

GDC Session #3

The Process of Recovery: Part II

Objectives of Session

1. Identify emotional and physical symptoms of withdrawal from cocaine and other substances.
2. Identify stages of recovery from cocaine addiction and problems common in each of these stages.
3. Identify one area of personal change to begin working on as part of ongoing recovery.

Methods/Points for Group Discussion

1. Use discussion format to review the clients' answers to the handouts and the educational material for this session. Write the major points on a chalkboard or flip chart, if desired.
2. Ask group members to share their own experiences related to this material, as it is reviewed.
3. Explain that withdrawal symptoms are temporary and will gradually disappear as the recovering person establishes more "clean time" and works toward maintaining a healthy lifestyle.
4. Ask clients to identify any physical and emotional symptoms they experienced when they first stopped using drugs and alcohol (acute withdrawal). Then, identify symptoms that emerged long after clients were substance free for weeks or longer (protracted withdrawal or post-acute withdrawal).
5. Discuss ways to manage withdrawal symptoms.
6. Introduce the concept of stages of recovery. Dr. Richard Rawson and his colleagues, who developed the neurobehavioral model of recovery from cocaine addiction, identified four different stages of recovery that are commonly experienced by people during their recovery. These stages are "rough" guidelines of the recovery process. Each of these four stages involves potential changes in clients' behavior, emotions, thinking, and interpersonal relationships. Following is a brief summary of key issues from the client's perspective that are associated with each stage.

Stage 1: Withdrawal (0-15 days)

The client may sleep more, act impulsively, or feel depressed, anxious, shameful, fearful, confused, or self-doubt. Cravings to use cocaine are strong, and the client may have trouble concentrating or coping with stress. He or she may become irritated easily with other people.

Stage 2: Honeymoon (16-45 days)

The client begins to feel better physically, with increased energy, optimism, and confidence about life. He or she may even begin to feel that the cocaine problem is “under control” or “over.” As a result of denial returning or minimizing the need for involvement in longer term recovery, the client may drop out of treatment early or stop recovery activities, such as attending NA, CA, or AA meetings or following the disciplines of recovery. This may contribute to his or her use of cocaine or other substances again.

Stage 3: The Wall (46-120 days)

This is seen as the major hurdle in recovery. The client becomes more vulnerable to relapse as he or she feels reduced physical or sexual energy, depressed, anxious, irritable, or bored; has trouble concentrating, and feels strong cravings or thoughts about using cocaine.

Stage 4: Adjustment (121-180 days)

If the client gets through the previous stages, he or she may feel a great sense of accomplishment. Life begins to feel like it's getting back to normal as the client adjusts to lifestyle changes. Although the client's mood improves, he or she still continues to feel bored and may even feel more lonely than he or she did before. Cravings for cocaine occur less frequently and intensely, and the client may begin to question whether he or she has an addiction. The client may even put himself or herself in high-risk situations that increase the risk of relapse to drug use.

7. Have clients discuss one change that they will work on in their ongoing recovery. Encourage them to be specific and realistic when identifying the area of change and the strategies they will use to make this change.

GDC Session #3 Handouts

1. “The Recovery Process.” Adapted from *Group Drug Counseling Participant Recovery Workbook*. Holmes Beach, FL: Learning Publications, Inc., pp. 7-8.
2. “Stages of Recovery From Cocaine Addiction.”

Suggested Educational Video

1. Living Sober Video B: *Coping with Cravings and Thoughts of Using*. Gerald T. Rogers Productions, 1000 Skokie Blvd., Suite 575, Wilmette, IL 60091, 1-800-227-9100.

GDC Session #3, Sample Handout #1

The Recovery Process

Recovery from cocaine addiction is a long-term process that involves **abstinence + change**. Abstinence from cocaine as well as from other street drugs, non-prescribed drugs, and alcohol is recommended because any substance use can threaten your recovery from cocaine addiction. You may develop an addiction to another substance.

Recovery involves changing yourself (**internal**) and your lifestyle (**external**). Improving or developing new coping skills is essential for change to occur and for abstinence to continue over time. Recovery is not an easy or painless process. It takes hard work, commitment, discipline, and a willingness to examine the effects of addiction on your life. At first, it isn't unusual to feel impatient, angry, frustrated, or unsure that you want to change.

