



# Women & The Impact of Addiction: Special Issues in Treatment and Recovery

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# About the Presenter



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Mysteriously perfect. Something behind this mask lays quiet. Hidden. To the world she is beauty but underneath is pain beyond her years. She uses this as a defense but at the same time, she is yearning to be known. Everyone assumes who she is and she plays along because if you really knew her, you just might not like her. She is broken and fragile, but she is determined to break through the perfection so that she may build herself up from within. One day, her heart of gold will shine from within and she will conquer rather than be defeated.



# Equal *AND* Different

- Get addicted differently
- Different reasons
- Progress faster
- Recover differently
- Relapse differently



***Recovery is a natural for women!***



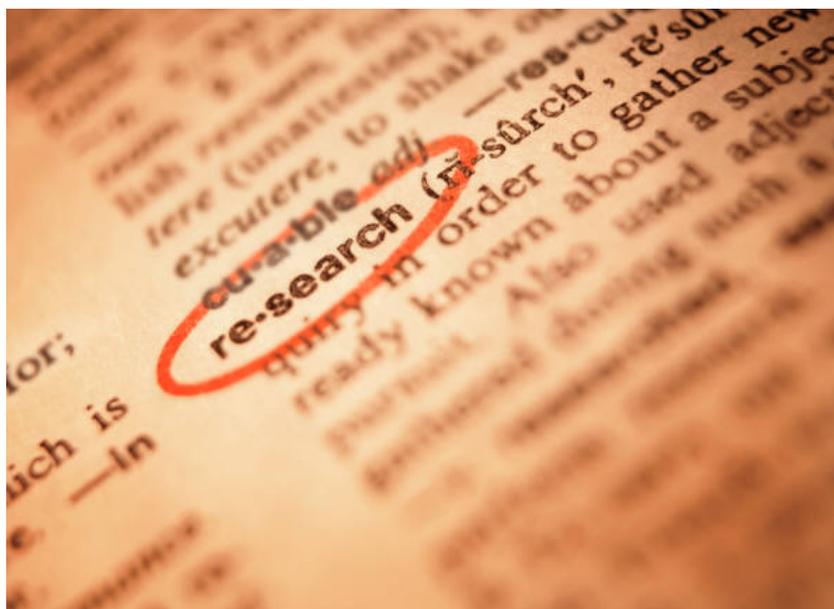
# Research

Only 8% of substance abuse research is about women's needs – there's not much out there!





# Caron Women's Study





# Caron Study

- Polled 100 moms who have completed residential treatment and have been in Recovery for up to 1 year
- The Findings
  - 46% were between the ages of 46-56 currently
  - 39% entered treatment for the first time between the ages of 46-55
  - 71.7% were married
  - 41.4% had 2 children
  - 87% were abusing alcohol and were using it in their own homes vs. going to bars
  - Over 44% were abusing prescription drugs (23% benzo's, 21% opiates)
  - Over 70% did not use drugs or alcohol while pregnant
  - Prior to recovery, 60% were driving UTI at least once a week



# Caron Study

## Top 5 contributing factors to addiction:

1. Stress or anxiety related to motherhood (49%)
2. Romantic relationships (47.4%)
3. Pressure from family and friends (37%)
4. A traumatic experience (35%)
5. General feeling of boredom (35.3%)



# Caron Study

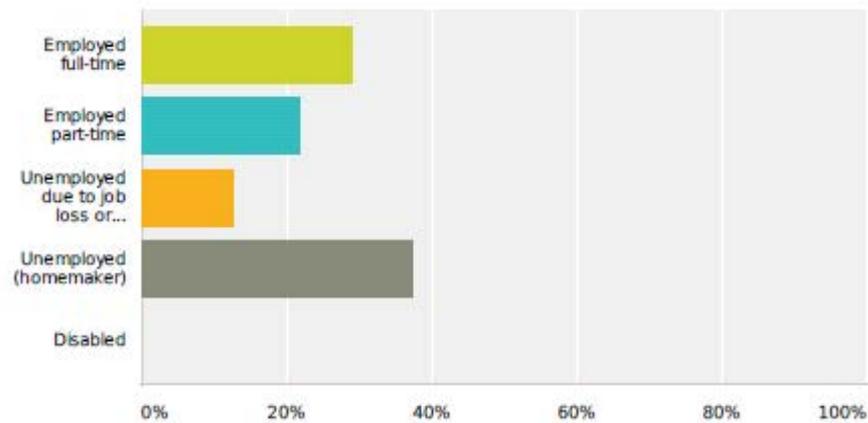
- Over 30% of women were reluctant to seek treatment because they were worried about leaving their families
- However, 55% sought treatment because their families asked them to



