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## SKILL ENHANCEMENT – A CONCEPTUAL APPROACH

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### **Abstract**

*Skill enhancement provides the opportunity and knowledge for a client to develop and strengthen the necessary skills to gain, maintain, and advance in a chosen area. Skill enhancement programs are focused around training that combines the best practices from education, psychology, social work, career counselling, sports, and technology training. Social skills are defined as specific strategies used by an individual to perform social tasks effectively and thus be socially successful and socially competent.*

*Non-verbal communication can occur through sight, sound, smell, touch or taste. Non-verbal communication can be conscious and purposeful or unconscious. The term 'problem gambling' is preferred to 'compulsive gambling' among many professionals, as few people described by the term experience true compulsions in the clinical sense of the word. Psychological addiction, as opposed to physiological addiction, is a person's need to use a drug or engage in behaviour out of desire for the effects it produces, rather than to relieve withdrawal symptoms. Food addiction is characterized by compulsive eating and an obsession with weight and body image. Alcohol and drug addictions are very widespread in our society. Internet addiction disorder, as a diagnosis, is still in its infancy. Internet addiction does not appear in the DSM-IV and no research has yet established that there is a disorder of Internet addiction that is separable from problems such as loneliness, problem gambling, sexual addiction, or addiction to pornography.*

*Keywords: Skill enhancement, Addictions.*

### **Introduction**

Skill enhancement provides the opportunity and knowledge for a client to develop and strengthen the necessary skills to gain, maintain, and advance in a chosen area. Skill enhancement programs are focused around training that combines the best practices from education, psychology, social work, career counselling, sports, and technology training. Through skill training a person can improve their overall performance in any identified area and in so doing can improve the overall quality of life. Skill enhancement or training typically uses a combination of cognitive and behaviour problem solving approaches, both of which are used to strengthen a person's positive skill development.

### **Social Skills and Competence**

A person's ability to develop and maintain appropriate social skills and social relationships with family, friends, peers, lovers, colleagues, authority figures, etc., is critical in being able to live a happy, productive and successful life. Social skills are defined as specific strategies used by an individual to perform social tasks effectively and thus be socially successful and socially competent.

They can be seen as falling into one of 2 categories:

- Environmental social skills which are essential to perform tasks in both an educational setting and the work place, such as listening, following instructions, and appropriate work habits
- Social interaction skills that facilitate any positive social interaction, such as starting and maintaining a conversation, complementing others, and resolving conflict.

### **Non-Verbal Communication**

Non-verbal communication can occur through sight, sound, smell, touch or taste. Non-verbal communication can be conscious and purposeful or unconscious. Also, non-verbal communication comes in many forms at the same time. For example, a person's dress, tone of voice, attitude, and movement all contribute to the communication going on in a certain situation. It can be very helpful to understand the importance of non-verbal communication and to modify those aspects of your non-verbal communication skills, which may be problematic.

**General Academic Skill Competence:** A person can develop problems that interfere with their ability to learn specific information in an academic or occupational setting.

### **Coping Skill Enhancement in the Treatment of Pathological Addictions**

The development of new skills is necessary for a person to overcome an addiction such as gambling, a sex addiction, alcohol and drug abuse, internet addiction, an addiction to food, work, or shopping.

### **Gambling Addiction**

Gambling can be defined as playing a game of chance for stakes. Gambling occurs in many forms, most commonly (horse and dog tracks, off-track-betting parlors, lotteries, casinos, slot machines, bookmaking, card rooms, bingo parlours and the stock market. Problem gambling is gambling behavior, which causes disruptions in any major area of life: psychological, physical, social or vocational. Problem gambling is an urge to gamble despite harmful negative consequences or despite a desire to stop. The term 'problem gambling' is preferred to 'compulsive gambling' among many professionals, as few people described by the term experience true compulsions in the clinical sense of the word. Problem gambling often is defined by whether harm is experienced by the gambler or others, rather than by the gambler's behaviour.

### **Gambling Addiction Classification**

- **Escape gamblers** prefer games that are perceived to have no elements of skill; these games include video poker, lottery, bingo, and slot machines. These games provide the relief from feelings of anxiety, depression, anger, boredom or loneliness. They use gambling to escape from crisis or difficulties. Gambling provides an analgesic effect rather than a euphoric response.

