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Addictions and the family: A dual diagnosis

Addiction is a disease that not only impacts the individual but the family as a whole as well. Family members tend to take on new unhealthy roles when infected with this disease in order to continue evolving as a unit and maintain homeostasis. This form of dysfunctional balance helps keep the system going while enabling the addiction to continue manifesting further. Codependency is a concept that describes this dysfunctional relationship or behavior of supporting or enabling another individual's addiction, unhealthy behavior, poor mental health or immaturity. Very often also known as 'relationship addiction', people who are codependent end up in relationships that are not only destructive to themselves but also to the other parties as well. In these kinds of relationships, people tend to become over-dependent on each other so much for the purpose of getting their own core dependency issues met that their personal and emotional maturity is stunted from growing. As the addict continues the addiction, the codependent sacrifices his or her own needs in order to fulfill the addicts' needs. One person needs to feel needed by sacrificing for the addicts needs while the addiction continues. They tend to continue to please people around them in order to feel important and wanted. There is this strong desire to appear perfect and good for others to approve. They have this delusional idea that as long as they can keep the important people in their life happy, their own pent up explosive emotions will go away. This form of "dual diagnosis" is not uncommon in most families presenting with addictions. Similar to treating any other dual diagnosis or comorbid disorder, family members require specific treatment as well and this paper discusses how this is achieved employing a biopsychosociospiritual approach.

Biography

Prem Kumar Shanmugam is Chairman and Clinical Director of Solace Sabah Addiction Treatment Retreat. He co-founded Solace with the vision of helping people with addictions recover and learn to live for life. He has worked in the field of Addictions and Psychology for more than 10 years. He is the Past President of the Association of Psychotherapists and Counselors (Singapore) and the Regional Director of the Asia Pacific Certification Board (Singapore) while being one of the founding members as well. He is a Psychologist, Psychotherapist, Trainer and Facilitator and is actively involved in research in the Addiction field. He is a Certified Practitioner in Management of Family Violence Counseling, Certified Clinical Supervisor, Certified Substance Abuse Therapist (Level 4) and a Certified Psychotherapist and Counselor (Level 4).

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