

Introduction to Psychology

APA IPI Tags: Theme 3

Content Area Tags: Addiction; Disorders; Biospsychosocial

Estimated Time: 25-40 minutes in-class. As a written assignment: 2 – 6 pages in length, depending on number of addictions assigned, and how in-depth you want the compare and contrast.

### Understanding the Complexities of Addiction

#### **Activity Instructions**

**\*This can either be run as a written paper/assignment or, as an in-class discussion. What follows are the instructions for an in-class discussion. For a written assignment, there could be a brief in-class discussion (i.e., the first bullet point below) as an introduction to the assignment, or this information could be given to students in written format.**

- 5-10 minutes – Review (or teach for first time) that human experience, thought, and behavior is influenced by complex and interconnected factors. Inform students that this concept will now be applied to addiction (i.e., addiction is complicated and multiply determined). Can begin by asking students what comes to mind when they hear “addiction” (will likely hear about substance addiction, gambling). Make sure to discuss how many things that weren’t considered addiction now are – e.g., sex addictions, social media addictions, gaming addictions.
- If running activity as in-class discussion, form student groups of 3-5
- Assign each group an addiction:
  - Substances
  - Gambling
  - Sex
  - Social media
  - Gaming
  - Etc.
  - *\*if this is being done as a written assignment, each student could pick 2 – 4 addiction types*
- 10-15 minutes – Depending on the number of groups, each group then discusses the biological, psychological, social-cultural factors that influence these addictions. If you have many groups, you could assign, for instance, gaming addiction to 3 different groups and have one group discuss psychological contributions, a second group discuss biological contributions, and the third group discuss social-cultural contributions.
- 10-15 minutes – On the board, create 3 columns and give each one a label (biological, psychological, social-cultural); have one student from each group come up and write the factors their group discussed in the correct columns. As a large class, compare and contrast what the groups came up with, noting similarities. If there’s time, you could move this into a conversation about treatment and the importance of it targeting all three levels of factors.

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#### **Activity Learning Objectives**

By completing this activity, you will be able to...

- Understand the complexities of factors that contribute to addiction
- Critically reflect on how regardless of the type of addiction, there is similarity in contributing factors (and if time permits, critically reflect on what this implies for treatment approaches)

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**Post-Activity Focus (for Instructors Only)**

- Students will likely have discussed many things in their group and there may be many factors on the board; help students notice the similarities, even though they may have used slightly different wording (e.g., perhaps there is a theme of family discord or traumatic experiences)

**Activity Notes (for Instructors Only)**

- Likely works best with a small to medium class size. In a larger class, you could still create groups, but perhaps only ask members from random groups to come write on the board
  - Works with synchronous or asynchronous classes
    - Can be done live, in person
    - Can do it online synchronously through the use of breakout rooms and the whiteboard
    - Asynchronously, can ask students to do this on their own as a written assignment (would likely be best if you asked them to contemplate factors for 2, 3, or 4 different types of addictions and then to critically reflect on common themes and impact for treatment)
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