- **Compulsive gamblers** have lost control over their gambling. For them, gambling is the most important thing in their lives. Compulsive gambling is a progressive addiction that harms every aspect of the gambler's life. As they continue to gamble, their families, friends and employers are negatively affected. In addition, compulsive gamblers may engage in activities such as stealing, lying or embezzling which go against their moral standards. Compulsive gamblers cannot stop gambling, no matter how much they want to or how hard they try.
- **Professional gamblers** make their living by gambling and thus consider it a profession. They are skilled in the games they choose to play and are able to control both the amount of money and time spent gambling. Thus, professional gamblers are not addicted to gambling. They patiently wait for the best bet and then try to win as much as they can.
- **Antisocial or personality gamblers** use gambling as a way to get money by illegal means. They are likely to be involved in fixing horse or dog races, or playing with loaded dice or marked cards. They may attempt to use a compulsive gambling diagnosis as a legal defence.
- **Casual social gamblers** gamble for recreation, sociability and entertainment. For them, gambling may be a distraction or a form of relaxation. Gambling does not interfere with family, social or vocational obligations. Examples of such betting are the occasional poker game, Super Bowl bets, a yearly trip to Las Vegas and casual involvement in the lottery.
- **Serious social gamblers** invest more of their time in gambling. Gambling is a major source of relaxation and entertainment, yet these individuals place gambling second in importance to family and vocation. This type of gambler could be compared to a "golf nut," whose source of relaxation comes from playing golf. Serious social gamblers still maintain control over their gambling activities.

### Psychological Addiction

Psychological addiction, as opposed to physiological addiction, is a person's need to use a drug or engage in a behaviour out of desire for the effects it produces, rather than to relieve withdrawal symptoms. Instead of an actual physiological dependence on a drug, such as heroin, psychological addiction usually develops out of habits that relieve symptoms of loneliness, anxiety, depression, and feelings of worthlessness. As the drug and/or behaviour is indulged, it becomes associated with the release of pleasure and avoidance of pain, and a cycle is started that is similar to physiological addiction.

### Food Addiction

Food addiction is characterized by compulsive eating and an obsession with weight and body image. Persons with a food addiction display an obsession with, and craving for, food and eating, a preoccupation with finding sources of food associated with pleasure and comfort, a compulsive cycle of eating, and the lack of an ability to stop abusing food.

### **Alcohol and drug addictions**

Alcohol and drug addictions are very widespread in our society. The cause of this craving is heavily debated, but the most popular beliefs are that it is:

- **A chemical or nutritional imbalance;**
- **A genetic predisposition;**
- **A neurological effect caused by runaway learning mechanisms;**
- **An inability to curb one's own desire for enjoyment.**

### **Internet Addiction Disorder**

Internet addiction disorder, as a diagnosis, is still in its infancy. Internet addiction does not appear in the DSM-IV and no research has yet established that there is a disorder of Internet addiction that is separable from problems such as loneliness, problem gambling, sexual addiction, or addiction to pornography. However, professionals recognize that Internet abuse is a problem that affects many people and each month additional research is being conducted to explore the ways people use and misuse the Internet.

### **Organizational Skill Enhancement Training**

This is utilized in organizations where employees and/or managers do not effectively respond in certain crucial situations. Organizational skills like problem solving, assertiveness, time management, relaxation responses, etc., are essential for better functioning of any company.

### **Skill Enhancement in Handling Stress**

The term stress refers to the pressures placed on individuals and to the physical and mental consequences of those pressures. Numerous common health problems are linked to stress including heart disease, cancer, lung ailments, accidents, suicide, eating disorders, and many other health related problems. Stress affects both the individual, his or her home and family life, and the person's workplace.

### **Enhancing Skills**

Failure to develop skill competence can be due to a variety of reasons and there are many commercially available skill programs to help an individual, family, work group or company. However, in general, to teach a single social skill or single grouping of skills a simple five stage cognitive and behavioural problem solving model can be followed:

- Helping the person develop sensitivity and awareness for their problem area;
- The development in the client of a sense of causality by linking this particular problem past and current events and problems;
- The development of a comprehensive list of alternative behaviours;
- Taking the client step by step through the most applicable alternative behaviours;
- Once a solution for the particular problem has been selected and implemented, the client is helped to apply the solution to other problems they may be having.

## Conclusion

The more you understand about skill development and skill enhancement, the better will be your ability to modify your behaviour and to live a healthier and more fulfilling life. Skill development and skill enhancement can be achieved by using one of several commercially available programs or with the help of a mental health professional such as a psychologist, psychiatrist, or clinical social worker.

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