

Working with an addicted personality: from the «I-Pathological» to the «I-Authentic»

Abstract

The article describes the practical acceptance of psychotherapeutic work with patients with addictive disorders, based on Psychogenetic theory of personality Y.V. Valentik (1993 -2008). Valentik introduced concept of "I-pathological", in order to give a better understanding of the changes taking place in psychological sphere of addict. It's a personality's new formation "responsible" for illness sustaining. One of the ways to solve the anosognosia problem is to «switch» active position of patient from the pathologic part of Self to Authentic (Normative Self). This technique can be used in counselling, treatment and rehabilitation of addicts, and can also be useful in working with relatives.

Keywords: patients with addictive disorders, addiction psychotherapy, anosognosia, i-pathological, i-authentic, method of forming personal self-regulation, treatment and rehabilitation of addicts

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Introduction

A person who suffers from the drug, alcohol or other types of addiction on the developed staged of the disease usually demonstrates anosognosia and rejects medical and rehabilitation help. The analyses of the practice of psychotherapy in the field of narcology, taking into account the modern scientific view an addicted personality,¹ brings to conclusion that one of the ways to solve the problem is to «switch» his active position from the pathologic part of Self to Authentic (Normative Self).

According to the Psychogenetic theory of Person of Y.V. Valentik only one personality status can be active per moment. It can be one of the normative statuses of the Self (I-child, I-parent, I-partner, I-professional, I- man/woman, I-groups member, I-physical) or pseudo-Self (I-alcoholic, I-drug addict, I-smoker, I- gambler). Pathologic Self is the alien structure responsible for the addiction sustain.^{2,3} We believe that there is also one more normative status: universal «over-self» status - I-spiritual.^{4,5} It is useless to work with an addicted person when he is in the status of Pathologic Self because all his strength is aimed at disease defence at this moment. This can be changed in the process of individual or group interaction if the methods of preventing the plunge into Pathologic Self are used and the intentional actualization of the true self's of person is maintained.

Plunge into Pathologic Self is triggered by mentioning the object of addiction, acknowledge that the person is «alcoholic\drug addict, addressing a person as an alcoholic\drug addict, use of slang, gestures and folklore specific for the addicts. Plunge into Pathologic Self can also take place in the presence of a co-dependent person or a person who behaves as co-dependent (as «pursuer», «victim» or «rescuer»); in the presence of the person who consumed psychoactive substance or as the result of chain-reaction when one of the associates is being in the state of Pathologic Self. Key features of being in the Pathologic Self are the following: defending the position of inevitability of consumption drugs, alcohol etc., actions based on the attitudes specific for Pathologic Self (i.e.: «what a holiday without alcohol?», «everybody has his own rush»), position of medical treatment

devaluation, loss of interest to everything accept addiction agent. «Switch» to pathologic self can be visually perceived by the special gleam in the eyes, gestures and mimic and can be accompanied by the agitation, irritation or indifference and boredom.

Specialists and relatives of addicts are to develop the skills of «switching» the statuses and maintaining the normative structures of Person. This can be achieved if the person is addressed as the one who suffers from the disease and is able to cope with it. Expression of respect, empathy, accepts and being in the friendly atmosphere can help an addicted person stay in the Normative Self. For intentional «switch» into normative statuses of Person the proper topics of talk can be used. «How do you feel?» - for switching to I-physical; «How are your parents?» - for switching to I-Child; «What do you like doing with your child?» - for switching to I-Parent etc. Discussing the actual needs of each Self status can help the person to return into his true Self. Relatives of the addicted persons should be trained to chat with their folks from the complementary statuses of Person position. From « I-Parent» - to the son or daughter, from « I-Partner» - to husband, from « I-son» or « I-daughter» - to parents and definitely not from the co-dependent statuses « I-victim», « I-pursuer» and « I-rescuer». The specific strategies and techniques of «switching» an addicted person from pathologic to normative status are being developed in the frame of the Method of forming personal self-regulation at the faculty of narcology of Russian Medical Academy of Continued Professional Education.³⁻⁶

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Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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