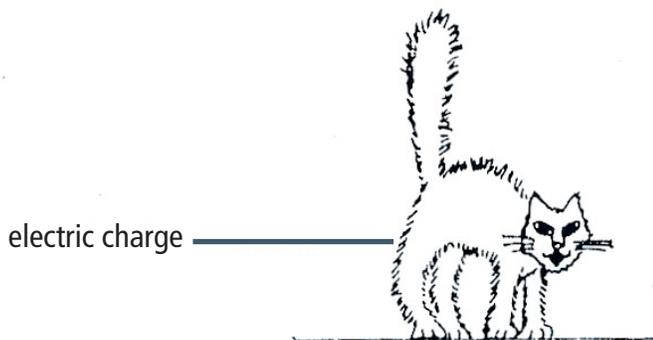


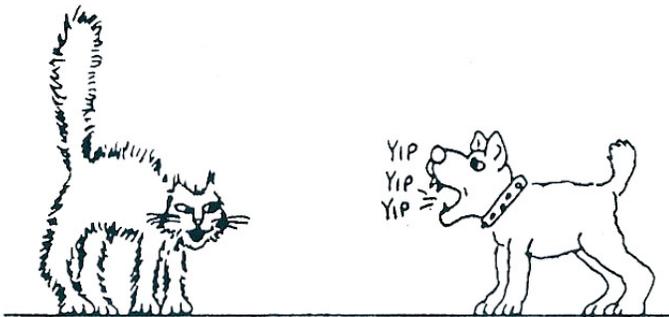
Augmentation of Emotions

- ranges from 3 months-12 months in time
- *augmentation*: the intensifying and distorting of everyday emotions, begins during addiction and continues into sobriety
- emotions are profoundly influenced by disruptions in the nervous system
- emotional responses to stress can either be blunted or heightened by drugs
- emotions are distorted by drug absence or withdrawal
- may find that even after renouncing the drug, you over-respond to everyday events

example: researchers used electricity to stimulate the brain of a cat to induce a fight or flight responses



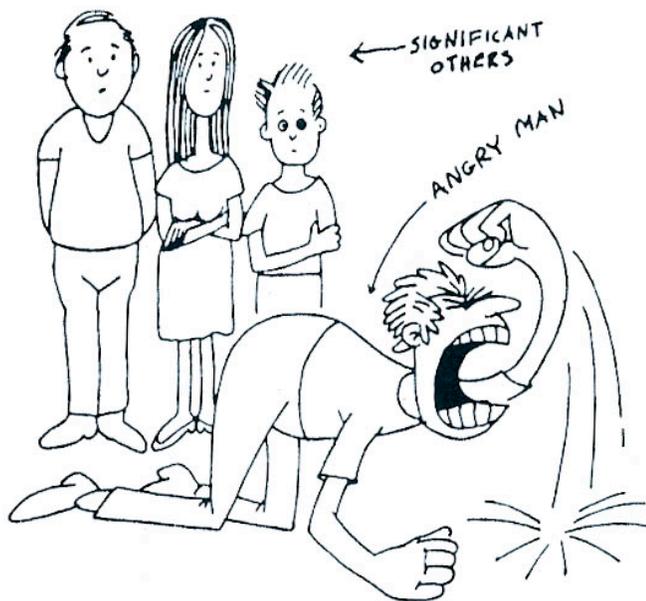
- when caused by electricity, there is no target; the cat's anger is not focused
- looking for an enemy but will not find one



- researchers then removed the current and brought in an obnoxious, yappy dog
- the cat again looks defensive, but this time targets his anger at the dog (his natural adversary)
- the natural enemy produces a response identical to that elicited by the current



- researchers removed the dog, then reintroduced it *with* the addition of the electric current
- the cat's response is dramatically augmented; he goes berserk!
- if he were asked what was wrong, he would only identify the dog as the problem, not the electrical current as well
- the electrical current represents the agitated nerve cells of a person using drugs or alcohol the morning after, while the dog represents other people



