

ECHO IDAHO

Counseling Techniques for
Substance Use Disorders

Relationship Addiction & Substance Use

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Introduction

- Relationship Addiction: compulsive dependency on a partner or relationship
- Substance Use Disorder: Ongoing use of substances despite negative consequences
- These two often reinforce each other, creating a cycle that is hard to break.



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What is relationship addiction?

- Can also be called: Codependency, love addiction, trauma bonding
- Key characteristics:
 - Fear of abandonment
 - Obsessive focus on the partner
 - Tolerating toxic or unhealthy behaviors
 - Feeling “empty” when not in a relationship



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What are some of the signs?

- Constant need for reassurance
- Difficulty with setting boundaries
- Neglecting responsibilities for the relationship
- Repeated patterns of unhealthy partners
- Loss of personal identity
- Anxiety or panic at the thought of separation



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What is substance use disorder (SUD)

- SUD involves:
 - Cravings
 - Loss of control over use
 - Neglecting of roles in work/school/home
 - Continued use despite negative consequences or harm

How these addictions intersect

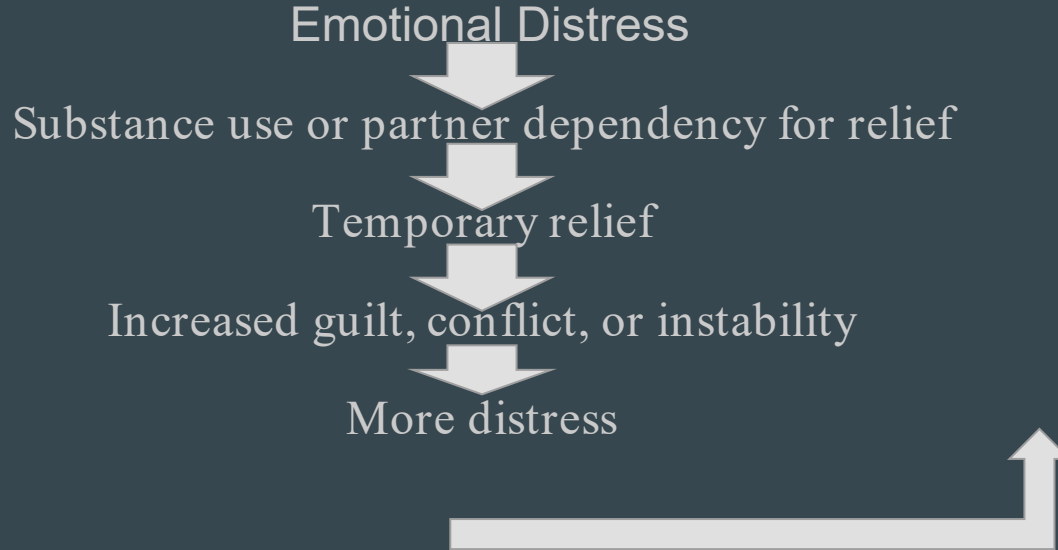
- Relationships may revolve around using substances together
- Substance use may worsen emotional dependency
- Addiction can be used as a coping skill for relational distress
- Both can stem from similar root causes (trauma, insecure attachment)



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The cycle of co-addiction



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Shared risk factors

- Childhood trauma
- Insecure attachment- anxious or avoidant
- Low self-worth
- Family patterns of substance use or codependency
- Mental health conditions- anxiety, depression, PTSD



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Psychological dynamics

- Trauma bonding- cycles of affection and pain creates attachment
- Reward systems- both relationships and substances activate dopamine
- Avoidance of emotions- using substances or partners to numb pain
- Enmeshment- loss of boundaries and autonomy

Effects

- Emotional exhaustion
- Increased anxiety and depression
- Isolation from support systems
- Financial and health consequences
- Risk of escalating substance use

Effects on the relationship

- Unstable or volatile communication
- Enabling each other's harmful behaviors
- Power imbalances
- Cycles of conflict and reconciliation
- Difficulty ending the relationship despite harm



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Integrated treatment

- Effective recovery often requires:
 - Treating both relationship patterns and substance use
 - Individual and couples counseling (when appropriate)
 - Developing healthy coping mechanisms
 - Building a strong support network
 - Relapse prevention planning



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Conclusion

- Relationship and substance addiction frequently interact
- Root causes often include trauma and insecure attachment
- Integrated treatment can break both cycles
- Recovery is possible with the right support and strategies