Caron Treatment Centers

### Q6 What was your employment status at the time you entered treatment?

Answered: 97 Skipped: 4



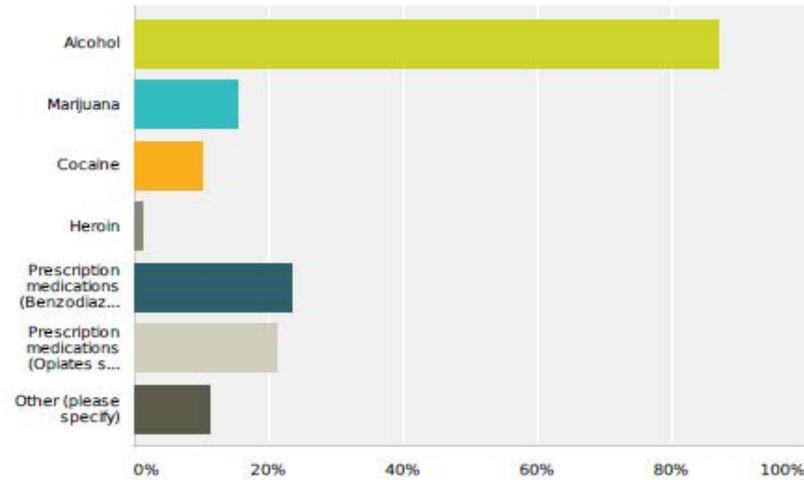
Answer Choices	Responses
<b>Employed full-time</b>	<b>28.87%</b> 28
<b>Employed part-time</b>	<b>21.65%</b> 21
<b>Unemployed due to job loss or layoff</b>	<b>12.37%</b> 12
<b>Unemployed (homemaker)</b>	<b>37.11%</b> 36
<b>Disabled</b>	<b>0%</b> 0
Total	97



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**Q7 Which of the following substances did you abuse before your recovery (please check all that apply)?**

Answered: 99 Skipped: 2



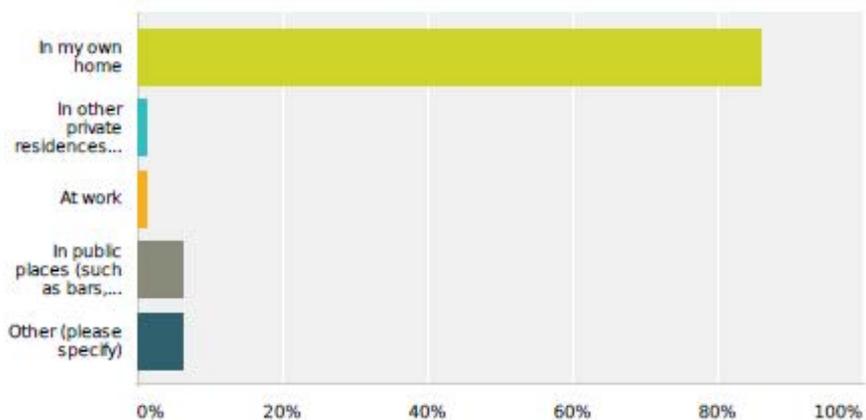
Answer Choices	Responses
<b>Alcohol</b>	<b>86.87%</b> 86
<b>Marijuana</b>	<b>15.15%</b> 15
<b>Cocaine</b>	<b>10.10%</b> 10
<b>Heroin</b>	<b>1.01%</b> 1
<b>Prescription medications (Benzodiazepines such as Xanax, Vallium, Klonopin)</b>	<b>23.23%</b> 23
<b>Prescription medications (Opiates such as Vicodin, Percoset)</b>	<b>21.21%</b> 21
Other (please specify)	11.11% 11
Total Respondents: 99	



Caron Treatment Centers

### Q8 Where did you most often abuse alcohol and/or drugs?

Answered: 99 Skipped: 2



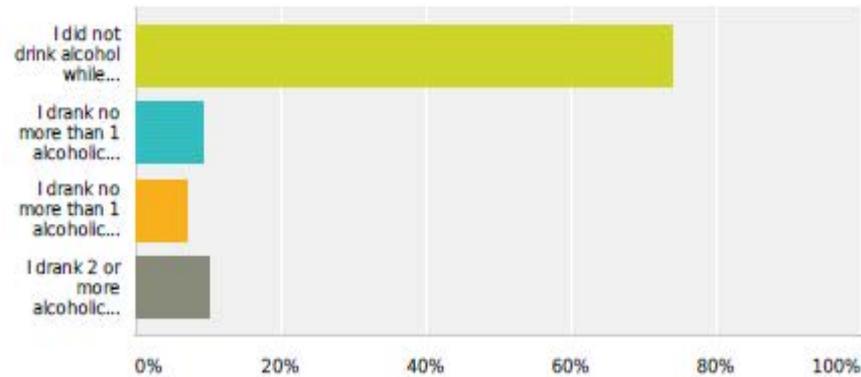
Answer Choices	Responses
<b>In my own home</b>	<b>85.86%</b> 85
<b>In other private residences (such as friends' or family members' homes)</b>	<b>1.01%</b> 1
<b>At work</b>	<b>1.01%</b> 1
<b>In public places (such as bars, clubs, restaurants or hotels)</b>	<b>6.06%</b> 6
Other (please specify)	6.06% 6
Total	99



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### Q9 How would you describe your alcohol use while you were pregnant with your child(ren)?

Answered: 99 Skipped: 2



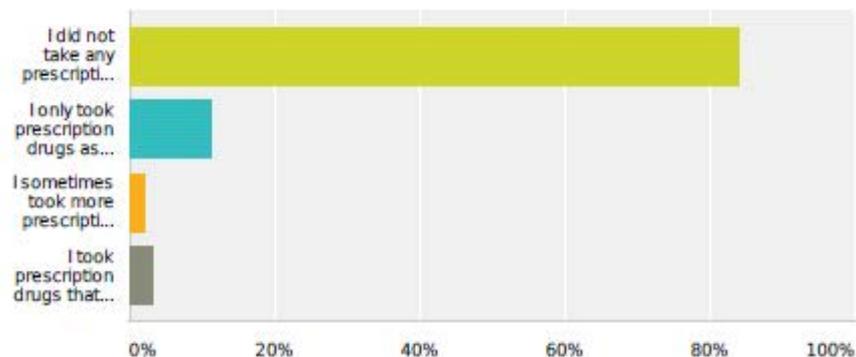
Answer Choices	Responses
<b>I did not drink alcohol while pregnant</b>	<b>73.74%</b> 73
<b>I drank no more than 1 alcoholic beverage per month</b>	<b>9.09%</b> 9
<b>I drank no more than 1 alcoholic beverage per week</b>	<b>7.07%</b> 7
<b>I drank 2 or more alcoholic beverages per week</b>	<b>10.10%</b> 10
Total	99



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### Q10 How would you describe your use of prescription drugs while you were pregnant with your child(ren)?

