drugs for the first time in social situations with friends and acquaintances. A strong desire to fit in to the group can make it feel like doing the drugs with them is the only option. Smoking a joint with friends over the weekend, or taking ecstasy at a rave, or painkillers when your back aches, for example, can change from using drugs a couple of days a week to using them every day. Gradually, getting and using the drug becomes more and more important to you. Your ability to stop using is eventually compromised. What began as a voluntary choice has turned into a physical and psychological need. Eventually drug abuse can consume your life, stopping social and intellectual development. This only reinforces feelings of isolation. With the right treatment and support, you can counteract the disruptive effects of drug use and regain control of your life. The first obstacle is to recognize and admit you have a problem, or listen to loved ones who are often better able to see the negative effects drug use is having on your life.

Five myths about drug abuse and addiction

Myth 1: Overcoming addiction is simply a matter of willpower. You can stop using drugs if you really want. Prolonged exposure to drugs alters the brain in ways that result in powerful cravings and a compulsion to use. These brain changes make it extremely difficult to quit by sheer force of will. Short-term

medical use of opioid painkillers can help to manage severe pain after an accident or surgery, for example. However, regular or longer-term use of opioids can lead to addiction. The brain changes associated with addiction can be treated and reversed through therapy, medication, exercise, and other treatments. Addicts have to hit rock bottom before they can get better. Recovery can begin at any point in the addiction process—and the earlier, the better. The longer drug abuse continues, the stronger the addiction becomes and the harder it is to treat. People who are pressured into treatment by their family, employer, or the legal system are just as likely to benefit as those who choose to enter treatment on their own. As they sober up and their thinking clears, many formerly resistant addicts decide they want to change. Recovery from drug addiction is a long process that often involves setbacks. Signs and symptoms of drug abuse and drug addiction

Although different drugs have different physical effects, the symptoms of addiction are similar. If you recognize yourself in the following signs and symptoms of substance abuse and addiction, talk to someone about your drug use. Using drugs under dangerous conditions or taking risks while high, such as driving while on drugs, using dirty needles, or having unprotected sex. You need to use more of the drug to experience the same effects you used to attain with smaller amounts. You use to avoid or relieve withdrawal symptoms. If you go too long without drugs, you experience symptoms such as nausea, restlessness, insomnia, depression, sweating, shaking, and anxiety. Loss of control over your drug use. You may want to stop using, but you feel powerless. Your life revolves around drug use. Warning signs that a friend or loved one is abusing drugs

Drug abusers often try to conceal their symptoms and downplay their problem. Glassy, red eyes; loud talking, inappropriate laughter followed by sleepiness; loss of interest, motivation; weight gain or loss. Dilated pupils; hyperactivity; euphoria; irritability; anxiety; excessive talking followed by depression or excessive sleeping at odd times; may go long periods of time without eating or sleeping; weight loss; dry mouth and nose. Dilated pupils; bizarre and irrational behavior including paranoia, aggression, hallucinations; mood swings; detachment from people; absorption with self or other objects, slurred speech; confusion. Contracted pupils; no response of pupils to light; needle marks; sleeping at unusual times; sweating; vomiting; coughing, sniffing; twitching; loss of appetite. Warning signs of prescription drug abuse and addiction

In recent years, prescription drug abuse has become an escalating problem, most commonly involving opioid painkillers, anti-anxiety medications, sedatives, and stimulants. Many people start taking these drugs to cope with a specific medical problem—taking painkillers following injury or surgery, for example. However, over time, increased doses are needed to achieve the same level of pain relief and some users can become physically dependent, experiencing withdrawal symptoms if they try to quit. One of the earliest warning signs of a developing problem is going through the medication at a faster-than-expected rate. In other cases, people start abusing medication not prescribed for them in order to experience a high, relieve tension, increase alertness, or improve concentration. Being aware of any signs of dependency can help identify prescription drug problems at an early stage and help to prevent them progressing into an addiction. Warning signs of commonly abused prescription drugs

Opioid painkillers including OxyContin, Vicodin, Norco: Drooping eyes, constricted pupils even in dim light, sudden itching or flushing, slurred speech; drowsiness, lack of energy; inability to concentrate, lack of motivation, decline in performance at work or school; neglecting friendships and social activities. Anti-anxiety medications, sedatives, and hypnotics including Xanax, Valium, Ambien: Contracted pupils; drunk-like, slurred speech, difficulty concentrating, clumsiness; poor judgment, drowsiness, slowed breathing. Stimulants including Ritalin, Concerta, Adderall, Dexedrine: Dilated pupils, reduced appetite; agitation, anxiety, irregular heartbeat, high body temperature; insomnia, paranoia. When a loved one has a drug problem

