

ARRESTING OBSESSION

CODA WORKSHOP PRESENTED BY HEIDI A.



WHAT IS OBSESSION?

- **It is compulsive, addictive thinking patterns and a form of fantasy addiction that is triggered to medicate the buried toxic shame that drives Codependence**
- **Dictionary definition: Obsession: preoccupation-an idea or feeling that completely occupies the mind; uncontrollable persistence of an idea sometimes associated with psychiatric disorder**

WHAT DOES OBSESSION LOOK LIKE?

- **Digging in your head, desperately trying to 'figure it out'**
- **Worrying about something that might happen in the future and all the possible scenarios**
- **Idealizing or romanticizing about something or someone that you want**
- **Trying to find the 'perfect' thought that will make sense of everything, fix everything, figure it out**
- **Flip-flopping with a choice or judgment, causing more confusion**
- **Making stories up about what someone will think, say, do or feel**
- **Replaying over and over what someone did to you and building up resentment or victimization**
- **Ignoring something important and daydreaming about unimportant or mundane things in our life**
- **Over-analyzing your choices when trying to make a decision until you're 'beating a dead horse'**
- **Intensely questioning and doubting a decision you already made**
- **Criticizing yourself with stories of what you 'should' have done**
- **Fixating on a person to 'figure them out'**

OBSESSION....

- **Starts out like ordinary thinking but intensifies and builds into mental self-assault, creating anxiety, panic, fear, rage, desperation, and/or shame**

WHY DO WE OBSESS?

- **Manages and controls feelings.** Intense, focused, detailed, obsessive thinking drives out feelings or creates new feelings to grow stronger and drive out the ones we don't want, for example;
 - **Focus on fearful thoughts can drive out loneliness**
 - **Focus on angry thoughts can drive out powerlessness**
 - **Focus on fantasy thoughts can drive out guilt or shame**
 - **Focus on self-criticism can drive out pain (like cutting)**
- **Provides us with temporary relief, a distraction, or hope**
- **Offers connection with others when we obsess together (using buddies)**
- **Creating conversation in your head to avoid feeling alone (white-noise)**
- **To avoid fear of commitment by alternating different choice scenarios (staying on the fence)**
- **Seeking the 'thought' (fantasy, story, scenario, answer) to create a good feeling to medicate bad feelings**
- **Family role-modeling – take a look at how our parents handled decisions, disappointment, being hurt or having disagreements**
- **Thinking is like a place to go away to...it seems safer than 'being' or feeling**
- **As children in dysfunctional homes our choices were limited and thinking was one thing we could control to get relief**
- **The critical, demanding voice of obsession may feel like home and offer comfort even though it's doing harm**
- **To create the illusion of power or choice in a powerless situation**

OBSESSION....

- **Is not actually making our lives better or different. It only makes our feelings better or different....for a minute.**
- **In truth, obsession is a drug, and when we use it, we are avoiding and neglecting our lives, our feelings, and ourselves....when the obsession has passed, we are right where we were before, except usually feeling a little more confused and beat up. 😞**

WHAT DOES IT COST US ?

- Usually ends in a shame spiral, over-reacting, frozen, resentful, feeling very alone, beat-up or hopeless
- Like all addictions, progresses so we have to use harder just to feel 'normal'
- The addiction tells us the problem is 'out there', when the biggest problem is now the addiction itself
- Over time, the addiction becomes normalized and transparent to us even though we're not getting much relief
- We learn to catastrophize things so we have more material for our addiction and to justify why we do it
- As the addiction progresses, we often scare ourselves into a state of paralysis and can't do anything
- Often we forget how to feel and intellectualize our feelings instead, creating toxicity and disease
- We try alternating multiple Obsessions in order to 'manage' the consequences (like switching drugs)
- Thinking about things eventually leads to acting on them and the unmanageability intensifies as we over-react
- Eventually we can feel trapped in a cycle of confusion and over-whelm, landing us back in the feelings of shame we were trying to avoid

OBSESSION....

- **Doesn't work.....When has it ever helped your gain clarity or make better decisions?**

WORKING THE STEPS ON *OBSESSION*

STEP 1. “We admitted that we were powerless over others (OBSESSION) – that our lives had become unmanageable.”

- *What Obsessions am I ready to give up?*
- *What does Obsession look like for me (checkmark ‘What Does Obsession Look Like’ above and/or add your own)?*
- *What are some painful feelings that have been directly or indirectly caused by my Obsession?*
- *Do I believe Obsession has caused me to harm myself or others? How?*
- *What do I relate to above in ‘What Does it Cost Us?’ (or list other consequences)?*

WORKING THE STEPS ON *OBSESSION*

STEP 2. “Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.”

- *Do I believe that my Higher Power is capable of helping me arrest my Obsession? Why?*
- *What have I expected Obsession to fix and how was that insane?*
- *What would sanity look like to me in making decisions or seeking better understanding?*

STEP 3. “Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.”