Answered: 99 Skipped: 2



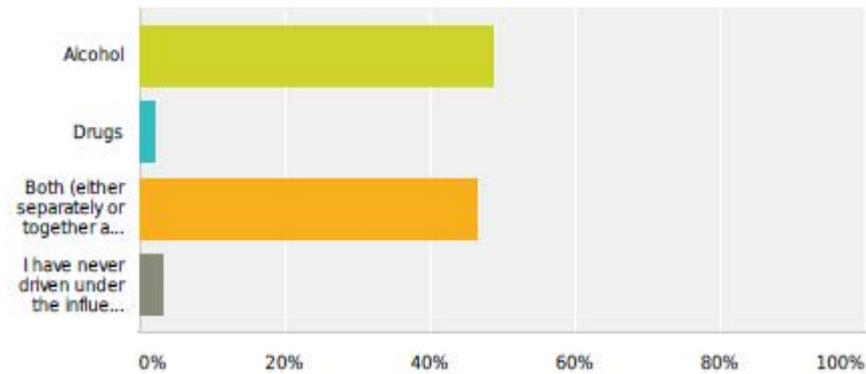
Answer Choices	Responses
<b>I did not take any prescription drugs while pregnant</b>	<b>83.84%</b> 83
<b>I only took prescription drugs as directed by a physician</b>	<b>11.11%</b> 11
<b>I sometimes took more prescription drugs than prescribed by the physician if I felt I needed them</b>	<b>2.02%</b> 2
<b>I took prescription drugs that I did not obtain through a physician</b>	<b>3.03%</b> 3
Total	99



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### Q12 I have driven under the influence of:

Answered: 99 Skipped: 2



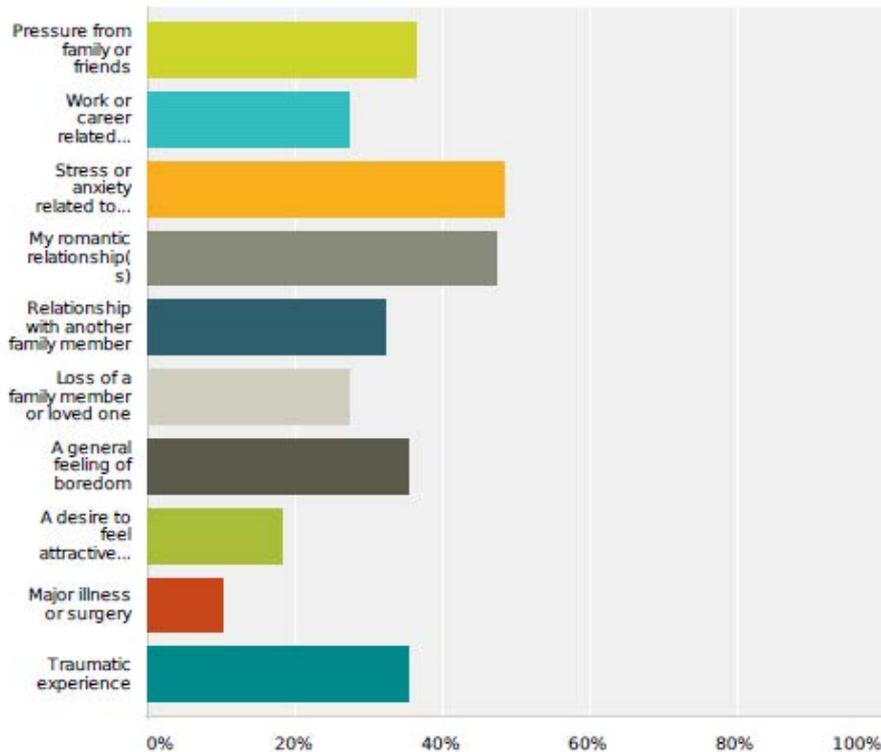
Answer Choices	Responses
<b>Alcohol</b>	<b>48.48%</b> 48
<b>Drugs</b>	<b>2.02%</b> 2
<b>Both (either separately or together at the same time)</b>	<b>46.46%</b> 46
<b>I have never driven under the influence of a substance</b>	<b>3.03%</b> 3
Total	99



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### Q14 In your opinion, what were the contributing factors to your addiction (please check all that apply)?