If you suspect that a friend or family member has a drug problem, here are a few things you can do: Talk to the person about your concerns, and offer your help and support without being judgmental. The earlier addiction is treated, the better. Take care of yourself. Make sure you have people you can talk to and lean on for support. Letting the person accept responsibility for their actions is an essential step along the way to recovery. Attempt to punish, threaten, bribe, or preach. Try to be a martyr. Avoid emotional appeals that may only increase feelings of guilt and the compulsion to use drugs. Cover up or make excuses for the drug abuser, or shield them from the negative consequences of their behavior. Take over their responsibilities, leaving them with no sense of importance or dignity. Hide or throw out drugs. Argue with the person when

they are high. Use drugs with them. Explain your concerns and make it clear that your concern comes from a place of love. In fact, teens are more likely to abuse prescription and over-the-counter drugs, including painkillers, stimulants, sedatives, and tranquilizers. In many cases, these drugs are much easier for teens to procure, yet they can have dangerous, even lethal, side effects. Risk of drug abuse also increases greatly during times of transition, such as changing schools, moving, or divorce. The challenge for parents is to distinguish between the normal, often volatile, ups and downs of the teen years and the red flags of substance abuse. Having bloodshot eyes or dilated pupils; using eye drops to try to mask these signs Skipping class; declining grades; suddenly getting into trouble at school Missing medications, prescriptions, money or valuables Acting uncharacteristically isolated, withdrawn, angry, or depressed Sudden mood changes or repeated health complaints, constant fatigue Dropping one group of friends for another; being secretive about the new peer group Loss of interest in old hobbies; lying about new interests and activities Demanding more privacy; locking doors; avoiding eye contact; sneaking around 7 steps parents can take to curb teen drug use Talk openly about the dangers of both illegal and prescription drug use with your kids. Lay down rules and consequences. Your teen should understand that using drugs comes with specific consequences.

Chapter 3 : Overcoming Addictive Behavior - SMART Recovery

Auto Suggestions are available once you type at least 3 letters. Use up arrow (for mozilla firefox browser alt+up arrow) and down arrow (for mozilla firefox browser alt+down arrow) to review and enter to select.

It is a chronic illness and abstinence is crucial for long-term recovery. Too often, family and friends find it difficult to reach out and help a loved one who has a drug or alcohol problem. However, denial or disregarding the situation will only prevent the individual from getting help to full recovery. Help is available because Project Unbroken helps addicts overcome drug and alcohol addiction. Perhaps you have a loved one who is struggling with an addiction and you may be wondering how you can help. Your loved one will need your support to overcome that addiction. Anticipate Problems Here are some reasons why you may have difficulty helping persons suffering from an addiction? They may be in denial They feel embarrassed and see no reason for discussing the problem with you They feel uncomfortable and do not want to discuss their personal issue with a. The addiction may be their way of skirting another issue they are having. There are no quick fix answers in helping an individual with an addiction. You cannot persuade the addict to change if they are not willing to. The addict must be determined and consistent to overcome the addiction. How to help your loved make the long term changes to quit the habit and help you to cope with the situation as well. Create Trust It is not easy to build trust that been destroyed previously. Most importantly, initiate this first step between you and your loved one before you think about change. Understand that trust can be undermined during your attempts to help. Nagging, lecturing and criticizing the addicted person. Shouting, exaggerating and name calling Getting involved even in minimal addictive behavior yourself, they will see this as hypocritical behavior on your part Be aware that: The addicted persons may feel that your attempts to help may be your way of trying to control them. This results in deeper involvement in the addictive behavior. The addictive behavior may be a coping mechanism for other stressful situations in their lives. If the environment you share is stressful, most likely the addictive behavior will progress. Trust is critical and works well both ways. People suffering from addictions hardly ever change. Change only occurs if there consequences to the behavior. Share with them the negative consequences of their actions. Initiate Help for Yourself It is stressful when your loved one is an addict. Accept the situation is stressful for you and seek help so you can cope. This is if you want to help your loved one. Remember, the decision to change must come from the person who has the addiction. Ensure that you communicate honestly and in a non- threatening way. Effective communication makes your loved one more open to deciding to change. A man with an injured hand taking more pain pills than he needs. Treatment The process for treatment will vary depending on the type of treatment available. Trust is critical; keep working to establish trust. Re-visit Step 1 before taking your loved one to counseling sessions. Honesty is important; be honest about your feelings, your expectation, and how the addiction is affecting you. Blaming, criticizing or humiliating your loved one during counseling will not help. Just say how this is affecting you. Just listen patiently with an open mind. Change has to be both ways. If you want to help the addict, you have to be willing to change too. If your loved one can see the willingness in you, most likely they will work with the treatment process. Check this URI What should you do if your loved ones seek treatment alone? Allow the addict to volunteer information about what happened in therapy. The approaches to helping addicts overcome their addiction vary. Bear in mind that you will encounter challenges and that change will take time. Be patient and encouraging during the process. Featured Photo courtesy of Tookapic.

