

ANGER AND ADDICTION

Glen Cannon M.S., L.C.P.C., C.A.D.C., C.A.M.S.III

WHAT WE WANT TO ACCOMPLISH TONIGHT

- Learn about the relationship between anger and both process and chemical addictions
- Touch on research in the area
- Learn about the neurological/biochemical process associated with anger and addiction
- Learn about the importance of appropriate screening of anger in addiction cases and for addiction in clients where anger is the identified problem
- Learn how this relationship is important not just for the client but for the family as well
- Become aware of the need to case coordinate with medical, financial, and legal professionals involved with these clients

A PHILOSOPHY OF ANGER IN SERVICE OF A CLINICAL APPROACH

- **In Deference to Ron**
 - Anger as a primary emotion
- **Anger as a secondary emotion**
 - When victim feelings of fear, vulnerability, helplessness, hopelessness, threat, embarrassment, inadequacy or feeling trapped occur, these feelings can become so intense that we cannot stand them we convert these feelings through Reaction Formation to Anger.
 - **THIS IS CLINICALLY AND DIAGNOSTICALLY SIGNIFICANT!!!!!!!!!!!!!!**

ANXIETY IS THE PRECURSOR

- Anxiety is an alarm
- It is about THREAT and CONTROL
- When the discomfort of anxiety becomes too intense we try to alleviate it somehow.
 - Some will push it inside and become depressed and physically ill.
 - Some will self medicate.
 - Others will convert the anxiety and pain to anger
 - But by this time it may be too late and now the person is angry AND addicted.

LETS MAKE SURE WE'RE TALKING
THE SAME LANGUAGE

- **PROCESS VS.
CHEMICAL
ADDICTIONS**

CHEMICAL VS PROCESS ADDICTIONS

- **Chemical** (all are typed as related disorders)
 - Alcohol Amphetamine or amphetamine like
 - Caffeine
 - Cannabis
 - Cocaine
 - Hallucinogen
 - Inhalant
 - Nicotine
 - Opioid
 - Phencyclidine
 - Sedative/hypnotic
 - Polysubstance
 - Other
- **Process**
 - Impulse Control disorders
 - Kleptomania
 - Pathological Gambling
 - Sexual Dysfunction
 - Disorders pending/under consideration for the DSM-V
 - Internet Addiction disorder
 - Problem Gambling
 - Theft (lesser form of Kleptomania)
 - Compulsive Shopping
 - Compulsive Embezzlement
 - Video Gaming Addiction
 - Not pending
 - Spending
 - Exercise
 - Shopping

ANECDOTAL EVIDENCE

- In our practice, all of us have experienced the interaction of addiction and anger in our clients.
- Manas Kapoor a 35 y/o financial manager for Morgan Stanley gambled away 100 million dollars of his investors funds and killed his wife at home in a fit of desperation and rage.
- From Recovery Today magazine is an article by Amy Grabowski in 2008, she talks of a female taken for granted by her sloppy boyfriend/roommate. She was “silently seething” having to always pick up his clothes that he would leave laying around and “was overcome by the urge to binge eat.”

Courtney Pool

November, 2013

- “My heap of emotions of this nature were about many things, as they are for every person who accepts they have anger within them. They can really be about anything. I couldn’t name all of mine here, but for example, I realized that underneath my food compulsions was anger I had from my childhood, anger at how people had hurt me, anger at how I felt like life was overall just too hard. I had rage at how fed up I was of having a food addiction, how much it had limited my life, how much I hated it, how hard I was trying and how impossible it seemed. In fact, I was angry that I had to heal my food addiction at all. I was even angry that I was angry! Sometimes, the anger I felt was even more like hysterical rage. But I didn’t want to think of myself as someone who had “anger issues” or rage. It conflicted with my self-image.”

Ron Potter-Efron Ph.D

The Anger Brain

- “Staying Sober is the single most important thing people can do to lessen their angry mood and behavior.”

Research on Anger and Addiction

- Studies going back almost a half century have shown a link between addiction and anger.
- According to Moja and Spie(1997) Rosenberg in 1971 demonstrated that addicts have little control over their emotions. Their study in 1997 using the STAXI showed that at least for drug abusers, they “expressed anger more often than nonusers, were more likely to express anger toward other persons or objects in the environment, and had less control of their angry feelings.”

Research on Addiction and Anger

- Dr. Jerald J Block M.D. found in his study of internet addiction that “internet users withdraw from physical interaction with others. This withdrawal can result in feelings of anger.”



