To use or to be used: The relationship between trauma and substance use

Substance use and trauma typically manifests metaphorically through to use or to be used. For in one moment, a substance is used to feel happy, numb while in the next a person is used for another to feel happy, numb. In this instance both the substance and that person become an object. When occurring together they are often mutually reinforcing to one another and feed off the reward of instant gratification. This object is simply for use and it becomes ingrained into identify, self. Thus facilitating the illogical disconnect of use and being used to believe that the ones needs are truly fulfilled or perhaps not caring if one it is used. For an example a young woman who works as a prostitute to pay for her substances. She will often share that it does not feel real to her, she had to do what she had to do to get her fix. However, due to this cyclic relationship, the pain gets buried and forms scars.

Biography

Melissa Alton, LMHC, NCC, CCMHC, EMDR earned her Masters’ from Nova Southeastern University in 2011. She has experience working with trauma, substance abuse and mental health which has developed through working with clients in crisis care and outpatient counseling. She currently works as a Licensed Evaluator at DACCO. In this role, she meets the clients when they first walk in for help, gets to know their stories and pieces of their troubles. Subsequently, balancing the intuitiveness of the therapeutic relationship with evidence based theory to facilitate care at level of need to guide clients towards lowering their distress level through changes in choice and feeling.

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