Chapter 4 : How to Overcome an Addiction: 14 Steps (with Pictures) - wikiHow

To overcome addiction, choose a specific date to quit in the near future to allow yourself time to mentally and physically prepare. Next, start building a support system by seeing a therapist, talking to friends and family, and seeking out support groups in your area.

The underlying assumption of the ABC Tool is that how we think has a major impact on our emotions and behaviors. Change our thinking and then our feelings and actions will change as well. In effect, the ABC Tool helps us unravel our thinking about drugs and alcohol and is the basic way to abstain from any chemical or behavior that negatively impacts our life. But what is the ABC Tool? And how do you put it into action? What are the ABCs of abstinence? A is the Activating Event. Simply put, something happens. That something can be external, say a traffic jam, a job loss, etc. It can be a memory of something in the past. It can be anticipation of the future. It can even be a bodily sensation. B stands for Beliefs, things we tell ourselves about A. These beliefs are evaluations. Beliefs can be rational: Beliefs can be irrational: C stands for Consequences. These are the emotional and behavioral consequences of what happens when we combine A times B. I feel an urge, craving, desire to use my beloved drug of choice. That would be marijuana for me. I tell myself stuff about A. See if any of these sound familiar: I must never be deprived of anything I like, especially pot! I need to smoke pot or eat weed to get high! Done with honesty and enthusiasm, over time these disputes lead to an Effective new way of thinking, feeling and acting. Use logic and reason to challenge my Bull Stuff. Ideally, Ds are questions. Have I ever died from having an urge and not giving in to it? Have I ever had an urge and there was no pot available? Did I die then? Am I likely to die if I resist this urge? What evidence is there that I need to smoke pot? Is pot like air, food and water? Will I die without it? Effective new way of thinking, feeling and acting 1. I have stood urges in the past for a variety of reasons. If, in the highly unlikely event this urge does kill me, then the struggle is over and I get a nice funeral. There is absolutely no reason why I must never be deprived! My urge is just that, a tantruming 2 year old. I do not need to smoke pot. I feel the urge much less strongly now and feel far more committed to resisting it. Be sure to seek medical help anytime that you stop drinking, especially after chronic or heavy bouts of drinking. Stopping cold turkey can be dangerous when you have been drinking heavily for a period of weeks or months. Always go through alcohol detox with medical help to prevent complications or serious side effects.

Chapter 5 : Treating Video Game Addiction

9 Steps You Can Take To Overcome Addiction There is a ton of information out there about addiction recovery, and there are always new theories and science that lead to new programs. Recommending the best program or way to recover from addiction is a loaded topic because each individual will respond to something different.

Most people engage in hundreds of different behaviors throughout the day, each one with its own set of consequences. In general, people make choices about which behavior to engage in next relatively thoughtfully and with the intent to improve their experience. For example, if you are hungry, you may choose to get a healthy snack that will not only satisfy your hunger but also give you energy to continue your day. However, someone who is living with a food addiction may choose to eat even when not hungry and may binge eat unhealthy foods in large amounts. When the behavior becomes impulsive in nature and begins to contribute to the development of a range of physical and mental health problems and the person is unable to stop, it is termed an addiction. Does this mean that you can be addicted to any behavior? It is a question that fuels an ongoing debate. Unfortunately, the fact is that if a little self-control were the only issue, then people struggling with behavioral addictions would certainly stop engaging in their behavior of choice long before it harmed their physical health, ended primary relationships, and caused a host of financial, legal, and mental health problems. What we do know is that there are several behaviors that are commonly reported as occurring at an addiction level, wreaking havoc and destroying lives for as long as they remain untreated. Additionally, many who struggle with gambling addiction may consider or attempt suicide. Food Addiction Though we all have to eat, and many people are prone to overeating on occasion or eating out of boredom or for pure enjoyment, people who struggle with food addiction cannot control their compulsive eating behaviors. Additionally, people who are addicted to food may develop a tolerance for food, as is characteristic of people who are addicted to drugs or alcohol. People who struggle with food addiction may be obese, but people who have a normal BMI may also struggle with the disorder. Damaged relationships, issues of self-esteem, and other health problems may also result. While roller coaster rides and adventure sports like parachuting out of an airplane or snowboarding off cliffs may be the lengths that most people will go with the intent of catching an adrenaline rush, some people take it further. Risky driving like driving under the influence, having unprotected sex with strangers, and choosing other activities that clearly put them at risk can indicate an addiction to risk when the person is unable to stop engaging in these activities despite the increase in negative consequences. Video Game Addiction Addiction to the fantasy and escape provided by video game play is a growing phenomenon. Graphics are getting better all the time, new games are always coming out, and the ability to communicate with others via headsets while playing the game with people who would otherwise be strangers from all around the world is uniquely interesting to people who may have a hard time connecting with others in person. Similarly, taking on the role of someone else and living a virtual life can also be alluring. As compared to a substance abuse addiction or even to other process addictions, video game addiction may seem relatively harmless, and certainly many people can play video games on occasion without ever developing a problem. When Addiction Is Out of Control and Help Is Needed Identifying when a behavior has turned into a problem issue and that problem has developed into an addiction can be tricky. It can be easy to be too close to the person and unable to recognize when things have gone from occasionally upsetting to a diagnosable disorder that requires treatment. The fact is that addiction is defined as a disease of the brain, a chronic illness that requires intensive therapeutic and medical treatment. When this happens, and the person is still unable to stop engaging in the addictive behavior even with a genuine desire to stop or great fear or remorse about what has and will happen, it is time to seek treatment. Many of the same programs that are effective in the treatment of dependence upon drugs or alcohol are effective in the treatment of behavioral addictions. An effective behavioral addiction treatment program should offer all clients access to the resources they need. This may include any combination of the following: Some clients describe insomnia, feelings of agitation, panic, angry outbursts, headaches, and other withdrawal symptoms when they stop indulging in the addictive behavior. Therapeutic support through this transitional period can assist the client in reaching stability in treatment and