Research on Anger and Addiction

- National Library of Medicine reports that 5% of Americans are addicted to shopping (Omnionomania) which dates back to the 19th century.
- “People shop to fulfill negative emotions. Addiction to shopping can lead to negative emotions.”
- “Feeling of guilt and anger often occur after shopping.”
- And from Georgia State University in a study on Problem Gambling and Violence
 - “64.5% had clinically significant anger problems
 - lifetime substance use disorder among those with anger problems increased the risk of violent acting out.

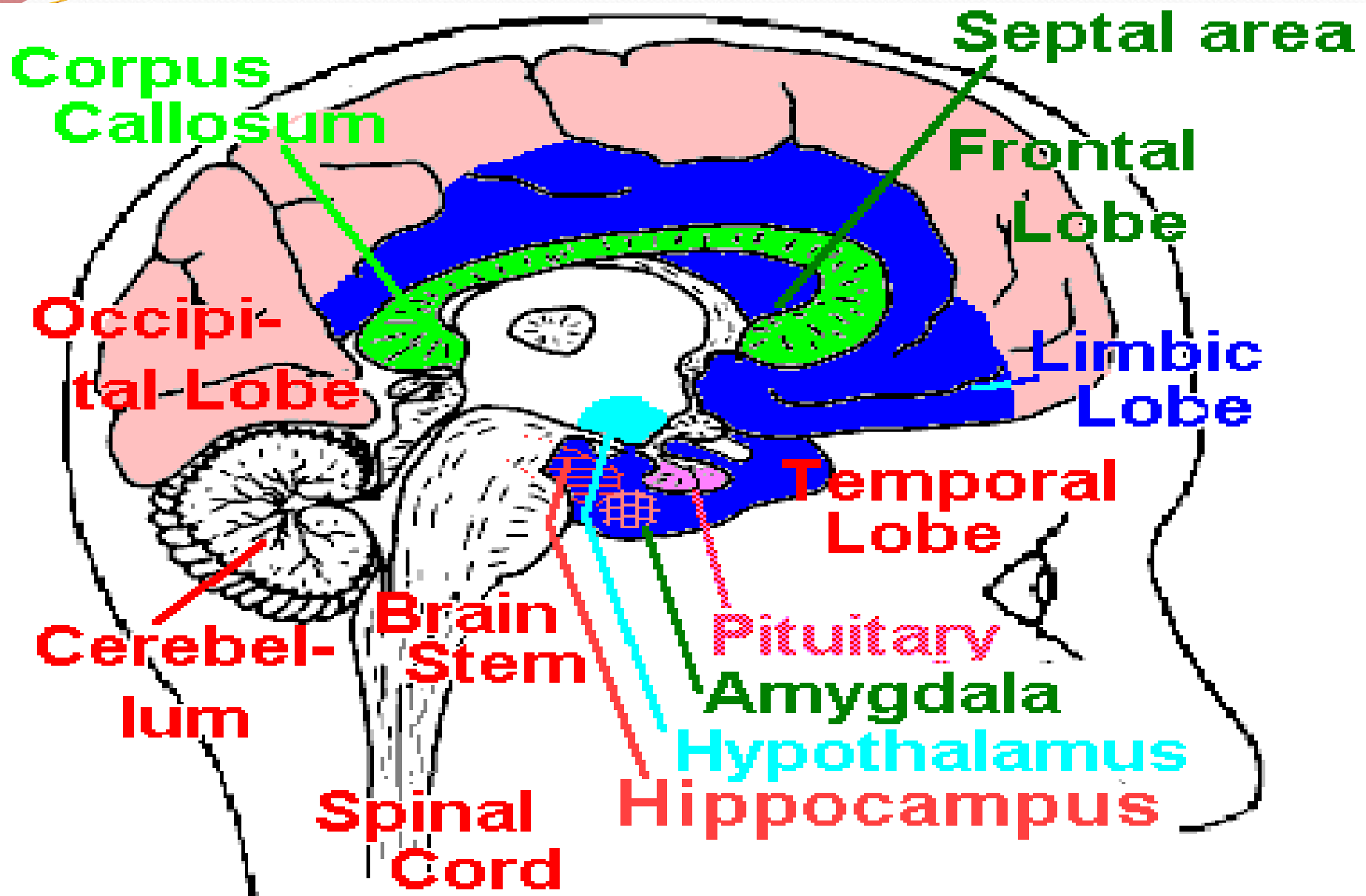
Neurology/Biochemistry

- The brain registers all pleasures in the same way, whether they originate with a psychoactive drug, a monetary reward, a sexual encounter, or a satisfying meal. In the brain, pleasure has a distinct signature: the release of the neurotransmitter dopamine in the nucleus accumbens, a cluster of nerve cells lying underneath the cerebral cortex. Dopamine release in the nucleus accumbens is so consistently tied with pleasure that neuroscientists refer to the region as the brain's pleasure center

