
Behavioral Change Through Treatment

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Recovery from the disease of drug addiction is often a long-term process, involving multiple relapses before a patient achieves prolonged abstinence. Many behavioral therapies have been shown to help patients achieve initial abstinence and maintain prolonged abstinence. One frequently used therapy is cognitive behavioral relapse prevention in which patients are taught new ways of acting and thinking that will help them stay off drugs. For example, patients are urged to avoid situations that lead to drug use and to practice drug refusal skills. They also are taught to think of the occasional relapse as a "slip" rather than as a failure. Cognitive behavioral relapse prevention has proven to be a useful and lasting therapy for many drug addicted individuals.

One of the more well-developed behavioral techniques in drug abuse treatment is contingency management, a system of rewards and punishments to make abstinence attractive and drug use unattractive. Ultimately, the aim of contingency management programs is to make a drug-free, pro-social lifestyle more rewarding than a drug-using lifestyle. The community reinforcement approach is a comprehensive contingency management approach that has proven to be extremely helpful in promoting initial abstinence in cocaine addicts.

Once drug use is under control, education and job rehabilitation become crucial. Rewarding lifestyle options must be found for people in drug recovery to prevent their return to the old environment and way of life.

For information on hotlines or counseling services, please call the CSAT National Drug and Alcohol Treatment Routing Service at 1-800-662-4357.

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