improve the capacity to focus on growth and healing going forward. It is often just as important for loved ones and family members to engage in their own healing processes as it is for the person living with the behavioral addiction. Choosing a range of therapies that assist the client in reaching treatment goals, and staying in treatment for as long as necessary to ensure that the client is strong and stable in recovery are key to an effective behavioral addiction treatment program. If a substance abuse or addiction disorder is a part of the experience of a client seeking treatment for a behavioral addiction, it is essential that treatment for that substance abuse disorder is integrated into the overall treatment plan. For many clients, the urge to drink or do drugs is coupled with the urge to engage in the process addiction. For example, some say that as soon as they get a drink in hand, the next thought is gambling. Others may include the use of stimulant drugs as a part of their ritual when they engage in behaviors triggered by or related to sex addiction. No matter what the combination of disorders is, it is often recommended that the person enroll in a residential treatment center that is equipped with the staff, resources, and experience to empower healing on all fronts. Statistics, Facts, and Data Gambling addiction may impact up to percent of the American public. Its signs, symptoms, and impacts may vary across genders , age groups, and other populations. Men are more likely to develop a gambling problem and at an earlier age as compared to women, but women make up about 25 percent of those living with a gambling addiction. Though similar in many ways, food addiction is different from binge eating disorder. Though both may result in obesity, people who struggle with food addiction may also be of normal weight. The period between sessions of eating large amounts of food may be characterized with different eating behaviors among patients living with BED as compared to food addiction. It is estimated that about one in 10 young people who plays video games has an addiction to the behavior. Some people in treatment for video game addiction report experiencing something like withdrawal symptoms when they are unable to play â€” angry outbursts, sweating, etc. Compulsive shopping is often believed to be a female problem, but CNN reports that about 6 percent of women struggle with the problem â€” and so do 5. Even one of the common signs of the disorder â€” frequent arguments over money with a spouse or significant other â€” is a normal issue. People who struggle with sex addiction are often also living with other significant mental health disorders such as bipolar disorder or borderline personality disorder. Engaging in potentially self-injurious behavior during manic periods or in general may be a sign of these other disorders and must be considered as a possibility during evaluation and diagnosis at the outset of treatment. Well before it becomes an addiction, however, chronic social media use can contribute to anxiety in users who describe feelings of discomfort and agitation if they are unable to connect â€” an issue that could potentially be termed a withdrawal symptom. Some studies suggest that medication may be helpful in the treatment of some process addictions even if they do not co-occur with other mental health disorders. For example, some studies suggest that naltrexone may be an effective choice in the treatment of online sex addiction.

Chapter 6 : Drug Abuse and Addiction: Recognizing the Signs and Symptoms of Drug Addiction

The word "addiction" is derived from a Latin term for "enslaved by" or "bound to." Anyone who has struggled to overcome an addiction or has tried to help someone else to do so understands why. Addiction exerts a long and powerful influence on the brain that manifests in three.