Answered: 99 Skipped: 2



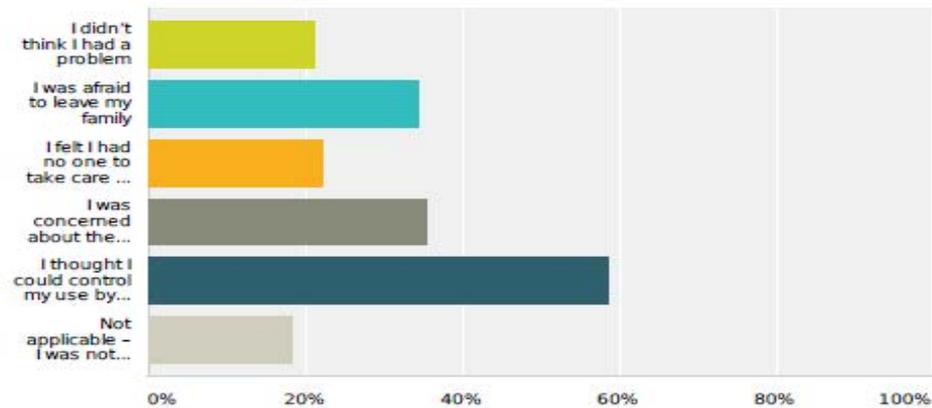
Answer Choices	Responses
<b>Pressure from family or friends</b>	<b>36.36%</b>
<b>Work or career related stress</b>	<b>27.27%</b>
<b>Stress or anxiety related to my responsibilities as a mother</b>	<b>48.48%</b>
<b>My romantic relationship(s)</b>	<b>47.47%</b>
<b>Relationship with another family member</b>	<b>32.32%</b>
<b>Loss of a family member or loved one</b>	<b>27.27%</b>
<b>A general feeling of boredom</b>	<b>35.35%</b>
<b>A desire to feel attractive and sexy</b>	<b>18.18%</b>
<b>Major illness or surgery</b>	<b>10.10%</b>
<b>Traumatic experience</b>	<b>35.35%</b>
Total Respondents: 99	
Other (please specify) ( 27 )	



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**Q15 If you were reluctant to seek treatment, which of the following describes why (please check all that apply)?**

Answered: 99 Skipped: 2



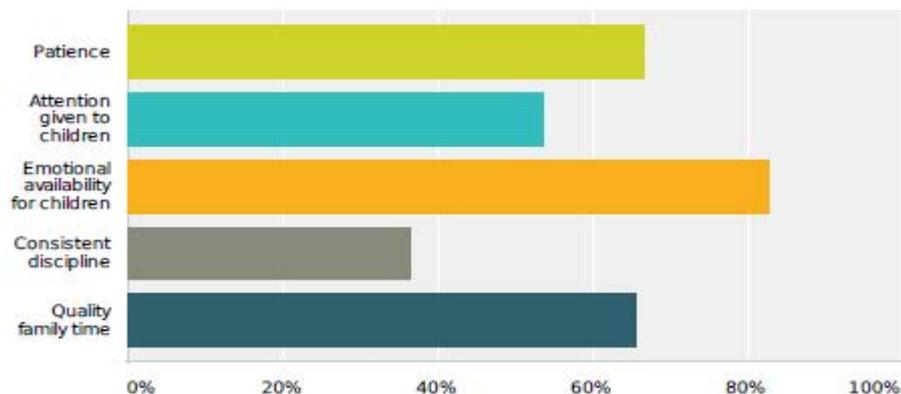
Answer Choices	Responses	Count
<b>I didn't think I had a problem</b>	<b>21.21%</b>	21
<b>I was afraid to leave my family</b>	<b>34.34%</b>	34
<b>I felt I had no one to take care of my children if I went into treatment</b>	<b>22.22%</b>	22
<b>I was concerned about the social stigma and its impact on my family</b>	<b>35.35%</b>	35
<b>I thought I could control my use by myself</b>	<b>58.59%</b>	58
<b>Not applicable - I was not reluctant</b>	<b>18.18%</b>	18
Total Respondents: 99		
Other (please specify) ( 18 )		



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**Q17 What aspect of your parenting most improved after you received treatment (please check all that apply)?**

Answered: 99 Skipped: 2



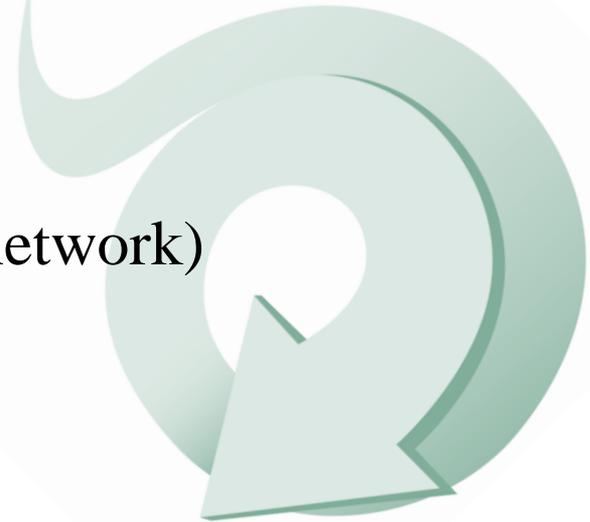
Answer Choices	Responses
<b>Patience</b>	<b>66.67%</b> 66
<b>Attention given to children</b>	<b>53.54%</b> 53
<b>Emotional availability for children</b>	<b>82.83%</b> 82
<b>Consistent discipline</b>	<b>36.36%</b> 36
<b>Quality family time</b>	<b>65.66%</b> 65
Total Respondents: 99	
Other (please specify) ( 24 )	





# Addiction is Messy!

- Brain disease
- Spiral downward
- Progressive
- Family and friends go down too
- Role central to stability of family (network)
- Hiding and sneaking
- Neglect of self
- Preoccupation “Monkey Chatter”





# The Female Brain

- Every brain begins as a female brain
- 8 weeks after conception testosterone kicks into the male brain
  - Shrinks communication center
  - Reduces hearing cortex
  - Makes the part of the brain that processes sex twice as large

*The Female Brain, Louann Brizendine, 2006 Morgan Books*

**Recovery is a natural for women –  
wired for connection.**



# Brain Plasticity

- People can learn skills to calm the emotionally reactive area of the brain
- People can learn to avoid triggers that activate the emotional area of the brain
- People can learn new skills to enhance the decision making area of the brain and think through decisions rather than respond impulsively