- Harvard Health Publications

Neurology/Biochemistry

- The Limbic system is made up of the Amygdala, Hypothalamus, Hippocampus, Septum and several other areas of the brain.
- Anger is more associated with a more primitive part of the brain called the Limbic System.
- The Limbic System is responsible for emotion and memory. “The double edged sword”

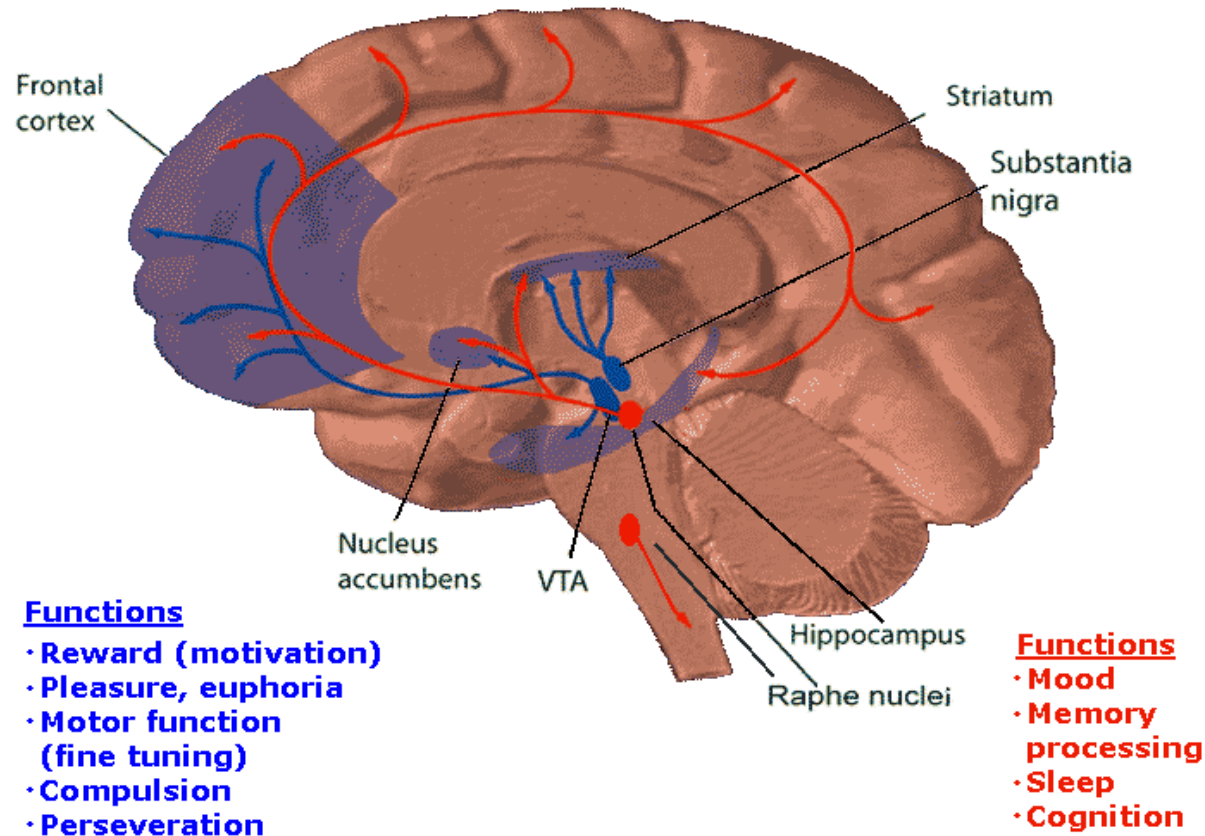


The Messengers of the Mind

- Neurotransmitters are chemicals in the nervous system that are responsible for carrying messages from one nerve cell to another.
 - Dopamine - involved with reward and pleasure
 - Serotonin- Associated with feelings of well being and happiness
 - Norepinephrine- stress neurotransmitter associated with the sensations of the fight/ flight response.
 - GABA-Inhibitory neurotransmitter slows and calms
 - Glutamate – stimulates and excites the nervous system

Dopamine Pathways

Serotonin Pathways



Addiction and Anger in the Brain

- Chemical addictions interfere with the connections between the Limbic System and the Cortex.
 - Alcohol deadens the cortex and makes it less useful
 - Norepinephrine is responsible for coordinating cognitive states with arousal states and Dopamine is associated with reward. An “Adrenaline rush” as found with cocaine causes a surge in Dopamine can cause the entire inhibitory system to break down and coordination with the cortex to think of alternatives to aggression can be lost. Gambling similarly effects Dopamine levels in the Nucleus Accumbens.
 - Fluctuations of Serotonin levels as can occur with eating irregularities or stress and interfere with communication to the Cortex and lead to anger, irritability or impulsive behavior.
 - Septal area of the brain associated with reward and reinforcement is intensified by alcohol and can lead to irritability and to aggression.

