

Grief and Detachment and Recovery as a Grieving Process:

Gambling :

A grief based addiction?

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A Hypothesis on what underlies problem gambling :

- An often misdiagnosed underlying issue in problem gambling is unresolved grief, loss and complex trauma issues
- Gambling losses are a subconscious behavioral expression of significant unresolved personal and emotional loss
- The neurophysiology of gambling is triggered on the winning and losing sides (complicated grief)

Losing my best friend; saying goodbye to the gambling man/woman:

- The addict has an enmeshed addictive (codependent) relationship with the object of their addiction and as a result loses the ME in THE
- This addictive relationship becomes a primary focus and one of the most important things in the addict's life.
- Giving up an addiction for an addict is the equivalent of losing a best friend
- Addict's relationship addiction:
- Often develops as a child
- been called the disease of the disease (the addict's original addiction)

Detachment Vs. Cutting Off:

- **Cutting Off** is to remove ones self physically from an addictive relationship.
- For the addict this may mean abstaining from the addictive substance or behavior.
- For the family this may mean physically leaving, separating or divorce.

Detachment :

- Detachment means to unhook emotionally from an addictive relationship.

It is complicated by over attachment (enmeshment).

It is a grieving process because it involves the death of a primary relationship.

For the addict it's the loss of their addict identity, friends, lifestyle.

For the family it's the loss of their caretaker identity

Stages of detachment parallel stages of grieving

- 1. denial/avoidance (fear, terror)
- 2. anger/blaming (resentment)
- 3. bargaining/manipulation (frustration)
- 4 depression/severe grief (anxiety)
- 5. self-acceptance/self-reconciliation/redefinition (hope)

Cultural myths impair the mourning process

- That happen a long time ago you should be over that by now.
- The Mrs. Lincoln response (“are you OK”).

The initial shock after a severe loss (avoidance)

- Triggers vulnerability, fear and terror
- The resulting sense of vulnerability causes the addict to react by
- Denying and/or avoiding their new reality
- They will:
- Deny/rationalize
- Distract through evasion and or other addictions
- Staying busy

Resolution:

- Avoidance is triggered by fear of powerlessness, loss of control and limitation
- Grief/loss more than any experience puts the addict in touch with these issues
- **Resolution:**
- Involves facing new reality by gaining knowledge/resources to belong in the context of the new reality.

Blame triggered by fear/resentment:

- After the initial shock, the addict feels resentful, cheated, ripped off
- Can result in the WHY stage
- The addict struggles with why (why me, my spouse, parents, Kids, girlfriend, boyfriend, etc.)
- This crazy energy drives the addict to try to understand why this happened and is still a denial of powerlessness and limitations. The addict believes that knowing why will enable them to change or fix the problem.

Change the focus

- **Resolution** involves the acceptance of powerlessness and limitations (complicated by powerless-shame trigger)
- Changing the focus from **why** I have the problem to **what** I can do to deal with it.

Let's make a deal:

- The addict having tried unsuccessfully to avoid and get angry about what has happened leaves the addict feeling frustrated and looking to cut a deal (manipulation)
- A person cannot manipulate or make a deal with something that they have no power over and attempting to do so leads to greater frustration

Letting go of control

- **Resolution** requires the addict to accept their limitations, inability to bargain with reality and letting go of control
- There's a paradox of control for the addict and family

It gets worse before it can get better

- Severe grief occurs when addict is unable to avoid the reality of the situation and is really afraid and hurt. This can trigger a traumatic stress response
- They will feel intense fear, powerlessness and horror.
- May withdraw from people and life. Addictions become a survival response. The addict may become anxious. Hyper-vigilant and their world seems an unsafe place.

Grief activates pain centers in the brain housed near deep limbic system

- Problems in deep limbic system:
- Moodiness, irritability, severe depression
- Negative perception of life
- Decreased motivation
- Flood of negative emotions
- Appetite/sleep problems
- Decreased and/or increased sexual responses
- Social isolation

Severe Grief mimics depression

- However if this pain is a severe (complicated) grief reaction. Medication may be contraindicated in that with grief pain. The addict needs to experience and express (mourn) the pain in order to heal it
- Meds may block this process leaving the grief unfinished. The only exception is if meds are needed to stabilize the addict's mourning or if the addict is suicidal

Wasted Time

- A serious reaction to the pain of severe grief that may intensify it is **THE WASTED TIME SYNDROME**
- Leaving addict feeling intense
- Shame
- Failure
- Inadequacy

Healing severe grief

- Resolution involves surfacing and experiencing the pain using it to challenge the addict to grow and reach out to others (constructive grief)

Self reconciliation/redefinition

- This last phase of the grieving process is the result of self acceptance and surrender. It requires the addict to redefine themselves in the context of their new reality from a practicing addict identity to a recovering addict identity, this inspires hope.

The opposites

- The psyche is a self regulating system that maintains equilibrium just as the body does. The natural state of the psyche is a jostling together of its components and in their contradictory behavior. The reconciliation of these opposites is a major problem. Thus, the adversary is none other than the other in me.
- **Carl Jung**

Recovery?

- The “night sea journey” is the journey into the parts of ourselves that are split off, disavowed, unknown, unwanted, cast out and exiled to various subterranean worlds of consciousness....The goal of this *journey* is to reunite us with ourselves. Such a homecoming can be surprisingly painful, even brutal. In order to undertake it, we must first agree to exile nothing.
- Stephen Cope