The 2010 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) estimated that 2.4 million Americans abused prescription drugs for the first time within the past year. **More than one half of them were female, and two-thirds of those were over the age of 17. That means approximately 800,000 adult females, or 2,191 women a day, began abusing prescription drugs in this past year alone. (NIDA)**



# Stimulants & Amphetamine Use

- Stimulant and amphetamine abuse in adolescent girls 12-17 is 60-79% higher than it is among boys (NIH-podcast-shines-light-prescription-drug-abuse-in-women) (2010)
- Take **stimulants to improve cognitive** (especially 18-25 years) **performance or lose weight** (Volkow/NIDA)
- Older women (particularly mothers in 30's and 40's) turn to stimulants for similar reasons (NIH)



# Common Statements Women Make to **Rationalize** Alcohol Abuse

- “My drinking is just a social thing. It’s not a big deal – everyone is doing it.”
- “I am way too functional to have a substance abuse problem.”
- “I don’t have a problem, I just need a little alcohol to take the edge off the stress of life.”
- “Asking for help is a sign of weakness.”
- “My family will not be able to function without me if I go into treatment away from home.”
- “My family and other priorities are more important than my personal well-being.”



- **Keep in Mind...**

someone who makes rationalizations regarding her drinking/drugging may not recognize that she has a problem. She may just be coping the best she can!

- She will need:

support and encouragement to evaluate her situation and determine the need to ask for help.

# Five Signs and Symptoms That May Indicate Alcohol Abuse

1. **Forgetfulness**-consistent inability to remember significant details or past activities and conversations
2. **Changes in Mood**-unordinary, yet ongoing change in disposition including irregular irritability, anger, depression, lack of interest in important relationships
3. **Change in Physical Appearance**-noticeable lack of interest in personal hygiene and appearance
4. **Loss of Time**-disappearance for several hours or days without notifying family and friends
5. **Inability to Control Drinking in Social Situations**-attending social events leads to excessive drinking or daily activities are planned around drinking



# ONE DRINK TWICE THE IMPACT!

“The impact of one drink on a woman is roughly equivalent to the impact of two drinks on a man. So woman who are keeping up with the men are actually subjecting themselves to far worse consequences.”



*Susan Foster, Director of Policy Research  
for the National Center of Addiction and  
Substance Abuse at Columbia University*



# Substance Dependence and Disordered Eating - Similarities

- Chronic
- Cravings
- Denial
- Preoccupation
- Shame
- Hiding and sneaking
- Medical consequences
- Compliance concerns
- Involve others
- Addiction recovery model works – 12-Step Groups
- Use similar tools, accountability, ask for help, connect with others





# Drunkorexia

- Do not eat in order to save calories for alcohol
- Not eating before drinking contributes to feeling of getting drunk super fast and can lead to other health problems
- Alcohol for many eases anxiety around sex and also leads to greater risks of STD's as guard is down
- Depletion of potassium contributing to cardiac issues and even cardiac arrest
- Both issues need to be addressed-eating and alcohol



# Patterns of Women's Use

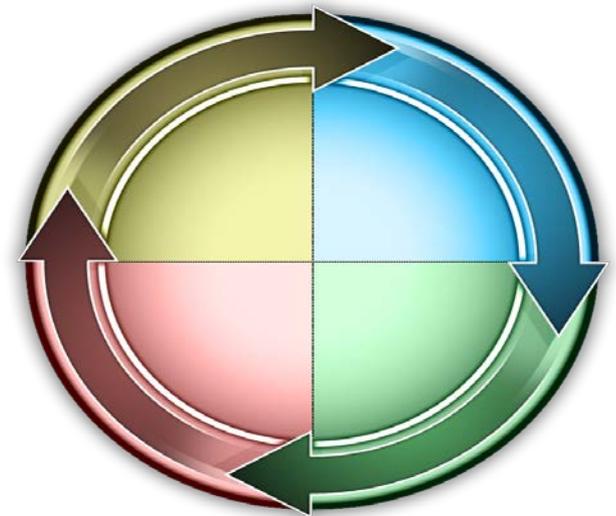
- Women use less alcohol and illicit drugs, more prescription psychoactive drugs
- Gender gap is narrowing
- Introduced through significant relationship
- Women accelerate to injecting faster
- Alter pattern of use for caregiver responsibilities
- Progress faster

Center for Substance Abuse Treatment. Substance Abuse Treatment: Addressing the Specific Needs of Women. Treatment Improvement Protocol (TIP) Series 51. HHS Publication No. (SMA) 09-4426. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2009.



# Alternating Cycles

- Addictions cycle back and forth in a patterned systematic way.
  - Example: Alcoholism is put into remission, food addiction becomes out of control. Drinking resumes and out of control eating subsides. Over and over...