Understanding Addiction How Addiction Hijacks the Brain Addiction involves craving for something intensely, loss of control over its use, and continuing involvement with it despite adverse consequences. Addiction changes the brain, first by subverting the way it registers pleasure and then by corrupting other normal drives such as learning and motivation. Although breaking an addiction is tough, it can be done. Addiction exerts a long and powerful influence on the brain that manifests in three distinct ways: For many years, experts believed that only alcohol and powerful drugs could cause addiction. Neuroimaging technologies and more recent research, however, have shown that certain pleasurable activities, such as gambling, shopping, and sex, can also co-opt the brain. Although a standard U. New insights into a common problem Nobody starts out intending to develop an addiction, but many people get caught in its snare. Consider the latest government statistics: Nearly 23 million Americans almost one in 10 are addicted to alcohol or other drugs. More than two-thirds of people with addiction abuse alcohol. The top three drugs causing addiction are marijuana, opioid narcotic pain relievers, and cocaine. In the s, when researchers first began to investigate what caused addictive behavior, they believed that people who developed addictions were somehow morally flawed or lacking in willpower. Overcoming addiction, they thought, involved punishing miscreants or, alternately, encouraging them to muster the will to break a habit. The scientific consensus has changed since then. Today we recognize addiction as a chronic disease that changes both brain structure and function. Just as cardiovascular disease damages the heart and diabetes impairs the pancreas, addiction hijacks the brain. This happens as the brain goes through a series of changes, beginning with recognition of pleasure and ending with a drive toward compulsive behavior. **Pleasure principle** The brain registers all pleasures in the same way, whether they originate with a psychoactive drug, a monetary reward, a sexual encounter, or a satisfying meal. In the brain, pleasure has a distinct signature: All drugs of abuse, from nicotine to heroin, cause a particularly powerful surge of dopamine in the nucleus accumbens. The likelihood that the use of a drug or participation in a rewarding activity will lead to addiction is directly linked to the speed with which it promotes dopamine release, the intensity of that release, and the reliability of that release. Even taking the same drug through different methods of administration can influence how likely it is to lead to addiction. Smoking a drug or injecting it intravenously, as opposed to swallowing it as a pill, for example, generally produces a faster, stronger dopamine signal and is more likely to lead to drug misuse. The hippocampus lays down memories of this rapid sense of satisfaction, and the amygdala creates a conditioned response to certain stimuli. **Learning process** Scientists once believed that the experience of pleasure alone was enough to prompt people to continue seeking an addictive substance or activity. But more recent research suggests that the situation is more complicated. Dopamine not only contributes to the experience of pleasure, but also plays a role in learning and memory two key elements in the transition from liking something to becoming addicted to it. This system has an important role in sustaining life because it links activities needed for human survival such as eating and sex with pleasure and reward. The reward circuit in the brain includes areas involved with motivation and memory as well as with pleasure. Addictive substances and behaviors stimulate the same circuit and then overload it. Repeated exposure to an addictive substance or behavior causes nerve cells in the nucleus accumbens and the prefrontal cortex the area of the brain involved in planning and executing tasks to communicate in a way that couples liking something with wanting it, in turn driving us to go after it. That is, this process motivates us to take action to seek out the source of pleasure. Do you have addiction? But acknowledging the problem is the first step toward recovery. Do you use more of the substance or engage in the behavior more often than in the past? Have you ever lied to anyone about your use of the substance or extent of your behavior? **Development of tolerance** Over time, the brain adapts in a way that actually makes the sought-after substance or activity less pleasurable. In nature, rewards usually come only with time and

effort. Addictive drugs and behaviors provide a shortcut, flooding the brain with dopamine and other neurotransmitters. Our brains do not have an easy way to withstand the onslaught. Addictive drugs, for example, can release two to 10 times the amount of dopamine that natural rewards do, and they do it more quickly and more reliably. In a person who becomes addicted, brain receptors become overwhelmed. The brain responds by producing less dopamine or eliminating dopamine receptors—an adaptation similar to turning the volume down on a loudspeaker when noise becomes too loud. People who develop an addiction typically find that, in time, the desired substance no longer gives them as much pleasure. Compulsion takes over. At this point, compulsion takes over. The pleasure associated with an addictive drug or behavior subsides—and yet the memory of the desired effect and the need to recreate it the wanting persists. The learning process mentioned earlier also comes into play. The hippocampus and the amygdala store information about environmental cues associated with the desired substance, so that it can be located again. These memories help create a conditioned response—intense craving—whenever the person encounters those environmental cues. Cravings contribute not only to addiction but to relapse after a hard-won sobriety. A person addicted to heroin may be in danger of relapse when he sees a hypodermic needle, for example, while another person might start to drink again after seeing a bottle of whiskey. Conditioned learning helps explain why people who develop an addiction risk relapse even after years of abstinence. Cultivate diverse interests that provide meaning to your life. Understand that your problems usually are transient, and perhaps most importantly, acknowledge that life is not always supposed to be pleasurable. Paths toward recovery , a special health report published by Harvard Health Publications. This site is for information only and NOT a substitute for professional diagnosis and treatment. We depend on support from our readers. All donations help and are greatly appreciated.

Chapter 7 : Change Your Environment to Overcome Your Addiction

Understanding the stages of change will help you to be gentler on yourself if you aren't ready to seek help.. If you feel you don't want to seek help in overcoming your behavioral addiction at this time, focus on ensuring that your behavior doesn't harm those around you, or yourself.