- *How has it worked to turn my will and life over to Obsession? Is Obsession caring?*
- *Do I believe God can care for my will and life better than Obsession can? How? Why?*
- *What does faith have to do with arresting my Obsession?*

RECOVERY TOOLS TO ARREST *OBSESSION*

- **We must first have boundaries about how, when, where, what and why we ‘think’ in order to know whether we are just thinking or Obsessing (whether it’s healthy or addictive thinking)**
- **Catch the Obsessive thought as soon as you see it and ask your Higher Power to remove it**
- **Surrender NOW wherever you are and eventually you can intervene before you even start**
- **Grow yourself up...Obsession is always your regressed child running your head**
- **Confront the Obsession’s shame-based lies and do power work (move the energy with strong statements, such as “I AM SAFE”, “I RELEASE THIS FEAR/SHAME/OBSESSION”)**
- **Identify your feelings behind the desire and care for them; soothing, reassuring, comforting, validating**
- **Say the Serenity Prayer and put your object of Obsession AND THE OBSESSION in your God box**
- **Surround yourself with reminders; sticky notes, phone banner, affirmations, set alarm on phone to pray**

RECOVERY TOOLS TO ARREST *OBSESSION*

- **Redirecting - fill your mind with other thoughts to break the Obsessive thinking (work, talking to friends, do activities with others, watching tv, reading, audio CDs, hobbies, sports, etc. (even if a choice is not the best self-care, you can get better balance later after you've arrested the Obsession)**
- **Practice 'being' instead of 'thinking' with meditation, focused breathing, mantras like 'All is Well'**
- **Directing your thoughts to focus on joyful self-care like vacations, hobbies, loving people, fun projects**
- **Be accountable by consulting with your sponsor about arresting this aspect of your codependence and set up a recovery plan with daily calls on your progress**
- **Pray for the Obsession to be lifted every morning and journal nightly with your inner child or God**
- **Remind yourself that your HP has your highest good in mind, but your brain just has data**
- **Identify patterns of Obsession (where, who, what, when) so you know what to surrender and where you're vulnerable**

BE GENTLE WITH YOURSELF

- **Once we turn it over, the feelings underneath that are driving the addiction are revealed. This means it's time for deeper recovery and healing...another layer of the onion...lean into self love, compassion and forgiveness...**



SELF-PARENTING: THE TRUE GIFT

- **Obsession is a call for help from our inner child. Answering that call is how we build love for ourselves that is sustaining, fulfilling and empowering. Self-intimacy develops as we arrest the Obsession and gently face fears, explore thoughts, feel feelings and trust God while letting life unfold within and around us in our own care.**
- **Self-Parenting is learning to think kindly, caring, compassionately and honestly. How would you want a friend to talk to you? A parent? Your Higher Power?**
- **Explore the real motives behind your Obsession. What is it fixing? Talk to little you, ask about the overwhelming feelings and let little him/her express all the fear, anger, overwhelm, outrage, shame, injustice, confusion and pain. Then care for them; apply comfort to pain, apply courage to fear, apply understanding to confusion, apply love to shame, apply soothing to overwhelm, apply faith to hopelessness, apply togetherness to loneliness, apply freedom to obligation. Sometimes, just be with them and listen.**

SELF-PARENTING: THE TRUE GIFT

- **Identify any actions are you neglecting, afraid of, frozen or avoiding and instead directing that energy into this internal hamster-wheel process that feels safer because you control it? Grow yourself up with God's help, get right-sized with what is scaring you and ask God for the courage to take action.**
- **Build a better understanding of healthy decision making; gather information, sit with it, ask others, wait for what feels right, consult those you trust, have a backup plan, be open-minded, be teachable, in the moment and unattached to expectations. As we change our values, we change our lives.**

HEALTHY 'THINKING' BOUNDARIES

T	Time Boundary	Create a sobriety boundary (suggested 10-15 minutes)
H	Higher Power	Pray for God's will, support and care.
I	Inner Child	Check in with your inner child to make sure you're in your parent.
N	Neutral	Openminded, right-sized and not in fantasy with a targeted outcome.
K	Kindness	Practice moving thoughts and motives toward compassion and caring.
I	Inventory	Searching and fearless exploring of situation, feelings and opportunities.
N	Next Right Thing	Given what you now know, what is the next right action or decision?
G	God	Pray for the power to carry it out.

This process can help to create new habits of conscious thinking
and derail old addictive thinking patterns.



GOD'S WILL

- To me, God's Will for me is more than a list of things I should or shouldn't do. God's Will is a state of open-mindedness, surrender and possibility. It is flowing, changing and evolving, like me, and unlimited, benevolent and unconditionally loving, like God. Since it's not a list of right and wrongs, I'm not going to find it in my head, with logic, statistics or rules. Not to mention stories, assumptions, denial or PTSD. So if I'm looking for God's Will in my head, I'm searching in the wrong place. The truth is that I'm going to feel it in my heart and know it in my being. It's going to come to me holistically and spiritually, and maybe not on demand but over time, through a process (hint hint...spiritual awakening). So if I'm 'in my head', I may completely miss the miracle, the insight, the ah-ha that I'm trying so desperately to achieve. Or worse, I may miss something amazing I don't even know God has in store for me. Obsession blocks me from the one thing that is certain to present the best and highest possible outcome...God's Will.*

I am no longer willing to give that up! So, help me, God!