



According to the South African Department of Social Services, addiction is defined as:

A strong desire or sense of compulsion to engage in a particular behaviour (especially when the opportunity to engage in such behaviour is not available).

Impaired capacity to control the behaviour (notably in terms of controlling its onset, staying off, or controlling the level at which the behaviour occurs).

Discomfort or distress when the behaviour stops.

Persisting with the behaviour despite clear evidence that it is leading to problems.

Their reference - Ref: Pols, Dr R, Farrin, Ms J A Sirenko, (1994) Handbook for Medical Practitioners & other Health Care Workers Australian Government Printing.

In terms of life, identity and relationships, human beings become addicted to emotions, love, masturbation, sex and pornography etc. which results in a cycle of destructive relationships. It finishes with the loss of free will, identity and an inability to manage one's life and relationships successfully on life's terms and finally, death.

Ultimately, all addictions begin with an IDENTITY CRISIS. This identity crisis is explained in more detail in the section, **A biblical perspective**. AA says that it is a disease and one that cannot be cured. The AAC tends to disagree based on lack of scientific evidence for this claim as well as the origin of the word and its original meaning within the context of AA.

In wanting to explain where alcoholism or addiction begins, it was explained in the early days as a dis-ease. In other words, it begins with uneasiness in an individual and the need to consume alcohol, drugs or engage in a behaviour is born. Either peer pressure or environmental conditioning creates this uneasiness or dis-ease. The identity of a person is affected by the creation of a belief in that person's heart or subconscious that they are not complete without it. From this internal belief flows a desire that needs fulfilment as the individual believes that they are in lack. The core of this belief is that their life will be better with it and they will suffer or be incomplete without it. For example, friends could be lost if they do not partake. No one wants to be lonely or not popular as they believe that being popular is desirable. However, once the substance or behaviour has been used, the body forms a tolerance after which a physical dependency and mental obsession is formed.

Many people including doctors, scientists and AA themselves have believed and stated categorically that alcoholism or addiction is a genetic flaw or memory which is passed down from generation to generation. Whilst this may be partly true, it is also partly incorrect. Dr. James B. Richards of the Impact of Huntsville Auricular Detoxification Clinic in Alabama believes that this is not true. "Although the alcoholic or addictive behavioural gene is inherited, it is only carried by its host until the age of about 5 years old. After this point it becomes a LEARNED BEHAVIOUR." In other words, humans are only predisposed to addiction until the age of 5. After this age it is modelled by that person's social or parental environment. Their identity is affected by beliefs, morals, and the values that are learned within their social environment. It is therefore INCORRECT to say that if your father or mother is an alcoholic, you will also be one. But the chances are you will be.

Its a learned behaviour that results in a physical compulsion and mental obsession.

This learned behaviour is best summarized through Ericson's model of human developmental psychology. If each stage is not managed correctly through proper parenting, the learned behaviour of addiction is certainly cemented.

1. Learning Basic Trust Versus Basic Mistrust (Hope)

Chronologically, this is the period of infancy through the first one or two years of life. The child, well - handled, nurtured, and loved, develops trust and security and a basic optimism. Badly handled, he becomes insecure and mistrustful.

2. Learning Autonomy Versus Shame (Will)

The second psychosocial crisis, Erikson believes, occurs during early childhood, probably between about 18 months or 2 years and 3½ to 4 years of age. The "well - parented" child emerges from this stage sure of himself, elated with his new found control, and proud rather than ashamed. Autonomy is not, however, entirely synonymous with assured self - possession, initiative, and independence but, at least for children in the early part of this psychosocial crisis, includes stormy self - will, tantrums, stubbornness, and negativism. For example, one sees may 2 year olds resolutely folding their arms to prevent their mothers from holding their hands as they cross the street. Also, the sound of "NO" rings through the house or the grocery store.

3. Learning Initiative Versus Guilt (Purpose)

Erikson believes that this third psychosocial crisis occurs during what he calls the "play age," or the later preschool years (from about 3½ to, in the United States culture, entry into formal school). During it, the healthily developing child learns: (1) to imagine, to broaden his skills through active play of all sorts, including fantasy (2) to cooperate with others (3) to lead as well as to follow. Immobilized by guilt, he is: (1) fearful (2) hangs on the fringes of groups (3) continues to depend unduly on adults and (4) is restricted both in the development of play skills and in imagination.

