

**Addiction Treatment:
Old School Technology Meets the New Science Model**

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Old School Technology

In 1956, the American Medical Association recognized alcoholism as a disease. This endorsement was a monumental step in moving addictions from a moral problem of weak character and decay into a medical disorder that warranted treatment. Approaches began to point towards helping “sick people getting well vs. bad people becoming good.”

Out of this change, the “Minnesota Model” took roots in the field of American addiction treatment. The Minnesota Model is a 30 day in-patient, 12 step based approach to treating alcoholics and drug addicts. This model is still the main underpinnings for the majority of today’s addiction treatment. Since the 1950’s, this model has helped an innumerable number of men and women overcome their addiction to alcohol and drugs. This translates to saving many lives, including family members, which would have otherwise been destroyed.

The Minnesota Model works from the following theoretical base:

1. Addictions are a disease that is chronic, progressive and affects negatively not only the body but also the mind, the emotion and the soul.
2. Addictive people find themselves continuing to use mood-altering substances (alcohol and/or drugs) to manipulate their feelings. They then get caught in the destructive cycle of addiction: using mood altering substances to feel better only to lose control with this substance, which creates a negative outcome, which creates negative feelings, which creates the necessity to turn back to the mood altering substance to escape or alter the feelings.
3. All addictions are treatable but denial is a major confounding component of addiction that must be successfully broken as a prerequisite to the first step of recovery.
4. Addictions are a malady of Spirit that necessitates a Spiritual understanding and engagement for successful sobriety.
5. Addiction creates isolation that is fed by shame. Successful recovery must include the benefits of group support. This support can assist in the diffusion of the shame as well as provide encouragement and guidance on making the necessary life style changes for a happy and sober life.

By approaching addicts as sick people who need to get well vs. bad people who need to get good has helped relieve the addict from the burden of shame. It has

also helped family members and society as a whole understand and accept the people who are affected by this disease.

The Minnesota Addiction Treatment Model has been successful because its basic philosophy addresses several areas other than the addiction symptoms. These areas include: emotions, denial, spirit, isolation and shame.

Working with Emotions

As already noted, this model's treatment approach has helped save countless lives of addicts and alcoholics. This is partially due to how this model connects the addict with their emotions. When addicts apply this technology in its current form, they learn how to work with their emotions; first through recognizing them and then by expressing them in group arenas or via other methods like writing, art, music, prayer, meditation, or counseling etc. With this model of treatment, addicts learn how to accept and work with their own feelings as well as the feelings of others so that positive growth and greater understanding can occur. The more they master skills to deal appropriately with their emotions, the greater their quality of life and the greater the sobriety.

Working with Denial

Understanding the denial component of addiction has generated treatment strategies deliberately pointed towards assisting addicts to confront the reality of the wreckage and progression of their disease and to stop hurting themselves and the people they love. These strategies range from planned family interventions to presenting their history to a small group and receiving feedback around their denial. As the denial of addiction is being successfully confronted and transformed, communities and businesses are becoming more understanding and accepting.

Working with the Spiritual Component

According to John Bradshaw, "The 20th century will be most known for the impact of AA and its influence upon our spiritual beliefs". The exposure and utilization of AA and the 12 steps have been paramount in leading an innumerable number of people back to a Greater Power. It has increased their understanding of Spirit and provided a way back to faith-based living. In faith-based living, Spiritual Principles become the guiding light in how to operate in ones daily affairs. This shapes new, positive mores that lift up not only the recovering addict but also all parties that continue to surround him or her.

Addressing the Isolation and the Shame

It appears that one of the most successful components in treating the shame and isolation of addictions is unconditional love and acceptance. These two aspects transform the "lost of the lost" and bring them back to a place of health, self-esteem and acceptance. The usage of community recovery support groups, like AA, NA, CA and other sister 12 step programs, has demonstrated this. When unconditional love and acceptance are added to the mix, it does not matter what

the person's circumstances are or how low one has slid, for there is still hope that one's past and plight does not have to be repeated. All kinds of new possibilities for the future are opened up. Research has shown that those who complete treatment and continue on with on-going support have far greater success than those who do not take advantage of this resource.

Can This Model Be Improved Upon?

The Minnesota Model of treating addiction has been the staple of addiction treatment for the past 50 years. As previously noted, its positive impact has saved countless lives. The question posed however, is "can this model be improved upon?" With the neuroscience breakthroughs over the past 20 years as well as other studies bringing into question the post-success of traditional treatment, which ranges from 20% to 33% of total abstinence within the first year of treatment, is there a way to improve upon this model or is there a better way to treat addicts and alcoholics?

Throwing the Baby Out with the Bath Water

Recently a new wave of addiction treatment has been emerging in response to the high recidivism, relapse rates of addicts who undergo treatment using the more traditional model of addiction treatment. These new treatment programs have been capitalizing on the neuroscience that addresses the physiological deficits that contribute to relapse. They are building a new science to help explain many of the post-acute withdrawal (PAW) symptoms that addicts confront early in their recovery and many times will relapse over. Treatment intervention has been pointed towards changing the brain state through the use of amino acids, nutrition, and pharmaceutical drugs. With the use of these interventions, these programs are now boasting an incredible 80% to 90% abstinence success rate within the 1st year of post treatment.

