

What is addiction?

Addiction is a manifestation of developmental immaturity; a pattern where a person uses something in a repeated attempt to fix how they feel to the detriment of themselves. Addiction is not the drug, the drink or the behaviour; it is the corrupted relationship with oneself and therefore everyone, and everything, else.

Thanks to recent developments in the understanding of the neurobiology, we know that addiction operates in the brain, over stimulating the reward pathways so that the addict initially experiences pleasure and, crucially, avoids feeling negative emotions such as anxiety, depression, anger or perhaps a reaction to past trauma.

Being able to self regulate and control emotion and behaviour is a brain function that is compromised in an addict. It is thus not the addict's fault that they cannot control their using, but it is their responsibility.

With any addiction, tolerance builds and the intake has to increase, and often be supplemented by engagement with other addictions, to achieve the same effect. Eventually, it stops 'working', and the addict is left feeling exposed, humiliated and vulnerable – this is often referred to as 'rock bottom', and although it can be a major turning point for many, for others it ends in tragedy.

The popular belief that you have to wait until the addict is 'ready' before treatment is possible is a mistake: rock bottom can be induced, and intervention works, but it must be planned and executed with experience and care.

Of course environmental factors and traumatic events, irrespective of size, have a huge influence on the

development of an addiction. For example, where there is a divorce in a family and children are involved, it is not the divorce itself that causes the problems, it is how it is managed and experienced that is significant.

Addiction is also widely acknowledged to be a family condition; a culturally learned way of dealing with emotions that causes more trouble than it solves. If there is addiction in the family, then all other family members need to be alert to the possibility of the presence of that influence, and learn how to work a preventative programme. Once addiction takes hold, it causes widespread devastation – to moral values, family relationships and any possibility of peace, trust and hope. It is an insidious and relentless destructive force that operates through emotions, and it is imperative that those who care about the addict invest some time in learning how to be around the illness without unwittingly enabling it (see services available for family members)

In the absence of the addictive substance or behaviour, the person is left with no coping skills around their emotions and this is where treatment comes in. We aim to get someone abstinent as a priority and then start working towards a sustainable recovery, and a productive happy life.

Recovery is possible and it is important to know that there are many recovering addicts, all over the world, who are happy and fulfilled. Once abstinent, much of the work we do at Charter is about working on self-esteem and personal identity so that people can leave treatment prepared and inspired to fulfil their potential.

If you think you or somebody you love is suffering with addiction issues then give us a call, we can help

Call 020 7323 4970

www.charterharleystreet.com