According to psychiatrist Michael Brody, MD, the criteria for video game addiction is the same as that for addiction to a substance. In both cases, the person requires more of the source as time goes on and becomes irritable and despondent when they cannot access it. In fact, video game addicts can even experience withdrawal symptoms. Another clue that a person is addicted to video games, according to researchers at Kansas State University, is that they may play video games to alter their mood. While the harm in addictions to substances is apparent in physical symptoms, it is often less clear with video game addiction. However, video game addiction can negatively affect a life in the same way a substance addiction can. Those who play for hours each day become withdrawn and isolated, foregoing work, school and other responsibilities to play. Younger addicts often miss out on critical education and important social development, while adults tend to experience deteriorating relationships and problems with their employers. Many addicted gamers gain weight as a result of their sedentary lifestyles and tendency to reach for high-calorie processed foods and beverages. Some experts warn that excessive gaming can even be fatal. A tech-addiction expert in Seattle said she has known of people who have died from heart attacks and blood clots, both results of the unhealthy lifestyle many extreme gamers live. The warning signs of video game addiction include: Gaming to escape difficult life situations Playing for longer periods as time goes on Skipping showers and meals to play Poor performance at work or school Lying to others to hide gaming activities Exhibiting signs of irritation when forced to stop gaming Although the American Psychological Association has not yet classified video game addiction as a mental illness, many experts contend that the signs and symptoms of the problem are similar to those of compulsive disorders such as gambling and sex addiction. If you or someone you care about needs help dealing with a video game addiction, call us at today. What Causes Video Game Addictions? Researchers are not certain what causes video game addiction; however, some experts believe that elevated dopamine levels contribute heavily to the problem. It is released during activities most people find pleasurable, including eating and consuming certain drugs. Therapists view all addictions as functioning essentially the same way. In the case of non-substance addictions, such as those to sex, gambling and gaming, the behavior takes the place of a substance. The action of playing generates a feeling of pleasure, which ensures the addict will repeat the action as often as possible. In a report published by CBC News in April , a gaming addiction expert said those with certain personality disorders or disabilities are at greater risk than others. Those who study video game addiction also believe that the problem has a psychological component. They contend that compulsive gamers retreat to a fantasy world to escape their real-life troubles and unpleasant emotions. According to a recent report, 41 percent of those who play online video games indicated they game to escape from reality. Staff at treatment centers designed to help video game addicts understand the underlying causes of the problem and are equipped to help. Call us at to learn how we can help you or your loved one overcome this addiction. Treatment for video game addiction is similar to that for other addictions. Counseling and behavior modification are the primary means of treating addicted gamers. Together, individual and family counseling are powerful treatment tools. Some treatment facilities incorporate medication in their programs. However, unlike drugs or alcohol, video games are tied to computers, which are a key part of life for most people. In that way, the addiction is similar to a food addiction. As a result, some treatment centers explore controlled use rather than abstinence. No overall cure for video game addiction exists. As with alcoholism and drug addiction, the key is to enter treatment and to stay aware of triggers while continuing to participate in recovery groups, such as Online Gamers Anonymous. Therapies for Video Game Addicts Research on treatment for video game addiction is ongoing, but few clinical trials have been conducted in relation to the problem. Experts agree that the same treatments used for sufferers of other addictions appear to work for video game addicts. As a result, they generally recommend counseling and psychotherapy, cognitive behavioral therapy,

step programs and medication, either individually or in combination with other treatment methods. One-on-one counseling and family counseling are both effective in treating a gaming addict. Psychotherapists attempt to help the addict understand how gaming is related to their school or job, emotions and moods, and sense of life goals and rewards. Where step programs are concerned, the primary resource available is Online Gamers Anonymous, a non-profit organization founded in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Treatment Many experts recommend cognitive behavioral therapy as the ideal treatment for video game addiction. The therapy allows the addict to shift their thoughts, replacing those that lead to compulsive gaming with healthier thinking patterns. As its name implies, cognitive behavioral therapy allows a person to modify their thoughts, feelings and ultimately behavior for the better. Therapists consider addiction a belief or way of thinking that leads to irrational, often unhealthy behaviors. They start treatment by identifying and focusing on the thoughts that start the chain of addiction and help the addict begin their transition from there. Cognitive behavioral therapy techniques include setting goals and then learning to overcome the thinking that sparks compulsive gaming.

Other Therapeutic Methods Wilderness therapy is an alternative treatment for video game addiction. Proponents of the method contend that by removing the addict from the source of the addiction, the therapy offers the best chance of recovering. They also believe that placing addicts in a natural environment, free of the trappings and distractions of modern life, allows them to learn to be comfortable with their own emotions.