- if the addict is criticized by a significant other, the addict begins to respond defensively; at the same time, his agitated nervous system augments the response
- once again, if asked what was wrong, the addict would only identify the person as being the problem, not the agitation produced by withdrawal
- because of augmentation, legitimate tragedies often elicit a delayed emotional response
- when the demands on an individual's resources are too great, one may see a flattened, apparently emotionless response for days, weeks, or even months, before the outpouring of emotion

Insomnia

- most commonly reported occurrence
- often really fractured sleep: drift off, wake up frequently, difficulty falling asleep again
- can be caused by excessive consumption of caffeine
- beware sleeping pills: likely to reawaken the craving for alcohol or other drugs, not effective in the long run

Mood Swing and Depressive Episodes

- different from augmentation
- some swing between depression and elation, others just cycle in and out of depression
- often abates with time; if not, could be a coexisting depressive disorder
- symptoms of depression: excessive crying, feelings of hopelessness, apathy toward normally pleasurable activities, decreased sex drive, difficulty making decisions, poor concentration, loss of desire to care for oneself, persistent sleep disruption, recurrent episodes of anxiety
- most will experience some of these symptoms, but if many occur together it could signify a coexisting depressive disorder

Residual Tremors

- often just nervous system's response to withdrawal
- could also be a sign of poor diet, excessive caffeine consumption, or an underlying blood sugar problem

Anxiety

- feeling of dread, as if something awful is about to happen
- includes "butterflies" in stomach, rapid pulse, feeling of lightheadedness bordering on fainting
- free-floating anxiety: when symptoms occurs without an obvious precipitating factor
- over time symptoms decrease in severity, frequency, and duration
- one of the best reasons for involvement in a supportive and reassuring recovery group
- if episodes increase in intensity or become more frequent over the first months, get evaluated by a clinician with experience in treating individuals with addictive disease

Food Cravings

- newly sober people often have unusual food cravings
- most often crave sugar; many people report that sugar consumption doubles or triples once off drugs
- sugar-heavy diet can cause nervous discomfort in the newly sober; often mistake for stress or other

- steps for altering food cravings:
- quit the excessive amounts of caffeine
- change your diet
- add regular exercise (doesn't have to be vigorous)
- take vitamin supplements

Flashback Experiences

- *perceptual distortion*: symptoms of drug toxicity that recur after an extended period of abstinence, includes distortions of images and "trailing" (when moving objects seem to leave trails of light behind them)
- can include the sensation that someone is calling your name or that moving objects flit around the periphery of your vision
- anxiety provoking, but otherwise harmless

Sexual Dysfunction

- males may experience episodic impotence
- females may have difficulty obtaining orgasm
- studies of narcotics addicts:
- dramatically diminished sexual desire in men
- severely interrupted menstrual cycles in women
- dysfunction can include:
- decreased (or in some cases increased) sex drive
- unpredictable fluctuations in desire, from intense to absent
- difficulty reaching orgasm
- exaggerated sensitivity (or lack of it) in erogenous areas
- episodic impotence
- many of these problems resolve over the initial months of sobriety without intervention
- be patient

Headaches

- for some, this can be a major difficulty in early recovery; for others it is a non-issue
- especially common when primary drugs were narcotics
- be careful of using cross-addictive drugs to treat the headache
- see a physician who is familiar of treating patients with a history of addiction
- possible remedies:
- aspirin
- brief period of relaxation
- self-hypnosis exercise
- be patient; will not last forever
- do not overreact; headaches during this period are not a sign of undiscovered brain disease (a common assumption among the emotionally augmented)

Weight Gain and Loss

- changes in eating habits (often a bad diet is the culprit)
- changes in the way the body processes food

Aches, Pains, and Cramping

- especially likely to occur to the newly sober person who has an old injury that hasn't bothered the person in years; newly awakened nervous system may draw attention to it
- use exercises similar to those given to orthopedic patients (see a doctor or physical therapist for instructions)
- may respond to electrical stimulation units, baths and massage, or self-hypnosis techniques
- be careful of taking medication; consult a doctor with a background in addictions first

