

The Recovery Handbook

Understanding Addictions and Evidenced-Based Treatment Practices

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Series in Sociology



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www.vernonpress.com

In the Americas:
Vernon Press
1000 N West Street,
Suite 1200, Wilmington,
Delaware 19801
United States

In the rest of the world:
Vernon Press
C/Sancti Espiritu 17,
Malaga, 29006
Spain

Series in Sociology

Library of Congress Control Number: 2020935718

ISBN: 978-1-62273-967-7

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Acknowledgement

There is a special class of people who make those around them undoubtedly better. They may not always be the one on center stage, or even care to be, but behind the scenes we all know that their contributions have great meaning. One such person is Mrs. Suzanne “Sue” Clark, who recently retired from a lengthy and highly successful career in the Holyoke and South Hadley Public Schools. As her first official retirement act, she graciously volunteered to edit this book. There is no question that Sue is a seasoned editor and gifted grammarian whose attention to detail made this tome far stronger and much more reader-friendly. This in and of itself would more than warrant this public note of appreciation; however, she has also spent a lifetime modeling kindness to those around her—friends, family, colleagues, and this writing team—so that we may all understand on an even deeper level the importance of positive human connection when navigating the trials and tribulations of everyday life. For this, she has our even deeper respect and gratitude.

Foreword

The Recovery Handbook: Understanding Addiction and Evidence-Based Treatment Practices has found its way into your hands for a reason. Before you can begin to figure out why and how you are willing to help people recover from addictions, I would like to share a story. I remember the impact this brief event had on my life as I struggled to put the pieces together in order to assist those suffering towards the health of recovery.

In 2015, I attended a community workshop for parents and teachers designed to raise awareness of the crisis regarding teenage drug and alcohol abuse. A young man, about twenty-five years old, was the guest speaker. He had attended the local elementary school where he began using drugs at the tender age of ten. At 21, and after ten years of drug use, he found himself in a treatment program that helped him find sobriety and saved his life. He was now dedicating his work to creating programs for addicts and youth all over the country. His mission was to share his story of hope.

The guidance counselor from his elementary school was in the audience and asked him what they might have done differently when he was in fifth grade. She wanted to know what might have influenced his decisions at such a young age; after all, there had been a school, a community, his family, his spiritual connection and all the professionals in the town. After a pause, the young man spoke about never understanding what 'self-love' really meant.

*When I was young, no one ever **taught** me about how important I am and that loving myself was more than just an arrogant ego trip. Loving myself meant that I would and could take care of myself, because I developed unconditional love for who I am right now. Regardless of my addictions, my flaws, my history, my mistakes, even my self-hatred and negative criticism of who I was. I had to learn to become my own best friend and hang out with all the parts of me in order to find my way home. And home meant loving myself and my sobriety enough to make the daily, sometimes hourly healthy choices that would catapult me to a thriving and flourishing life.*

Addiction knows no limits, boundaries, class, social or economic parameters, no gender, no age or race. Addiction is a chronic disease compromising brain function - it takes lives, destroys dreams, ravages families, fills our jails, terrifies our youth, costs our economy trillions and continues to fray the fabric of our society.

If we turn our focus and look in the rearview mirror of the addiction epidemic, we can find our focus on recovery. In fact, the addiction crisis has brought this country to a point where almost everyone knows someone who is in recovery. Addiction has no cure; rather, there are solutions to healing.

The 2014 movie *The Anonymous People*, directed by Greg Williams, is just one invaluable resource to building a tool-kit of skills, knowledge and sensitivity to the struggle of finding ways to help those who suffer from addictions.

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, (2019) and the National Institute on Drug Abuse (2018h), the statistics on drug abuse are extremely sobering and include:

- 164.8 million people, aged 12 and older, have used addictive substances,
- 25 million suffer from the disease of addiction,
- 2/3 of all American families are touched by addiction,
- 740 billion dollars annually - the cost to our economy for untreated addiction in the workplace, healthcare expenses and crimes in the community,
- 20 million individuals are suffering in silence,
- An estimated 65% of those incarcerated have a connection to addiction.

The good news is that the 'rearview mirror' glance has over 23 million people living in long-term recovery. Sobriety is the silent antidote and remedy – it is a hopeful alternative to addiction. There is an army of silent voices eager and willing to support others suffering from a disease that requires so much more than 'just say no.' It is time to use all the resources available to find ways to stay with the addict, regardless of the drug of choice. To help them find solutions, treatment programs, clinics, support networks, alternatives and even beds in times of crisis.

The terrain of dealing with addictions is unpredictable, tumultuous, and constantly changing. The courage to embark on this journey is filled with others who have gone before you. Look to the experts, the guides, and stand on the shoulders of those who know the territory. Stay connected with supervision, colleagues, the latest research and anything new that might support the healing afforded those who suffer.