Residential Inpatient Gaming Addiction Treatment Centers Inpatient treatment for addicted gamers is best for those who need to leave their environment altogether for a time in order to heal. Such treatment centers offer group therapy, individual counseling and a game-free atmosphere. Some inpatient facilities offer private rooms, while some offer dorm-like accommodations. All these programs are designed to make the patient feel safe, comfortable and supported as they embark on a healing journey. Once an addict has allowed their life opportunities to diminish by withdrawing entirely into the addiction, they have few options for overcoming the dependency on their own. This is where inpatient treatment facilities are a tremendous help. They help patients relearn healthy coping skills in a contained environment. For help in selecting a treatment center, call.

The Benefits of Residential Video Game Addiction Treatments Residential, or inpatient, video game treatment centers offer the patient ample time to recover from the addiction. Some people only require a day stay, while others benefit from a minimum of 60 days at such a center. Many centers offer flexible payment plans, while most accept insurance.

Luxury Video Game Addiction Facilities If you are interested in an inpatient treatment center with amenities, you can find what you want at a luxury video game addiction facility. Such centers offer everything from massage therapy to gourmet meals. Many find that the luxuries offered at these facilities make recovery more comfortable, ensuring the individual stays in treatment for longer.

Executive Video Game Addiction Programs Those who have hesitated to seek treatment for their gaming addictions owing to responsibilities at work might be good candidates for executive video game addiction programs. These inpatient centers offer limited access to computers and mobile phones to permit business executives to stay in touch with the office while undergoing treatment.

Outpatient Video Game Rehab and Treatment Programs Outpatient video game rehabilitation programs share many of the traits of inpatient programs, minus the overnight accommodations. Outpatient programs offer significantly more freedom for the patient, who, at the end of each session, is allowed to return home. Such a structure permits patients to maintain commitments to work, school, friends and family. Another benefit of an outpatient program is that the patient can enjoy a support network without needing to reveal to coworkers or fellow students that they are undergoing treatment for an addiction.

Prescription and Over-the-Counter Medications Although clinical trials are in the early stages, there is some indication that certain medications help video game addicts by altering their brain chemistry to reduce the urge to play. Bupropion, in particular, has appeared to offer help to some addicts by inhibiting norepinephrine and dopamine reuptake. A six-week trial showed that those taking the drug experienced fewer cravings to play. Many video game addicts appear to suffer from undiagnosed depression and anxiety disorders as well. Once they receive help, often in the form of medication, for one problem, they have a better chance of overcoming their gaming addictions as well.

How to Find the Best Video Game Addiction Treatment Facility Recent developments within the psychiatric field may mean more treatment options for addicted gamers in the near future. In May , the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental

Disorders, the official guide for those in the mental health field, included a recommendation to continue studying Internet-use disorder, which encompasses video game addiction. The recommendation adds legitimacy to claims that video game addiction is a bona fide disorder that requires treatment. That recommendation combined with an increasing number of available statistics, such as that nearly one in every 10 gamers ages 8 to 18 is addicted to playing, should result in more options for those finding help in treating video gaming addiction. If you are looking for a video game addiction treatment facility, we can help. Call to discuss treatment options. According to the University of New Mexico, recent studies suggest that 6 to 15 percent of all gamers exhibit signs that could be characterized as addiction. Though this disorder can have significant consequences to those suffering from it, its signs and symptoms can sometimes be very difficult to recognize. Learn more about what this means here. Our helpline is offered at no cost to you and with no obligation to enter into treatment.

Chapter 8 : 12 Ways to Beat Addiction

Nowadays, many people also use the term "addiction" to refer to a "need" to repeat a behavior such as gambling, eating, having sex, exercising, working, shopping or surfing the Internet.

