

Substance use, problematic substance use, & addiction

1. People experience urges to use drugs or alcohol,
2. These urges can be weak or strong, or anything in between. However, in the case of a person with problematic substance use, these urges are likely to be strong,
3. Urges are proportional to trigger size, and triggers can add together to make stronger urges.
4. Urges usually have one of seven types of trigger:
 1. Pleasure
 2. Relief/coping
 3. Habit/association
 4. Discontentment
 5. Confused
 6. Withdrawal
 7. Substance-induced.
5. Most of these triggers can be addressed in treatment.
6. Urges are moderated by the frontal cortex, so when the cost outweighs the benefits, in most cases, the urge is overruled.
7. Sometimes people experience highly irrational urges.
8. These urges cannot be adequately explained by impulsivity or subjective value.
9. Cravings are a particular subtype of strong urge that seems to have a different physiological basis, eliciting a modified state of consciousness.
 1. an increasing sense of restlessness and anxiety resulting in a compulsive need to do something,
 2. an uncontrollable obsessive-like focusing down of thoughts onto performing the behaviour in question,
 3. as the urge becomes a craving it disrupts the striato-thalamo-orbitofrontal circuit, preventing rational decision-making through hindering the use of emotion to evaluate pros and cons (e.g. conscience); reducing behavioural inhibition; and blocking consequential thinking
10. Cravings may not be proportional to trigger size so even minor triggers can result in a relapse.
11. Cravings can easily overwhelm the person, and are likely to be a key factor in loss of control, especially where there seem to be overwhelming motivators against using/drinking.
12. For the purpose of this model, the presence of craving driving the person's substance use can be a clinically useful way to differentiate problematic substance use from addiction.

13. Urges (including cravings) do not always follow through into substance use. This is because there are moderating factors that facilitate or block the behaviour.
14. Because cravings are much more motivating than urges, the role of moderating factors is even more important if the problematic substance use has progressed into addiction.
15. There are seven factors that seem to have a particularly strong effect in moderating substance use. These are
1. Motivation
 2. Attitude
 3. Access/opportunity
 4. Social System.
 5. Pillpower
 6. Skillpower
 7. Willpower
16. Effective treatment needs to target not only the triggers and reasons for using, but also these moderating factors to help build a wall to prevent cravings successfully following through.