Forgetfulness

- might be related to longstanding deficiencies in thiamine and other essential vitamins
- can persist far into sobriety even with supplements
- *short-term memory*: most common deficit
 - *immediate retention*: the ability to recall something that's just been presented to you
 - *short-term post-distractional memory*: ability to recall something after an intervening period of distraction; the type most often deficient in recovery
- solution: take notes on everything until memory improves

Allergies, Colds, and Infections

- commonly reported increase in vulnerability to colds and respiratory infection
- sudden resurgence of allergies may occur (sometimes including those inactive since childhood)

Cravings

- craving: non-specific term for any kind of spontaneous desire to use a drug
 - free-floating craving: seemingly unrelated to the environment and probably the result of activity on a biological substrate
 - craving due to emotional excitement: allowing the pendulum of one's augmented emotions to swing too far in either direction (elation or depression)
 - conditioned craving: set off by an environmental cue (could be anything from seeing old drug-using friends or drinking buddies to watching TV that contains drug/alcohol reference)

Euphoric Memories

- remembering how wonderful it felt to be under the influence of drugs while forgetting the negatives

Intense Dreams

- sometimes so real that people wake up wondering if they managed to use the drug while asleep

Bothersome Thoughts

- this happens when a person is doing something unrelated and thoughts of alcohol or drugs pop into the mind — and refuse to leave

Planning Relapse

- surmising times or situations that would allow for alcohol or drug use "just once"
- "nobody would even know"

Acute Drug Hunger

- actual withdrawal-like craving for the drug that impedes comfort, rest, sleep, and concentration
- when craving reaches a certain intensity, defense mechanisms reappear and the ability to perceive one's own problems is greatly diminished; difficult to take steps to avoid relapse
- "After all, why bother? I was never that bad in the first place..."

Best way to deal with craving:

Three R Method:

Recognize: identify a craving as a craving instead of whatever else it may seem to be; craving is a natural outcome of addiction and is not linked to problems in life

- If we don't satisfy that craving with more drugs, it will diminish and gradually disappear.

Reduce: interrupt the craving as early as possible; ways to reduce a craving include:

- vigorous aerobic exercise
- eat something (preferably not refined sugar)
- talk to someone about the craving
- distraction with a pleasurable activity
- use a self-hypnosis or relaxation technique
- if a conditioned craving, leave the situation that is triggering the craving and go to an environment that will reduce it

Refocus: once the craving is gone, avoid analyzing to find meaning in the craving; return to whatever was happening before the craving started

Change in Augmentation of Emotions

- occurs when the tendency to augment is confined to emotionally charged situations (often involving a specific set of stressful circumstances or the assumption of new, anxiety-provoking responsibilities)

Waxing and Waning of Physical Symptoms

- often the symptoms continue for years, but rather than persisting for days/weeks/months (as they did initially), symptoms may now wax and wane
- may be the root of the terms dry drunk or sober hangover syndrome as referenced in organizations like Alcoholics Anonymous
- dry drunk: symptoms characteristic of active addiction; for no obvious reason, addict may find himself in the grips of intense craving or even what appears to be acute withdrawal

Residual Memories of Events from Active Addiction

- for some people, memory of events that occurred long ago improves as well as short-term memory during recovery
- occasionally, such memories that had been "forgotten" are accompanied by powerful feelings of remorse, including events that occurred while under the drug's influence

Focus on Family

- early stages may have been marked by absorption in individual goals, but family goals and relationships may become more important as time progresses
- addict and family are better able to deal with problems that have been present all along (including barriers to communication, misunderstanding of intentions, resentments over past events)
- may have difficulty if family assumes that recovery is entirely the addict's problem and has been waiting for the addict to show interest in renewing the relationship while building resentment and demands
- if this occurs, the "family" may not survive this period