# Physical Risks



## Younger Women

- Hooked faster
- Hooked using less alcohol and other drugs
- Suffer consequences faster and more severely
- Delays onset of puberty
- Hurts chances of getting pregnant later
- Causes long lasting changes to brain during brain development
- Heart damage
- Higher risk of STD's

## Older Women

- Increases risk for breast cancer (alcohol increases estrogen)
- Vulnerable to cognitive function damage
- Osteoporosis
- Cirrhosis of the liver
- Circulatory disorders
- Experience brain atrophy sooner than men
- Report more physical disabilities (stairs, walking, etc.)
- Face overall more severe, long term health problems than men



# Addiction Deterioration Process

## Addiction Deterioration Process

Spiritual → Emotional → Mental → Physical  
(death)

## Recovery Process

Physical → Mental → Emotional → Spiritual

## Relapse Process

Spiritual → Emotional → Mental → Physical  
(use)



# Mortality

- Difficult to measure – lack of accurate reporting
- For women increase in breast cancer rates complicates benefits of light to moderate alcohol intake
- Males – 2.4 times more deaths overall
- Females – Suicide
  - 4 times more alcoholic women attempt suicide than general population
  - In some geographical areas women's suicides outnumber men's
- Highest mortality risk ages 35-54

*(DAWN, 2003: Area Portfolios of Drug Related Mortalities)*



# The Most Common Mental Health Concerns for Women

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Eating Disorders
- Trauma

***Need for Differential Diagnosis***



# Trauma and Addiction

- Addiction can be “triggered” by life events or traumatic experiences that prompt an individual to engage in substance abuse. Some of the most common triggers include drastic changes in family life (divorce, death of a family member or even kids growing up and “leaving the nest”), a job loss or retirement or a health crisis such as a major injury or illness.



# Barriers to Treatment

- **Lack of Child care or safe child care**
- **No children**
- **Lower wages – less money**
- **Role central to stability of family**
- **Extended family is using**
- **Intimate partner is using**
- **Can hide in less visible role at work**
- **Attendance problem – can blame sick child**



# Barriers to Treatment

- **Fear of loss of Children**
- **Don't see problem – think “crazy” “bad”**
- **Concerns about mixed gender treatment**
  - **Lesbian women**
  - **Women with trauma history**
- **Women who have been sex workers**
- **Don't want treatment**



# Effective Treatment (NIDA 2003)

- No single treatment is appropriate for all
- Treatment needs to be readily available
- Effective treatment attends to the multiple needs of the individual
- Treatment plans must be assessed and modified continually to meet changing needs
- Remaining in treatment for an adequate period of time is critical for treatment effectiveness
- Counseling and other behavioral therapies are critical components of effective treatment



# Major Areas of Focus in Treatment

The Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (1994) identifies seventeen critical areas of focus for women's treatment:

1. The causes of addiction, especially gender specific issues related to addiction (e.g., factors related to onset of addiction and social, physiological, and psychological consequences of addiction)
2. Low self-esteem
3. Race, ethnicity, and cultural issues
4. Gender discrimination and harassment
5. Disability-related issues
6. Relationships with family members and significant others
7. Attachments to unhealthy interpersonal relationships



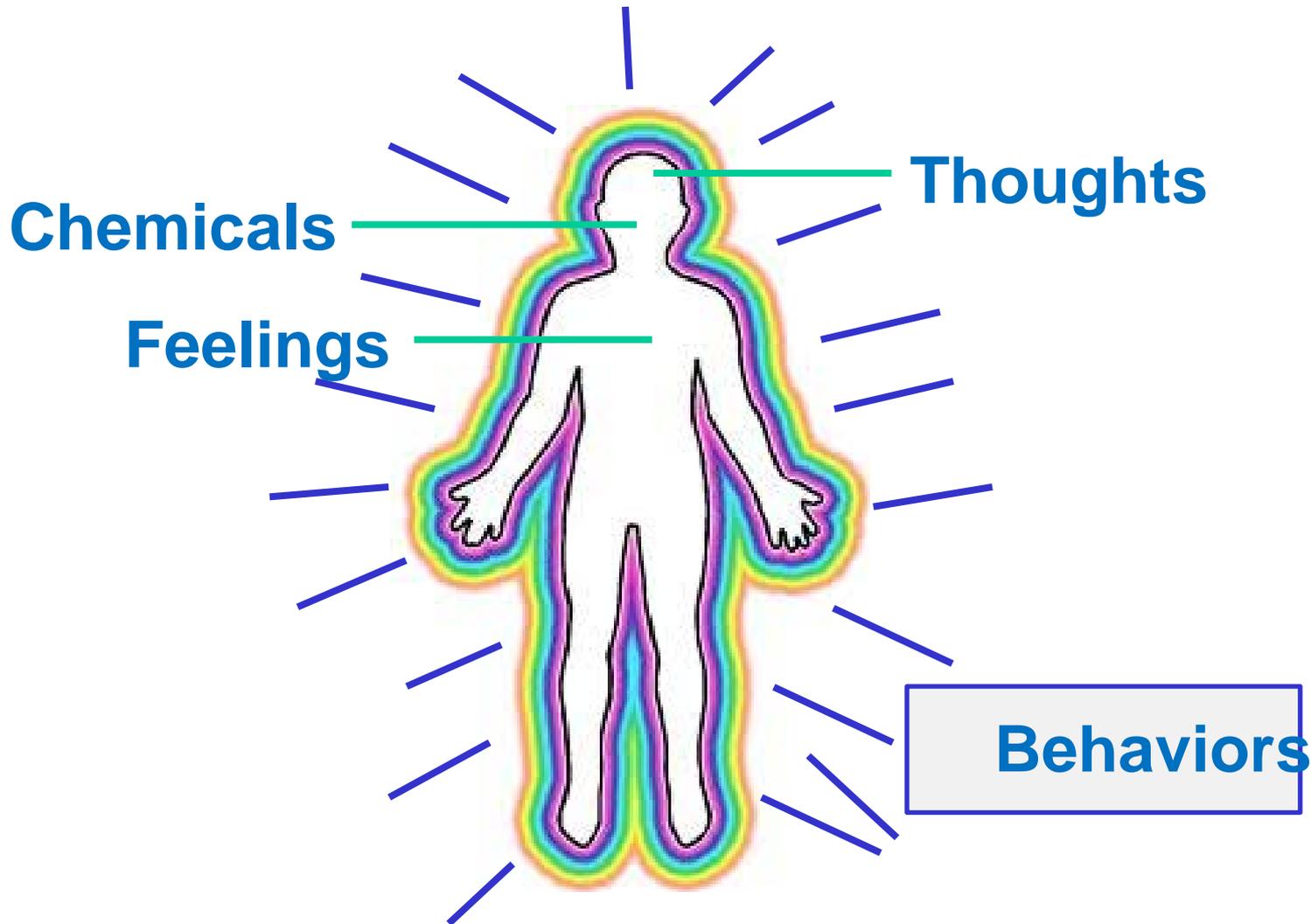
# Major Areas of Focus in Treatment

Cont'd.