Congratulations on your willingness to embark upon this most delicate of the helping professions. You have picked up this book because there is something drawing you to enter prepared into this field of healing. You can use this book as a 'pocket guide' to help you navigate the various hills and valleys on the road

to helping someone manage their addiction and find ways to live a productive, and positive life. You will find your own way to understand what recovery really looks like for each and every individual suffering with their personal and unique addictions.

Keep in mind as you build your skills and knowledge in this field that you could be the only caring guide in an addict's life. You might want to think of them as struggling with a diagnosis of cancer, heart disease, diabetes, or some medical disease, as an addiction of any kind is no different. By reframing the disease, it provides a doorway into compassion and hope which is often closed to addicts. The addict often finds a dead end in treatment when relapsing, leaving the program or overdosing - rest assured, the addict will relapse, it is part of the healing.

Just as we would continue to find treatments for cancer patients, it is paramount that we continue to find treatments that work for those suffering from addictions. Unconditional love, acceptance, positive regard, hope and compassionate responses must become the threads that hold the treatment programs together long enough to ensure sobriety. We are talking about stepping up the love, compassion and care we have for each other and our efforts to win the ongoing and relentless fight in this war that is taking so many lives.

Often relapse sends us and the medical community into blaming the patient for not sticking to the program and pulling out the support. Addiction has no cure, but it does have a solution. Find ways to open the hearts of all those who have suffered from the debilitating disease of addiction and are on the road to recovery. Remember my young friend who had to be taught about self-love. Develop a practice of loving yourself first in order to teach others how to do the same. Take care of yourself while you learn to care for others. Trust that you are in this field for a reason and all those you touch with your wisdom, light and hope are already grateful.

Gena M. Rotas, LICSW, author

Love YOU! Small Changes to Quiet the Gremlins and Tame those Unhealthy Habits, Behaviors and Addictions

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Dr. Nicholas D. Young has worked in diverse educational roles for more than 30 years, serving as a teacher, counselor, principal, special education director, graduate professor, graduate program director, graduate dean, and longtime psychologist and superintendent of schools. He was named the Massachusetts Superintendent of the Year; and he completed a distinguished Fulbright program focused on the Japanese educational system through the collegiate level. Dr. Young is the recipient of numerous other honors and recognitions including the General Douglas MacArthur Award for distinguished civilian and military leadership and the Vice Admiral John T. Hayward Award for exemplary scholarship. He holds several graduate degrees including a PhD in educational administration and an EdD in psychology.

Dr. Young has served in the U.S. Army and U.S. Army Reserves combined for over 35 years; and he graduated with distinction from the U.S. Air War College, the U.S. Army War College, and the U.S. Navy War College. After completing a series of senior leadership assignments in the U.S. Army Reserves as the commanding officer of the 287th Medical Company (DS), the 405th Area Support Company (DS), the 405th Combat Support Hospital, and the 399th Combat Support Hospital, he transitioned to his current military position as a faculty instructor at the U.S. Army War College in Carlisle, PA. He currently holds the rank of Colonel.

Dr. Young is also a regular presenter at state, national, and international conferences; and he has written many books, book chapters, and/or articles on various topics in education, counseling, and psychology. Some of his most recent books include *Maximizing Mental Health Services: Proven Practices that Promote Emotional Well-Being* (2020); *Masculinity in the Making: Managing the Transition to Manhood* (2020); *The Burden of Being a Boy: Bolstering Educational and Emotional Well-Being in Young Males* (2019); *The Special Education Toolbox: Supporting Exceptional Teachers, Students, and Families* (2019); *Sounding the Alarm in the Schoolhouse: Safety, Security and Student Well-Being* (2019); *Creating Compassionate Classrooms: Understanding the Continuum of Disabilities and Effective Educational Interventions* (2019); *Acceptance, Understanding, and the Moral Imperative of Promoting Social Justice Education in the Schoolhouse* (2019); *Empathic Teaching: Promoting Social Justice in the Contemporary Classroom* (2019); *Educating the Experienced: Challenges and Best Practices in Adult Learning* (2019); *Securing*

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Attorney Smolinski received a Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology and Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from the University of Connecticut, a master's in psychology and Counseling as well as a master's of Higher Education Student Affairs from Salem State University and her law degree from Massachusetts School of Law. She is currently an EdD in Educational Leadership and Supervision candidate at American International College, where she is focusing her research on special education and laws to protect students with disabilities in the classroom.

Attorney Smolinski has become a regular presenter educating the faculty, staff and students at institutes of higher education on disabilities and

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