

Working with Psychological Conditions

Addiction

- Three Levels - Use, Abuse, Dependency
- Etiology – dependency can be psychological or physiological .
- Dependency can produce changes in neurotransmitters, sedative effect on CNS.
- With dependency – it takes more and more of the substance to get the effect and stopping will create daunting physical and psychological challenges.

- Risk factors
 - Genetic predisposition
 - Other mental illness
 - Environmental factors – peer pressure, low self-esteem, history of physical and/or sexual abuse
 - Age
 - Medical reasons

- Complications
 - mental illness, impaired judgment.
 - gastrointestinal, cardiovascular, nervous system, and/ or immune system compromise.
- Treatment
 - recognize problem
 - abstinence
 - detox
 - rehab
 - prevent relapses

Massage?

- Adjust treatment plans if person suffering physiological dis-ease as a result of the addiction.
- Can help ameliorate withdrawal symptoms, speed detox, reduce need for drugs (it's a healthy high!).
- Do not work with person under the influence.

Anxiety Disorders

- Irrational fears and excessive efforts to avoid or control them.
- How is it recognized? – sympathetic reactions and frightening feelings and thoughts
- Types
 - General anxiety disorder
 - Panic disorder
 - PTSD
 - OCD
 - Phobias – social and specific

Massage?

- Person may be hypersensitive to touch and boundaries – esp. if anxiety is related to physical and/or sexual abuse.
- Positive effects – feeling calmer, more able to cope with everyday stresses (through positive touch impact on limbic and autonomic nervous system.)

- **Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder**

- Not really deficit – person pays attention to *too* many things.
- Neurochemical disorder (which can have genetic as well as familial or environmental causes)
- Symptoms: Inattentiveness, hyperactivity, impulsivity
- Treatments – medications and psychotherapy

Massage?

- Indicated unless person has inability to tolerate stillness.
- Can improve anger control, sleep quality, school behavior, mood, interpersonal relationships. Identify their preferences – vigorous or more stillness.

Autism Spectrum Disorder

- Appears to be genetic (usually diagnosed by age 3)
- Deficits in verbal & nonverbal communication, problems with social interactions, repetitive behaviors/memory
- Locked into their own perspective/world

- Behavioral treatment most common.

Autism – far more severe

Asperger syndrome – much more mild (debates whether should be considered on this spectrum at all). Difficulty socializing, picking up social signals, consuming interest in some subject that completely engages them.

Massage? -

- Often will be hypersensitive to touch.
- Get to know the individual – if they like touch, it may be very helpful in helping them connect to world in positive way.

Depression

- Genetic and/or familial origin or related to other problem – such as physical illness.
- Ranging from chronically low or “negative” energy (persistent feelings of sadness, guilt and/or hopelessness) to bi-polar disorder to suicidal inclinations.
- Treatments – medications and psychotherapy

Massage?

- Massage will either have little effectiveness or a very helpful impact on depression. It can help release bodily tension that may “hold” the depression in place. It can release physical and psychological tensions that may sustain the depression. It can stimulate endorphins, amplifying pleasure (do not allow this to effect their use of appropriately prescribed medication).
- With severe depression with suicidal thoughts, you may want to refer them to a psychiatrist first if they are not seeing one already and then get their permission to communicate with their psychiatrist and get their advice re massage (or not). Make sure you assure yourself that they are seeing a therapist/psychiatrist.

Eating Disorders – compulsions about food and weight gain or loss.

Anorexia, bulimia and binge eating.

- Usually women, possibly with overly high expectations of self.
- Can lead to serious health problems.
- Treatment – medication if useful and counseling program.

Massage?

- Anorexia/bulimia can result in various psychological, anatomic and physiological frailties – be careful in your treatment design.
- Massage can help people with distorted, negative self-image experience their bodies as safe, strong and healthy – improving their body image. It can also lower anxiety levels.