“Rageaholic”

- An anger addict is a person who gets excited by expressing rage with little or no provocation. Someone who is clinically angry and who compulsively expresses fits of rage.
- May have something to do with the relationship between Dopamine and Norepinephrine where, as anger/rage is expressed as aggression, excitatory chemicals are released in the brain producing a stimulating sensation.

Pathological Intoxication

- Pathological intoxication is an extremely negative reaction to alcohol, even in very small amounts. This may be caused in some people by a genetic variant in brain receptor molecules that may cause them to react with unusually violent or impulsive behavior when they take a drink. True Pathological Intoxication is a real, but rare, condition.

• Pedersen, Tolly

- Diminished Capacity vs. Mitigating Circumstances.
- Used to be an actual diagnosis in early DSMs

My alcoholism consists of
one part anger, one
part, depression, Two
parts genetics and one
part of I Don't Give a
Flying f---!



WHO GETS ANGRY?

- Obviously, the addict themselves.
- But what about.....
 - Significant Others/Codependents
 - Parents/Grandparents
 - Children/Grandchildren
 - Employers
 - Police
 - Hospitals
 - Neighbors/Friends
 - And the list goes on and on and on and on.....

Codependency and Anger

- Codependent as victim of anger by the addict in active use and recovery
 - Chemical addiction
 - Process addiction
- The angry codependent
 - Chemical addiction
 - Process addiction

Gambling *CAN* change your life . . .



BUT maybe not the way you intended.

Gambling problems can lead to physical or emotional abuse of a partner, parent, or child.

Angry Codependent

- Blaming, resentment, physical abuse, emotional abuse, child/elder abuse through displacement
- Can be manifest through somatization, marital conflict, depression, and co-addiction.

Recovery and Anger

- Recovering addicts can be overwhelmed by emotions that had not been experienced or acknowledged for a long time.
- Recovery can bring to consciousness past traumas which had been suppressed for extended periods of time by the addiction.
- In recovery, the addict can no longer rely on the self medication of addiction they had used to face issues, feelings and resentments that they had spent years avoiding.
- In recovery is grief over the loss of the addiction, often expressed as grief turned to anger.

Screening Considerations

- Anger in the Addict
- Addiction in the Angry Client

Anger in the Addict

- **The first step is always a comprehensive bio-psycho-social assessment.**
- Anger may be masked by the addiction
- Anger may be missed when addiction is the main focus
- Cannot appropriately screen for anger when client is actively using.
- In recovery, how is client handling stress and issues without the addiction to buffer.
- Emotional screening-depression, resentments, irritability as more than post acute withdrawal syndrome.
- Medical/neurological considerations-brain damage, liver enzymes, hypoglycemia which can effect anger and its expression.
- Screen for co-occurring psychiatric issues

Addiction in the Angry Client

The first step is always a comprehensive bio-psycho-social assessment

- What ways do angry clients deal with the anger? Addiction is often the way they self medicate.
- On court referral for anger/aggression, 60-70% were intoxicated when they performed the violent act. 92% had used alcohol that day.
- Process addictions such as gambling, sexual addiction, shopping. Shoplifting, compulsive eating and spending are often ways people try self medicate their anger.
- Drug tests are indicated in many cases.
- Don't forget! Any addict may lie, especially those with an anger issue.
- Often the best source of information is a collateral.
- Screen for co-occurring psychiatric issues.

Treatment Considerations

Case Coordination

- The client will be focusing on the presenting problem. The client must be made to understand that anger and addiction are linked and successful resolution of one is difficult if not impossible without resolution of the other.
- Cognitive –Behavioral therapy with some insight therapy as needed.
- Medical/neurological examination and coordination with the medical professionals
- Nutrition.
- Referral to the appropriate self help groups.
 - AA, NA, OA, CA, GA, SA, EA, DA, Al-anon, Nar-anon, S-anon, MICAP,
- Coordination with attorneys, states attorneys, physicians, probation/parole officers, nutritionists, family members, EAPs, SAPs, school counselors.
- Urge a daily recovery program.
- Treat all co-occurring issues at the same time.
- Consider psychiatric evaluation.