8. Interpersonal violence
9. Eating disorders
10. Sexuality-Functioning and Orientation
11. Parenting
12. Grief related to the loss of children, family members, partners, and/or alcohol and other drugs
13. Work
14. Appearance and overall health and hygiene
15. Isolation related to lack of support systems
16. Life-plan development
17. Child care and child custody



# Addiction





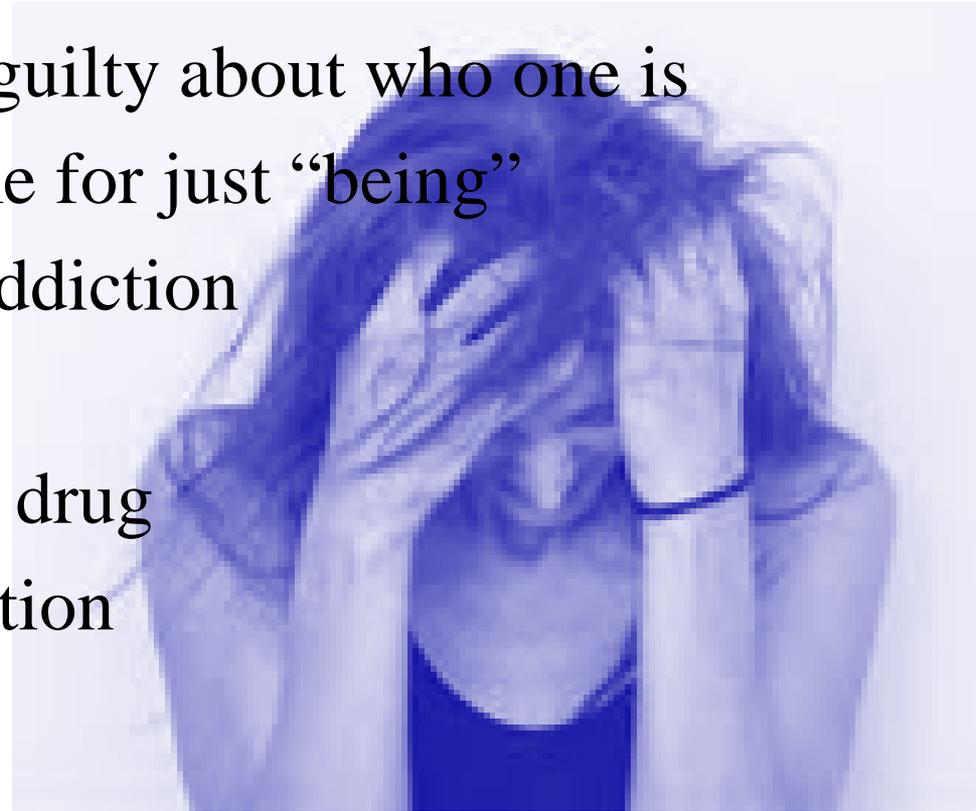
# Early Treatment Process

- Craving Management
- Use of Grounding Skills
- Emotion Regulation/Distress Tolerance
- Step 1 work, developing sober support
- Developing trusting relationships with staff and peers



# Shame and Hiding: A Large Part of Addiction

- Shame is about feeling guilty about who one is
- Many women feel shame for just “being”
- Keeps people stuck in addiction
- “Bad” person
- Shame about the actual drug
- Shame about preoccupation





# Addiction Interaction Disorder

- Brain disease-same neuro-transmitters
- In early recovery, feelings can be new and can be raw
- In recovery, people may switch addictions to cover up feelings
- Replacement and Fusion
- Various co-existing addictions can compromise recovery efforts: food, gambling, sex, relationships, work, shopping, etc.



# Four Steps to Family of Origin Work

- 1) Undo the emotional denial they have about their history
- 2) Connect the past to the present
- 3) Challenge the beliefs they internalized
- 4) Learn new ways of coping and relating



Addiction  
Interaction  
Family  
Tree





# May Need to Work on in Treatment

## Women

- Self reliance
- Program of action
- Empowerment
- Non-compliance/question
- Learn how to trust self
- Respect self
- Caring for self

## Men

- Letting go of control
- Identifying feelings
- Letting go of idea of being all-powerful
- Compliance/Just do it
- Learn to trust others
- Respect others
- Caring for others



# Start using Start using again? (Relapse Concerns)

- Lose weight (Food/Body Concerns)
- Relieve stress or boredom (Complacency)
- Improve their mood (Mental Health)
- Reduce sexual inhibitions (Intimacy)
- Self-medicate depression (Mental Health)
- Increase confidence (Self-Esteem)

*The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University  
(CASA). Women under the Influence, John Hopkins University Press. 2006*



# Individual High-Risk Situations

- Cravings
- Beginning or ending romantic relationships
- Physical pain
- Spending time alone
- Hormonal changes
- High stress or after periods of stress
- Milestones in recovery
- Anniversary “freakies”
- Complacency
- Boredom

# SAMHSA'S Definition of Recovery

“A process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential.”

