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Psychology of Addiction: Discussion & Essay Questions

Brent Maximin
CUNY City College

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Psychology of Addiction: Discussion/Essay Questions

1. Twelve-step groups like Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA) are built in part on the philosophy that addiction is a lifelong disease and there is no such thing as a safe level of use for someone who has an addiction. They believe that any use reflects a “relapse” after someone has been clean for some time. However, the idea of harm reduction continues to gain momentum in the treatment world, and the DSM-5 certainly acknowledges the possibility of recovery and remission. Do you believe it’s possible for someone who has been diagnosed with an addiction to limit her/his use to a safe level? Why or why not? How would you work with a client who had a different opinion than you on this topic?
2. Although marijuana has approved medical uses and less significant negative effects than some other drugs of abuse, it remains classified as a Schedule I drug by the federal government, meaning it is considered among the most dangerous drugs in terms of addictive potential and other toxic effects, and not seen by the government as having legitimate medical uses. Why do you think the federal government continues to maintain this official stance when so many states have opted to legalize medical use of marijuana to varying degrees? Do you see this changing in the near future?
3. Some medications have been developed to help people overcome their addictions, like methadone, buprenorphine, and Antabuse (disulfiram). What are your feelings on using a drug to help people recover from an addiction to another drug?
4. Interventions have become a popular topic on television shows and in pop culture. Obviously, TV depictions leave out significant parts of the story. What is your impression of interventions? Do you see them as more positive or negative? Would you consider holding an intervention for a loved one who had a significant substance abuse problem?
5. Does society's interest in protecting an unborn baby justify coercive measures against pregnant women who ingest harmful substances? Specifically, do you believe that each state should have authorization for the civil commitment of pregnant women who abuse alcohol?
6. Is there such a thing as "responsible underage drinking?" Explain. What can be done to prevent the development of alcohol use disorder in adolescents and young adults?
7. What are the similarities between "substance" addictions and behavioral addictions? What are the differences?
8. How can peer influence be a *protective factor* against addiction? How can peer influence be a *risk factor* for addiction?