4. Industry Versus Inferiority (Competence)

Erikson believes that the fourth psychosocial crisis is handled, for better or worse, during what he calls the "school age," presumably up to and possibly including some of junior high school. Here the child learns to master the more formal skills of life: (1) relating with peers according to rules (2) progressing from free play to play that may be elaborately structured by rules and may demand formal teamwork, such as baseball and (3) mastering social studies, reading, arithmetic. Homework is a necessity, and the need for self-discipline increases yearly. The child who, because of his successive and successful resolutions of earlier psychosocial crisis, is trusting,

autonomous, and full of initiative will learn easily enough to be industrious. However, the mistrusting child will doubt the future. The shame - and guilt-filled child will experience defeat and inferiority.

5. Learning Identity Versus Identity Diffusion (Fidelity)

During the fifth psychosocial crisis (adolescence, from about 13 or 14 to about 20) the child, now an adolescent, learns how to answer satisfactorily and happily the question of "Who am I?" But even the best - adjusted of adolescents experiences some role identity diffusion: most boys and probably most girls experiment with minor delinquency; rebellion flourishes; self - doubts flood the youngster, and so on.

Erikson believes that during successful early adolescence, mature time perspective is developed; the young person acquires self-certainty as opposed to self-consciousness and self-doubt. He comes to experiment with different - usually constructive - roles rather than adopting a "negative identity" (such as delinquency). He actually anticipates achievement, and achieves, rather than being "paralyzed" by feelings of inferiority or by an inadequate time perspective. In later adolescence, clear sexual identity - manhood or womanhood - is established. The adolescent seeks leadership (someone to inspire him), and gradually develops a set of ideals (socially congruent and desirable, in the case of the successful adolescent). Erikson believes that, in our culture, adolescence affords a "psychosocial moratorium," particularly for middle - and upper-class American children. They do not yet have to "play for keeps," but can experiment, trying various roles, and thus hopefully find the one most suitable for them.

6. Learning Intimacy Versus Isolation (Love)

The successful young adult, for the first time, can experience true intimacy - the sort of intimacy that makes possible good marriage or a genuine and enduring friendship.

7. Learning Generativity Versus Self-Absorption (Care)

In adulthood, the psychosocial crisis demands generativity, both in the sense of marriage and parenthood, and in the sense of working productively and creatively.

8. Integrity Versus Despair (Wisdom)

If the other seven psychosocial crisis have been successfully resolved, the mature adult develops the peak of adjustment; integrity. He trusts, he is independent and dares the new. He works hard, has found a well - defined role in life, and has developed a self-concept with which he is happy. He can be intimate without strain, guilt, regret, or lack of realism; and he is proud of what he creates - his children, his work, or his hobbies. If one or more of the earlier psychosocial crises have not been resolved, he may view himself and his life with disgust and despair.

These eight stages of man, or the psychosocial crises, are plausible and insightful descriptions of how personality develops but at present they are descriptions only. We possess at best rudimentary and tentative knowledge of just what sort of environment will result, for example, in traits of trust versus distrust, or clear personal identity versus diffusion. Helping the child through the various stages and the positive learning that should accompany them is a complex and difficult task, as any worried parent or teacher knows. Search for the best ways of accomplishing this task accounts for much of the research in the field of child development.

Socialization, then is a learning - teaching process that, when successful, results in the human organism's

moving from its infant state of helpless but total egocentricity to its ideal adult state of sensible conformity coupled with independent creativity.

The 2nd phase of development (will), i.e. which gives us the ability to decide which boundaries in life never to cross, is one of the most crucial stages relating to addiction. This phase is also known as the "terrible two's". If a child's boundaries are not managed properly, the adult human will always struggle to live their life within boundaries and will become professional boundary movers. This means that when a boundary such as "drugs are bad" comes along, it is more likely to be overstepped or tested resulting in devastating consequences.