

ECHO IDAHO

Counseling Techniques for
Substance Use Disorders

Managing Hopelessness & Shame in SUD Client

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“You can’t keep blaming yourself. Just blame yourself once, and move on.” - Homer Simpson



Why is important to know about these?

- Hopelessness and shame are some key barriers to recovery.
- Shame leads to secrecy, relapse, and isolation.
- Hopelessness creates the belief that change isn't possible
- Addressing these emotions improves recovery outcomes.



Understanding Shame

- Shame = I AM something bad vs. Guilt = I DID something bad
- Shame is fueled by:
 - Social stigma
 - Internalized judgements
 - Repeated relapses
 - Past traumas
- “I don’t deserve to change”, or “I deserve what had happened to me”
- Shame -> Isolation -> Relapses/More use -> Deeper Shame
 - Goes round and round



Understanding Hopelessness

- Hopelessness: A loss of belief in the possibility of change
- Hopelessness is common in:
 - Chronic relapses
 - Co-occurring depression or trauma
 - Lack of support or failed systems
 - Family has “written them off”, friends have distanced themselves, unsuccessful attempts at treatment in the past.
- Can lead to suicidal thoughts or giving up on recovery
 - “Why bother”, “Why even try, I’m not going to get it”, “I’ve messed up this much



Language matters

- Person first language
- Non-judgemental
 - Clean vs dirty, sober vs clean
- Respectful language reduces shame and increases engagement



Breaking the Shame Cycle

- Normalize feelings
 - “You’re not alone”
- Validate experience
 - “This is hard AND you can do it”
- Offer empathy, not judgement
- Focus on strengths and resilience



Practical strategies

- Encourage peer support groups
 - Peers who have been through similar experiences can help with the shame and hopelessness, “if I’ve done it, so can you”
- Offer trauma-informed care
- Work on negative self-talk
- Reframe identity: “you’re not your past”



Tools for Hope

- Mindfulness, affirmations
- Rewriting the recovery story
- Purposeful daily routines
- Recovery role models- “If they can, I can too”



Why is connection important

- Shame thrives in silence
- Peer support = shared experience = reduced stigma
- Family education and involvement (when safe) helps sustain hope



Wrapping it up

- Shame and hopelessness are common, but not permanent
- Compassion > punishment
- Connection > isolation
- Language and mindset can support or sabotage recovery
- Small steps = big changes over time