With this new paradigm, many of these programs have now focused their attention on changing the brain and the physiological part of the disease. As the primary treatment focus becomes brain-centered, the treating of the other aspects of emotion, shame, family and support are often left out or slightly touched.

This new science of the brain and focusing in on the physical health of the addict has added a crucial component to the treatment of addiction that was not found in the traditional model. If the goal is to help addicts become clean and sober, we cannot ignore a treatment model that uses this science and obtains these success rates. However, it appears with all the enthusiasm surrounding the new neuroscience and the biology-based focus of these programs, valuable treatment components, which have been pioneered and tested by traditional treatment models, are being left out. Many of these traditional components still can and will help addicts achieve the goal of sobriety.

Traditional Technology Meets the New Addiction Treatment Science

Why not have the best of both worlds or, in this case, both addiction treatment paradigms? At The Freedom Center we are advocates of utilizing whatever works - staying true to our vision of being the most effective and the best in what addiction treatment has to offer. At The Freedom Center we have a highly trained staff that are practiced and knowledgeable in combining the traditional addiction technology with the new state-of-the-art holistic, neuro-biological, natural addiction treatment model. At The Freedom Center we have taken the best of the traditional schools and the new science programs and combined them into a holistic wellness approach to getting and, more importantly, staying clean and sober.

The Freedom Center's Program Holistic Wellness Approach to Getting Sober

Drawing from the traditional model of addiction treatment, addiction is viewed as a disease that affects the body, mind, emotion and spirit. In utilizing the Holistic Wellness treatment approach to recovery, The Freedom Center addresses each facet of the being starting with a thorough assessment then building an individualized treatment plan that deliberately points towards building optimal whole health for the recovering addict.

Physical Recovery

At The Freedom Center, all clients complete a health questionnaire, meet with our certified nutritionist and undergo a kinesiology examination with our Doctor of Chiropractic medicine. Clients are also encouraged to meet with their own medical doctor for a current physical, which includes specific chemical tests, to determine their current level of physical health. Throughout the course of treatment, clients will receive information and recommendations on proper nutrition, fast acting amino acid and vitamin supplements, auricular therapy and healthy life style changes including good sleep, exercise and recreation. These will be incorporated into the recovery plan, as needed.

Emotional Recovery

Learning how to address emotions without turning to mood altering substances is paramount for successful recovery. At The Freedom Center, clients are educated and coached on how to recognize what they are feeling, and on strategies that promote a healthy, productive, and appropriate expression of the feelings. Clients meet weekly with a highly trained addiction counselor as well participate in regularly scheduled group meetings in order to safely address the issues of the heart. With the utilization of the amino acid therapy, in conjunction with the individual and group therapy, clients report significant success in alleviating anxiety and depression in a relatively short period of time.

Mental Recovery

Addressing the shame from the past and the conscious, and more importantly, the sub-conscious, negative, self-defeating beliefs are critical for successful recovery and better living. Utilizing traditional counseling strategies in conjunction

with PSYCH-K™, clients report miraculous and fundamental change in a relatively short period of time. The “change your beliefs and change your behavior” strategies have allowed countless number of people to break self-sabotaging patterns and move into better living. With this technology for better mental health, the conscious and sub-conscious mind can come into alignment with the belief that each of us are worthy, capable and can be successful in getting and staying clean and sober.

Spiritual Recovery

For many addictions the compulsion and desire to use was driven by the need to be connected and go beyond the ordinary. This desire is a soul desire of wanting the best that love and life have to offer. By turning to matters of the Spirit, this need to part of, to be safe, to be guided and to be loved will be satisfied. In utilizing the 12 steps, clients learn that this connection is something very personal, is defined by them and is of their own choosing. As part of treatment, clients learn the value of gaining a greater Spiritual awareness and realizing that they are not the best candidate to be that higher power for their recovery. All religions and Spiritual beliefs are honored and supported in developing this facet of recovery.

Support

Making changes for the long term is the name of the game for successful and long lasting recovery. Our human nature is to feel comfortable and to avoid stress. Consequently, when most people begin the change process, they participate in the new behavior and life style up to a point and then lapse back to old habitual patterns that are comfortable. Support becomes a critical feature in breaking through this resistance and creating new, healthy, long-term behaviors. At The Freedom Center, we are committed to our clients in the long run. We provide 1 year of group aftercare support and if needed, will extend the group therapy treatment for no additional charge. Clients also are educated on and encouraged to take advantage of outside community recovery resources to create an on-going, positive support network.

Conclusion

The science of addiction medicine has helped an innumerable number of addicts and alcoholics through out the ages. This science has brought forward a valuable understanding about addictions that not only has helped the addict and the alcoholic but also has shaped a different cultural understanding when viewing and dealing with addictions.

Over the years, the traditional model has come into question on how effective its approach has been in treating addictions. Out of this questioning, a new science of the brain is being studied and applied in helping addicts get clean and sober. This science also appears to be very valuable and is enhancing the field of addiction treatment. Many of the providers of this new science have abandoned

or reduced the practice of treatment techniques from the traditional model of recovery with the belief that their model is better.

At The Freedom Center, we have blended the best of both worlds; utilizing old school principles of recovery with the new science of brain chemistry to make a more comprehensive and straightforward approach to getting clean and sober. In our approach, we have created a holistic wellness model that addresses the whole self with assessment, education, and life style and whole health coaching. To get more information on this radical, non-radical approach to addiction treatment, call us at 303 420-9430.