



## CROSS ADDICTION

**What is Cross Addiction?** – A transfer of addictions. The exchange of one harmful dependency for another. Substitution

It may involve the concept of an “**Addictive Personality**”- Some people simply have a tendency to become addicted to exciting, rewarding and/or pleasurable activities.

- Thinking becomes **OBSESSIVE**.
- Behavior becomes **COMPULSIVE**

Can anyone identify with this?

**Examples of Cross Addiction** –

- Substituting one substance for another – Alcohol for Marijuana, Marijuana for Opiates, Prescription Drugs for Illegal drugs
- Compulsive Eating Habits – Eating too much, bingeing, anorexia, bulimia
- Gambling
- Shopping/Spending
- Sex
- Love/Relationships
- Workaholism

**What is Wrong with Cross Addiction?** –

Cross addiction often leads to relapse – why?

- Substance changed but behavior has not
- Addictive symptoms may return – denial, lying, minimizing, rationalizing, sneaking, hiding, loss of control, consequences
- Eventual return to the favorite – For example, if someone was trying to quit eating chocolate ice cream by switching to vanilla, how long before they try to order a taste of chocolate again? (back to the favorite)
- Substituting can be viewed as a “tease” and actually increase craving for one’s favorite. (Experiencing a high that is just not as good as one’s favorite high)
- It is hard for someone who played in the “big leagues” to successfully go back to the minors. For example someone who long ago progressed from marijuana to heroin may have a difficult time being satisfied with just marijuana on a long term basis because they have experienced such a more potent form of euphoria with heroin
- “Successful” use of the new drug could lead to the belief that maybe I can control the old drug this time (Usually a failure that leads to relapse – right back where you started)
- Cross Addiction can block the Recovery Process – When someone stops an addictive behavior, there is a void. “Recovery” is designed to fill that void with new positive ways of thinking, acting, behaving. If someone chooses to fill the void with another drug that may get in the way of the true recovery process and as a result effective sober coping skills are never learned. Frustration, anger and stress may still be huge obstacles when one does not have and practice the proper recovery tools



## Recovery Scenarios For Discussion– Cross Addiction

1. Tim has been sober for over 30 days now. For the first time in his life he feels he following directions and taking advice from people who care about him. Tim is attending 12 Step Meetings as recommended by his counselor, even though he did not want to go at first. Tim also stopped associating with his old group of friends who are all still drinking, drugging or dealing. Tim has been a model client in his Intensive Outpatient Program, coming on time, and never missing a session. He is following all of the rules except for one. There is this attractive girl in group that he has been sleeping with on the side. At first, they got together to go to AA meetings but before he knew it they were flirting, then soon after having sex. Now Tim and his fellow group member skip the AA meetings and just have sex. This girl has a husband with whom she is separated with but she has sworn to group that her goal is to reunite with him in the near future. All of the lying is bothering Tim's conscience a bit, but the excitement and the thrill of sneaking around is well worth it. "At least I am still clean" Tim tells himself. Recently, Tim has started missing IOP sessions and coincidentally, the girl he was sleeping with suddenly stopped attending herself.
2. Lana has been sober now for 90 days. She is at the tail end of her treatment program and she is scheduled to graduate. Some of the benefits of her sobriety have been that she has obtained an excellent job and now that she isn't blowing her money on coke, she has more spending money that she is used to. Lana is determined to stay sober but sometimes her emotions still get to her. Lana has noticed that going shopping has been a real escape for her. Unfortunately, recently Lana has racked up some credit card debt because she seems to be shopping beyond what she can afford. Even though Lana is not using, for the past few weeks, it seems like her paycheck is disappearing just as fast as when it used to when she was using. "At least I have a really great collection of shoes," Lana says to herself, "What's the harm in that?"
3. Buck has completed his aftercare program and he has been sober for over 2 years now. Buck is even sponsoring someone himself now since he believes he has a lot to offer others with what he has learned. Recently though, his sponsee has stopped calling him. Buck can remember for the past several weekends his sponsee called him when he was at Atlantic City. The last message his sponsee left him said that no one ever sees Buck on the weekends anymore. "I have been going to the casino a lot recently" Buck says to himself, "but this is just a phase". Buck's wife recently had a fit when she saw that he had used up half of their savings account without telling her. "One more good weekend and I'll win it all back" Buck thinks to himself.
4. Leslie is new in recovery but for the first time ever in her life she feels he has an edge to stay sober. Leslie has always been a bit of a loner, with a poor track record with the opposite sex. When Leslie was using she had some sexual partners but she knows now that the guys she was with were addicts themselves and they were using her for drugs and money or even a place to stay. Recently though, Leslie has discovered a whole new social outlet. Leslie cannot believe how much attention she is getting from her friends on the Internet. Leslie is more popular than she has ever been by using her computer to meet people from all over the world. Leslie has been spending more and more time on the computer lately and her family has complained that they never see her anymore. Leslie recently was reprimanded by her employer for being caught on social networking sites and instant messaging while at work. Leslie feels more and more depressed when she is away from her computer or phone and she finds herself thinking about logging back on whenever she is away from it.



5. Jack's recovery was going great until his car accident 6 months ago. He was a raging alcoholic for years until he got his life back together 5 years ago by getting sober. For the past 6 months however, Jack's family has noticed a change in him. He has an edge to him and he is easily annoyed. Jack has mood swings and he has been isolating a lot. Jack is still sober 5 years and motivated not to drink. Jack has been taking pain meds for his back injury from the car accident and for the first 3 months he was doing fine. Recently though, Jack has been running out of pills before the script is renewable. The pain meds just don't work like they used to and Jack has legitimate pain issues. "I am not making this up!" Jack tells his family, "I can't function without my pills!" Recently, Jack has been getting some opiate pain meds and benzos over the Internet to supplement his prescription. Jack finds himself scheming ways to get more pills especially when they run out and recently Jack has considered doing some doctor shopping.