



Substance Abuse Counseling

Substance abuse counselors work with individuals who are struggling with addictions. Individuals may find themselves to be dependent on, or overuse particular substances such as drugs and/or alcohol. However, drugs and alcohol may not be the only “substances” that cultivate addictive behaviors.

Those who have addictive behaviors or thoughts of abuse may seek the support of a substance abuse counselor. These professionals provide support and use different methods of treatment to look at the bigger picture. Substance abuse counselors often try to find what is “good” about the addiction. In this case, “good” means what is beneficial or positive about the addiction. For example, an individual may overuse marijuana as a way to control their anxiety. If this is the case, then the individual’s anxiety could become a focus of therapy.

Samantha Schams works as a Substance Abuse Counselor and a Licensed Professional Counselor at the North Shore Center LLC. She works with adolescents and young adults who struggle with addiction and mental health concerns. Samantha received her bachelor’s degree from the University of Wisconsin- Eau Claire and her masters in Clinical Mental Health Counseling at the University of Wisconsin- Whitewater. She is currently working to complete her PhD in Counseling Psychology with the University of Wisconsin- Milwaukee. If you would like to set up an appointment or get in touch with Samantha, please contact us via email at: admin@northshorecenterllc.com or by phone (262) 241-5955.

Who Benefits From Substance Abuse Counseling

Many people can benefit from substance abuse counseling. However, it is usually those who have a past history of overuse and addictions that may need and benefit from this type of counseling. While substance abuse counseling seems most beneficial for former or current addicts, this type of counseling can be used as a preventative measure for young adults and adolescent teens who find themselves experimenting with friends. From the start of the teenage years to the end of young adulthood, individuals are trying to find themselves mentally and physically. Therefore, it is normal for a person to explore themselves and experiment with life choices during these years. It is important for an adolescent or young adult to know that they have access to substance abuse counseling if their addiction should ever get out of hand. Know that you do not have to be addicted to alcohol and drugs to benefit and seek out this type of counseling. Those who struggle with any unbreakable bond to a specific behavior (i.e. gaming or eating) can be treated for an addiction.

Family Involvement

More often than not, adolescents experiment with drugs and/or alcohol. While no parent wants to see their child go down the path toward substance abuse and addiction, it is important for them to understand that experimentation at this stage of an adolescent's life is a normative part of development. Samantha Schams provided some tips to keep in mind when approaching a child about substance abuse or use.

- **Cultivate a relationship** -- be open, positive, and allow your child to talk with you about situations they may have found themselves in. It is important to not demonize their choices.
- **Ask your child for their own feedback or opinion** -- ask them their thoughts on experimentation, "What do you think?" Be curious, not suspicious.
- **Know who their friends are** -- adolescents may have more access or exposure to substances depending on what their friend group is like. Get to know their friends and who they are close with.
- **Be involved in their social life** -- if you know what goes on in their lives and have that good relationship with them, children feel that they can come to you about anything.

Wrapping it up....

People are ambivalent when it comes to any type of therapy. There may be barriers and reasons why they should not go, however they know they need the help. It can be very difficult to talk to someone about a particular situation they have been experiencing, that is why it is most important that your therapist is a good fit for you. This type of relationship building will help establish a feeling of comfort and the ability to become vulnerable in front of another person. Being able to share all issues with a therapist, not just that of the substance abuse, can help break the barriers underlying the addiction. In other words, full disclosure of current and past personal struggles may help the therapist understand the underlying purpose the addiction serves. That being said, the therapist can structure the therapy in a way that benefits each client and is catered to their individual experiences.

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References:

Schams, S. (2019, June 17). Personal interview.