The specific changes you need to make will depend on how addiction has affected you and other people in your life, your motivation to change, and what you see as important to change to recover from your addiction. An open attitude and a willingness to learn information and listen to others are essential in laying the foundation for recovery.

Following are some of the common areas of change to think about in developing your specific recovery plan:

- *Physical*: good nutrition, exercise, sleep, relaxation, and health care practices.
- *Psychological or Emotional*: Accepting your addiction and learning to cope with feelings, problems, stresses, and negative thinking without relying on cocaine, alcohol, or other drugs.
- *Social*: Developing relationships with sober people, learning to resist pressures from others to use substances, and developing healthy social and leisure interests to occupy your time and give you a sense of satisfaction and pleasure.
- *Family*: Examining the effects of cocaine addiction on your family and encouraging them to get involved in your recovery, making amends to family members hurt by your addiction, and working hard to have mutually satisfying relationships with family members.
- *Spiritual*: Learning to rely on a higher power for help and strength, developing a sense of purpose and meaning, and learning to accept life on life's terms.

Recovery from cocaine addiction is best viewed as a “we” process in which you use the help and support of others, such as your counselor or therapist, sponsor, family, or other important people. Following are some questions to help you begin planning your recovery strategies:

1. List any withdrawal symptoms that you experienced when you reduced or stopped your use of cocaine, alcohol, or other drugs.

When I quit booze I had some tremors, felt sick to my stomach, lost my appetite, and couldn't sleep very well.

2. List several benefits of recovery.

Better physical and emotional health

My family won't break up

Function better at work

3. List two changes you need to make in your recovery from cocaine addiction.

I can't be hanging out with people I got high with or people who will try to get me to use drugs or alcohol.

I need to control my anger and not use it as an excuse to use cocaine or drink alcohol.

4. Choose one of the changes you listed above to begin working on now, and list two or more steps to take to make this change.

Change: *I can't be hanging out with people I got high with or people who will try to get me to use drugs or alcohol.*

Cut ties with users.

Socialize with NA/AA friends after meetings.

Take up one new hobby that doesn't put me at risk to use.

GDC Session #3, Sample Handout #2

Stages of Recovery From Cocaine Addiction

Dr. Richard Rawson and his colleagues, who developed the neurobehavioral model of recovery from cocaine addiction, identified four different stages of recovery that are commonly experienced by people during their recovery. These stages are rough guidelines for the recovery process. Each of these four stages involves potential changes in your behavior, emotions, thinking, and interpersonal relationships. Following is a brief summary of symptoms or behaviors associated with each stage.

Stage 1: Withdrawal (0-15 days)

You may sleep more, act impulsively, or feel depressed, anxious, shameful, fearful, confused, or self-doubt. Cravings to use cocaine are strong, and you may have trouble concentrating or coping with stress. You may become irritated easily with other people.

Stage 2: Honeymoon (16-45 days)

You begin to feel better physically, your energy increases, and you feel more optimistic and confident about your life. You may even begin to feel your cocaine problem is “under control” or “over,” and, as a result, you may want to drop out of treatment early or stop your recovery activities, such as attending NA, CA, or AA meetings or stop following the disciplines of recovery. This may contribute to your use of cocaine or other substances again.

Stage 3: The Wall (46-120 days)

This is seen as the major hurdle in recovery. You become more vulnerable to relapse as you feel reduced physical or sexual energy, depressed, anxious, irritable, or bored; have trouble concentrating; and feel strong cravings or thoughts about using cocaine.

Stage 4: Adjustment (121-180 days)

If you get through the previous stages, you may feel a great sense of accomplishment. Life begins to feel like it’s getting back to normal as you adjust to changes in your lifestyle. Although your mood improves, you still continue to feel bored and may even feel more lonely than you did before. Cravings for cocaine occur less frequently and intensely, and you may begin to question whether you have an addiction. You may even put yourself in high-risk situations that increase your relapse risk.