

GDC Session #5

Relationships in Recovery

Objectives of Session

1. Identify how cocaine addiction has adversely affected relationships with family, friends, coworkers, and others.
2. Identify ways to begin repairing damage done to family and interpersonal relationships as a result of cocaine addiction.
3. Define enabling.
4. Identify components of healthy relationships.

Methods/Points for Group Discussion

1. Use discussion format to review both 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. Relationships with other people often are seriously damaged by cocaine and other types of drug addiction. When addicts are using drugs, their primary relationship is with the drug. Addicts may spend a lot of their time getting money to buy the drug, getting the drug, using the drug, and “crashing” from or coming down off the drug.
4. Sometimes recovering people want to continue to socialize with dealers or drug users because they appear to be friends. However, the relationships are not genuine friendships because they are based on mutual involvement in the drug culture.
5. Many people are lonely and want meaningful relationships. They use drugs to make it easier to socialize with others. This is a circular problem because the addiction damages a person's relationships so that he or she feels lonely. As a result, a person will use drugs again to socialize and escape the feeling of loneliness.
6. Define enabling. Then have clients give examples of enabling behaviors that occur in their relationships with family or significant others.
 - **Enabling**—Behaviors that include shielding cocaine-dependent people from the consequences of substance use, covering up or lying for drug addicts, or bailing them out of trouble that was caused by their drug use.

7. Have clients identify the specific problems in their relationships that were caused or worsened by their addiction; and draw from the following list.

■ **Examples of Common Relationship Problems:**

- Communication difficulties.
- Distrust.
- Manipulating others.
- Lying, stealing, or conning others.
- Failure to assume parental or marital responsibilities.
- Sexual problems.
- Anger problems.
- Being irresponsible in the relationship.
- Inability to give and take.
- Financial problems.
- Difficulty meeting each other's needs.
- Broken relationships.
- Violence.

8. Have clients identify ways to begin repairing some of the damage their addiction has caused their relationships.

9. Ask clients to identify the components of healthy relationships. Develop a list, and review the following:

■ **Healthy Relationships:**

- Support your sobriety and involvement in recovery.
- Allow for mutual trust, love, and/or respect.
- Involve a balance between give and take.
- Allow you to recognize and meet your own needs.
- Promote tolerance and appreciation of differences.
- Allow for expression of anger and other feelings.
- Allow people to work through conflicts and disagreements.
- Provide an atmosphere in which people are able to share positive and negative feelings.
- Are not abusive.

GDC Session #5 Handout

1. “Relationships in Recovery.” Adapted from *Group Drug Counseling Participant Recovery Workbook*. Holmes Beach, FL: Learning Publications, Inc., pp. 11-12.

Suggested Educational Videos

1. Living Sober Video E: *Coping With Family and Interpersonal Conflict*. Gerald T. Rogers Productions, 1000 Skokie Blvd., Suite 575, Wilmette, IL 60091, 1-800-227-9100.
2. Living Sober Video J: *Relationship Issues Part I—Amends, Assertiveness, and Honesty*. Gerald T. Rogers Productions, 1000 Skokie Blvd., Suite 575, Wilmette, IL 60091, 1-800-227-9100.
3. Living Sober Video L: *Relationship Issues Part 3—HIV, Quick Sex, and Early Recovery Romances*. Gerald T. Rogers Productions, 1000 Skokie Blvd., Suite 575, Wilmette, IL 60091, 1-800-227-9100.

GDC Session #5, Sample Handout #1

Relationships in Recovery

Cocaine addiction has an impact on your family and personal relationships. In more serious cases, families break up and important relationships end because of problems that are caused or made worse by addiction. Parents sometimes lose custody of their children to other relatives or to child and youth agencies because they are unable to care for them. Some of the more common relationship problems associated with cocaine addiction include:

- Communication problems.
- Distrust.
- Problems functioning responsibly as a parent.
- Inability to meet the emotional needs of a spouse or partner.
- Emotionally damaged relationships.
- Anger, hurt, and fear.
- Severe financial problems.
- Verbal and physical violence.
- Broken relationships or divorce.

Family members may take over your responsibilities at home because you are unable to function as an adult, spouse, and/or parent. They may even “enable” your addiction by covering up for you, lying for you, shielding you from the consequences of your addiction, or bailing you out of trouble. Although enabling is usually done with good intentions, it only makes things worse because it helps you avoid the problems and negative consequences your addiction has caused.

A difficult, yet very important aspect of your recovery is to identify people who were hurt by your addiction and pinpoint specific ways in which your family and close personal relationships were affected by your addiction. Later in your recovery, you can work to make amends to people hurt by your addiction. Although you may be tempted to immediately make amends to everyone affected by your addiction, you are advised to go slowly. Discuss this with your therapist or sponsor so you can figure out together the best time and ways to begin making amends. There are many small ways to start this process.

The questions that follow will help you begin to assess your relationships and find ways to improve them during your recovery.

1. List family members or friends who were negatively affected by your addiction.

Spouse

Mother

Son

Work associates

Daughter

Best friend Darnell

2. Give personal examples of how your addiction negatively affected family members or friends.

I spent more time chasing crack than being with my two children. I not only ignored them, I snapped at them a lot because I was always irritated when I couldn't get drugs or when I was coming down off a high. I asked my work associate to lie for me and cover some of my work. I took advantage of Darnell and borrowed money I never repaid.

3. List steps you can take now to repair some of the damage that was done to your family relationships or friendships as a result of your addiction.

I can talk to my children and mother about my addiction and my recovery and invite them to a counseling session or to Al-Anon/Nar-Anon meetings.

I can talk with Darnell about a plan to pay him back the money that I owe him.

Be responsible for myself at work and don't ask my associate to cover for me.

4. List the benefits of improving your relationships during your recovery.

I'll get closer to my family and mother and may even earn their trust.

My work associates will respect me.

Darnell will trust me again and want to keep our relationship.
