



The Addiction Technology Transfer Center Network
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ADDICTION Messenger

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SERIES 16

Northwest Frontier Addiction Technology Transfer Center

810 "D" Street NE
Salem, OR 97301
Phone: (503) 373-1322
FAX: (503) 373-7348

A project of
OHSU

Department of Public Health & Preventive Medicine

Steve Gallon, Ph.D.,
Principal Investigator

Wendy Hausotter, MPH
Project Director

Mary Anne Bryan, MS
Editor
bryanm@ohsu.edu

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Recovery Support - Part 2

Recovery Counseling Strategies

*"It is a good rule to face
difficulties at the time they
arise and not allow them to
increase unacknowledged".*

~ Edward W. Ziegler ~

Ideally, a discussion about the recovery process should occur early in your client's treatment - but how do you address it? This Addiction Messenger will focus on counseling strategies and easily accessible resources that can enhance the recovery process.

Recognize Resiliency

The stereotypes and stigma faced by your clients are all too familiar. Your client's awareness of that stigma can keep them focused on the mistakes they have made, damaging their belief that recovery is possible or their ability to see themselves as a recovering individual. What would happen if the focus was instead on their strengths and their resilience? You can help your client create such a strengths-based focus without denying the behaviors that are causing problems in their life.

One resiliency model, developed by Steven and Sybil Wolin, stems from clinical experiences and interviews with adults who had been raised under difficult circumstances.

They identified seven resiliencies that help

people survive:

* **Insight**

The mental habit of asking searching questions and giving honest answers.

* **Independence**

Dealing with competing needs: having safe boundaries with their troubled parents, the dictates of their conscience, and their longing for family ties.

* **Relationships**

Having intimate and fulfilling ties to other people.

* **Initiative**

Having the determination to assert themselves and master their environment. They prevail by carving out a part of life they can control amid the confusion of a troubled family.

* **Creativity**

Having a safe harbor where their imagination can take refuge and rearrange the details of their life in a more positive way.

* **Humor**

The ability to mix the absurd and the awful and laugh at the combination.

* **Morality**

Wishing for a good personal life. Morality can grow when a child from a troubled family feels hurt and wants to know why. They begin judging the rights and wrongs in their daily life.

How might you use this information in counseling sessions? By helping your client find the evidence of those resilient qualities in their present actions or past history, and by

discussing the positive effects these resilient behaviors produced.

Chart Recovery Progress

Each person in recovery does specific things that help them stay on-track. Margolis and Zweben (1998) refer to these behaviors as “mooring lines” because they help keep a client’s recovery process in place and prevent a potential relapse from occurring without warning. The Mooring Lines Recovery Chart, shown below, can be used to list and track the “ropes” that keep your client in recovery. To use the chart:

- * Have your client identify 4 or 5 specific things that are now helping them stay in recovery (e.g. working out for 20 minutes 3 times per week); they can include items such as counseling or group therapy appointments, attending 12-Step meetings, adjusting eating patterns, etc.;
- * Note specific people or places that are known triggers under the “I am avoiding” section (e.g. hanging around friends who use).

Encourage your clients to complete the checklist regularly (weekly). When you notice that two or more items cannot be checked, it may be a warning of a drift towards relapse. Discuss with your client the possible reasons mooring lines could be interrupted. Personal hardships, illnesses, even vacations and holidays can be disruptive. Your client can use the chart to recognize when the potential for relapse is there, and decide on a strategy for dealing with it.

Use Mental Roadmaps

The Institute of Behavioral Research at Texas Christian University (TCU IBR) developed a counseling manual titled “Mapping New Roads to Recovery: Cognitive Enhancements to Counseling”. This manual describes node-

link mapping, a method for visually representing a client’s problems, issues and potential solutions.

The strategies presented in this manual can be used in individual and group counseling sessions to:

- * provide a visual communication tool for clarifying information shared by the client, and
- * provide a model for systematic and “cause and effect” thinking and problem solving that clients can adopt.

Mapping can also help organize your client’s thoughts, provide a springboard and focus for discussions, and provide a “shared ownership” of the counseling process enhancing rapport between you and your client.

“Mapping New Roads to Recovery” gives detailed instructions for map development, strategies for use, and clearly illustrates the mapping process through example dialogues with clients. The manual can be downloaded for free at www.ibr.tcu.edu.

Develop Transition Skills

A final product from TCU IBR which can be used in recovery counseling is a manual called “Straight Ahead: Transition Skills for Recovery” which helps clients develop the social skills and support networks which are so important for recovery maintenance. The manual addresses relapse prevention, the importance of friends and social networks, 12-step and other community based self-help, family recovery issues, assertiveness, communication, stress reduction, anger management, and problem solving. Developing these transitional skills enables clients to establish their own continuing aftercare support systems.

The manual outlines ten two-hour sessions for small groups, and is best used with clients who are making progress in their recovery, rather than those in crisis. This tool can be

Mooring Line Chart

Mooring line behaviors	Date	Date	Date	Date
1.				
2.				
3.				
I am avoiding				
1.				
2.				
3.				

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Address Stigma

The stigma of addiction makes it difficult for many people to begin the recovery process. They may not want to admit they need help or think they are worthy of receiving it. Stigma may deter the person from seeking assistance or remaining in treatment for a duration that will improve their recovery outcomes. Addressing stigma openly and directly with your client throughout the treatment process can make a difference in their recovery process.

One strategy that will help your client step back and take a more objective look at themselves is storytelling. White (1996) suggests a series of questions, below, that can help clients redefine their identities in recovery by looking at who they've been, who they are now, and who they want to become. These questions can be addressed in individual or group settings:

1. Who was I before I began using alcohol/drugs?
2. Who and what did I become as a result of my use?
3. Why me? How do I explain what happened?
4. What happened to break this pattern? (How do I explain why and how I stopped?)
5. Who and what am I now?
6. Where am I going, and what do I need to do to get there?

As your client redefines themselves, their patterns of self-blame, self-criticism, and self-hatred can be broken, allowing the recovery process to progress.

Dual Diagnosis Recovery Counseling

NIDA's "Approaches to Drug Abuse Counseling" series includes a downloadable guide specific to counseling dual disorder clients. The guide addresses specific and practical concerns such as proscribed counselor behaviors, format for typical individual and group counseling sessions, dealing with common problems such as resistance, responding to slips and relapses and involving significant others. Go to: <http://165.112.78.61/ADAC/ADAC3.html> and download the manual.

Twelve-Step

NIAAA's Project MATCH series includes a "Twelve-Step Facilitation" manual, 12-15 individual sessions based on 12-Step behavioral, spiritual, and cognitive principles. TSF facilitates acceptance of the need for abstinence and the willingness to participate actively in 12-step fellowships as a means of sustaining sobriety. Goals are broken down into a series of cognitive, emotional, relationship, behavioral, social, and spiritual objectives. The manual is best used by a counselor who has attended 12-step meetings (anyone can attend an "open" 12-Step meeting, so all counselors should have this experience in their repertoire). The manual costs \$6 and can be ordered online at <http://www.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/match.htm#ordering>.

Facilitation

Next Issue:

"Recovery Resources"

Sources:

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