But he might have gone for Quitting Round 1, had he had the benefit of recent research. In Stanley Schachter, an eminent social psychologist then at Columbia University, unleashed a storm of controversy in the addictions field by publishing an article showing that most former smokers and overweight people he interviewed had changed successfully without treatment. He also cited a study that reported even higher rates of recovery among heroin users without treatment. A particularly controversial finding was that the success rates of his so-called self-changers were actually greater than those of patients who underwent professional treatment. Schachter discussed two possible explanations. First, treatment seekers may be more severely addicted than self-changers. Second, studies typically examine only one change endeavor, whereas his interviews covered a lifetime of efforts. Perhaps it takes many tries before a person gets it right, he suggested. In this view, addictions are diseases caused by physiological and psychological factors that are triggered by using the substance drugs or alcohol ; once the disease is triggered, the addict cannot control his or her substance use, and complete abstinence is the only way to manage the disease. Proponents of this model did not believe that so many people could change their addictions at all, let alone without treatment. Nevertheless, his findings served as a catalyst, encouraging many researchers to study self-change in addictive behaviors. Let us examine what the research tells us about how widespread successful self-change is for problem drinking and drug addiction. Rates of Success Psychologist Reginald Smart of the Center for Addiction and Mental Health in Toronto recently reviewed the findings on the prevalence of self-change efforts among problem drinkers. We draw the following conclusions from his review and from our reading of the literature: Most of those who change their problem drinking do so without treatment of any kind, including self-help groups. A significant percentage of self-changers maintain their recovery with follow-up periods of more than eight years, some studies show. Many problem drinkers can maintain a pattern of nonproblematic moderate use of alcohol without becoming readdicted. Those who do seek treatment have more severe alcohol and related problems than those who do not. Although fewer studies of self-change in drug addiction exist, the results generally mirror those for problem drinking. The experiences of Vietnam veterans are especially instructive. Louis, and her associates published a widely cited series of studies beginning in on drug use and recovery in these veterans. While overseas, about 20 percent of the soldiers became addicted to narcotics. After discharge to the U. Fewer than 5 percent had overcome their addiction through therapy. Although nearly half the men who were addicted in Vietnam tried narcotics again after their return, only 6 percent became readdicted. For example, most men who became addicted in Vietnam had not had that problem before their tour of duty, suggesting that they may be unrepresentative of the general population of drug addicts. Moreover, their drug use may have been triggered by the stress of serving in Vietnam, making it easier for them to stop when they returned home. This last criticism is weakened, however, by the finding that most men who continued using some narcotics after discharge did not become addicted and by the fact that the return home was also very difficult because of the popular sentiment against that war in the U. Next Steps We need more and better research on the potential for self-change to conquer problem drinking and other addictions. We also do not know of any studies on self-change with prescription drug addiction. Finally, we need to know if recovery from drug addiction leads to substitution with another addiction. At least one study revealed that many former drug addicts became problem drinkers. Because of these caveats and others, the percentages we have reported should be taken only as rough estimates. Although we have reviewed some encouraging initial results from the literature, it is our impression that many addictions professionals do not view self-change as very effective. Their conclusion may be largely correct for those problem drinkers and drug addicts to whom they are typically exposedâ€”treatment seekers. Generalizations from those who seek treatment to the population of problem drinkers and drug addicts as a whole may be incorrect for two reasons, however. First, those who seek treatment have more severe problems than those who do not; second, they may overrepresent

those who have failed repeatedly in their attempts at self-change. We may learn a great deal from people who successfully change addictive behaviors on their own. Whatever they are doing, they are doing something right. In addition to the work with problem drinkers and drug addicts, we are beginning to make headway in the study of self-change in other problem areas, such as problem drinking, smoking, obesity and problem gambling. Greater knowledge about self-change and how it comes about might be used to help people who are not in treatment find ways of shedding their addictions as well as to enhance the effectiveness of our treatment programs. This story was originally printed with the title, "D. This article was originally published with the title "Facts and Fictions in Mental Health: A Fluke or Normal Expectation? Robins in Addiction, Vol. Promoting Self-Change from Addictive Behaviors: Practical Implications for Policy, Prevention, and Treatment. Arkowitz is a psychology professor at the University of Arizona, and Lilienfeld is a psychology professor at Emory University.

Chapter 9 : Overcoming Addiction

All addictive behaviors have at least these two things in common: (1) they help people cut off painful feelings and (2) they are strongly influenced or controlled by a destructive thought process.

Everyone needs to be loved. He created us for acceptance, not rejection, and connection, not separation and abandonment. And often, the result is an addictive behavior. We can get addicted to just about anything, from alcohol, cigarettes and drugs, to food and eating disorders. People can also be addicted to pornography, hoarding, gambling, and exercise. Then there are addictions to behaviors like worrying and being indecisive or the need to be approved by others. When people become addicted to something, they are usually trying to feel good about themselves or latch on to something that makes them feel they have worth. But addictions are actually bondages that keep us enslaved to a behavior that is destructive. The key to true freedom is knowing who we are in Christ and that we are valuable because Jesus died for us. As a believer in Christ, you are "a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" 2 Corinthians 5: And you "have strength for all things in Christ Who empowers" you; you are "ready for anything and equal to anything through Him Who infuses inner strength into" you Philippians 4: See, when you received Christ as your Savior, a seed of everything God is came into your spirit. When a person is born again, 1 John 3: When we do this, the fruit of the Spirit develops in our character: Having self-control means God has given us the ability to control ourselves. When I wanted to quit smoking, it was hard to do, and I had to start over several times before I made it. Trade Your Addiction for True Freedom I really want to encourage you to be determined to have the abundant life Jesus died to give us. If we want the freedom He promises in His Word, then we need to set aside time to study the Word and spend time with Him. But we have to stop trying and start depending on God for everything. She hosts the Enjoying Everyday Life radio and TV programs, which air on hundreds of stations worldwide. For more information, visit www.