Health, Home, Purpose, Community

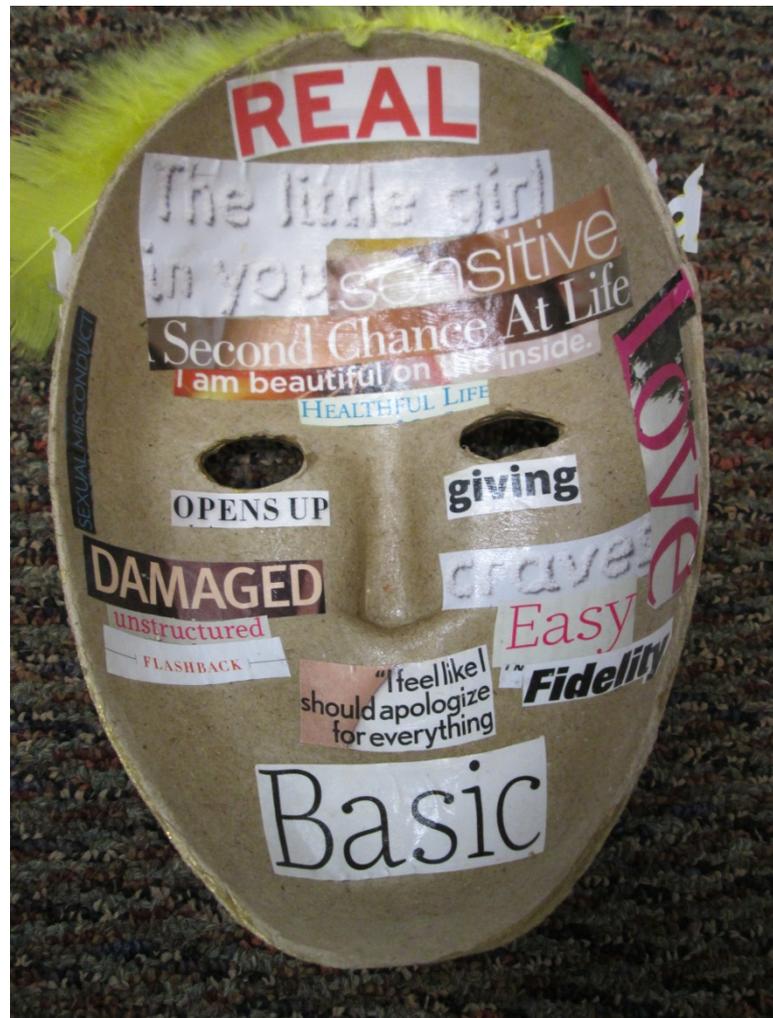


## My Public Mask





## Private Mask





# Ongoing Recovery Concerns

- Physical concerns
- Mental health concerns
- Feeling a void
- Miserable with cross-addiction
- Dry drunk
- Self-sabotage
- Complacency
- Character defects

*A Woman's Guide to Recovery, 2006*



# Women and What Works

## Keys to Recovery and Living a Sober Life

- Women respond better to treatment
  - Women-focused addiction treatment sensitive to the needs of women can be highly effective
  - There is a sense of safety and a sharing of the multiple roles women play in their lives
  - Knowing you are not alone is comforting
  - Women are more likely to develop a sober supportive network of other women



# Women and What Works

## Keys to Recovery and Living a Sober Life

- Early identification and intervention
  - Recognizing you have a problem
  - Listening if others are telling you they think something is wrong
  - Acceptance is a big step towards recovery
  - An assessment with an addiction professional can help sort out what you may need



# Women and What Works

## Keys to Recovery and Living a Sober Life

- Women attending Women's Groups
  - Throughout the US women can find 12 step meetings that are gender specific
  - AA , Al-Anon, NA, SLA, GA etc. are usually recommended; for some women, this may be the first step they take where they check out a meeting and get a female sponsor



# Women and What Works

## Keys to Recovery and Living a Sober Life

- Women who receive treatment
  - Can have a positive impact on their children
  - Alcoholism not only affects the alcoholic but their family members
  - Women who engage in treatment and abstain from alcohol/drugs can have a positive effect on their children



The first step is acceptance – it is not without struggle. The struggle provides opportunity to grow, love ones self, live a life of recovery and give back to others still struggling. When you enter a room of recovering Women, you will never be without support.





# Program of Action

- Action, Not Feeling
- Self Soothing Plan
- Boundaries
- Expectations
- Self Care
- Just for Today



# Just for Today

- Just for today
- Just for today
- Just for this day...
- Just for today I'll...
- Just for today!



# Questions?



# Caron Treatment Centers

*Comprehensive Addiction Treatment. Recovery for Life.*

## Residential Facilities



Caron Pennsylvania  
[Caron.org](http://Caron.org)



Caron Texas  
[CaronTexas.org](http://CaronTexas.org)

To help individuals and families achieve Recovery for Life, Caron offers:

- Residential Primary and Extended Care Treatment Programs
- A Residential Relapse Program
- Residential Assessment Programs
- Family Education Programming
- Aftercare Programs
- Outpatient Treatment Options
- Breakthrough at Caron Personal Growth Workshop



Caron Renaissance  
[CaronRenaissance.org](http://CaronRenaissance.org)



Hanley Center  
[HanleyCenter.org](http://HanleyCenter.org)



Caron Ocean Drive  
[CaronOceanDrive.org](http://CaronOceanDrive.org)

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**800.678.2332**