

Harm Reduction For The Family & Friends of People with SUD

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Introductions



Agenda

Cause and Effect: SUD creates unhealthy relationships
SUD as a “family disorder”

Primary (Direct) Trauma to the Loved Ones
A real-life scenario showing how manipulation unfolds.

Secondary (Indirect) Trauma to the Loved Ones
Mental & emotional states common with SUD cause unintentional “collateral damage”.

Supporting the loved ones supports the PwSUD
“Recover together”

Where do we go from here?

Cause and Effect:

SUD creates unhealthy relationships

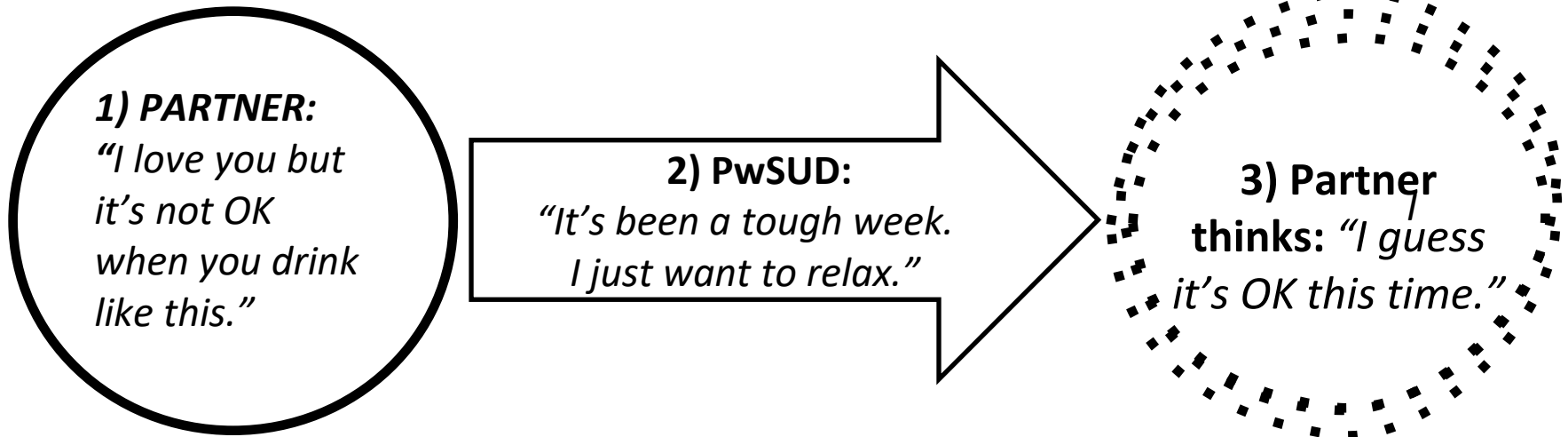
SUD as a “family disorder” lies in the mental and emotional aspects.

IMPACT

- Boundaries are blurred, perception is altered, trust is breached, emotional safety feels threatened.
- Family adapts to instability as normal, becoming “collateral damage”
- The family system becomes unhealthy

A very short interaction

The PwSUD starts to drink and.....



1) Partner defends their clearly-defined behavioral boundary with love.

2) Innocent sounding statement exploits the relationship to evoke sympathy.

3) Success at evoking sympathy. An exception is granted, softening the boundary.

What happens over months and years?

The Loved Ones reflect one day at what they now tolerate and wonder:
“How did I get here ?!”

At first, a clearly defined boundary of what is tolerated.

ONE exception granted for out-of-bounds behavior. Behavioral boundary softens.

After many exceptions, softened boundary expands. Result is toleration of more and more.

Chronic exposure over time makes the family system unhealthy.

Primary (Direct) Trauma to the Loved Ones: *Targeted manipulation by the PwSUD*

A Short Skit

What just happened?

Let's break down the conversation

- What did Craig do? What tactics did he use?
- What was the impact on Nicole? What happened to her boundaries? How did she feel? How did she react?
- What could she have done?

Our (partial) analysis of what happened

Craig's actions

- hiding drinking and pot smoking
- creates self-doubt
- controls perception
- tries to control her perception with a cheerful tone
- puts her on the spot
- preemptively tries to get her to back down
- plays dumb
- acts casual
- tries to persuade her to think she is perceiving things wrong

Impact on Nicole

- hypervigilant
- so angry
- nerves are shot
- always feels exhausted
- inner conflict between intuition and how he is portraying things
- felt like she overreacted
- general state of irritation
- unable to control reactions
- frustrated
- infuriated
- hard time regulating nervous system and emotions
- nervous system is shot
- **exhausted and lost sense of self**

What just happened? The full script

We only analyzed 1/3 of the 3-minute conversation!

Nicole narrates the scene set:

After a long day at work, we decided to order take out for dinner. Craig, as he always does, volunteered to go pick it up. Sometimes I feel like he is hiding something because every time there is an errand to be run which involves leaving the house, he jumps on it. These errands always seem to take longer than they should with him. He left an hour ago and the takeout place is not even minutes away....I texted him like 15 min ago to see what the hell is taking so long, and he hasn't responded.

Craig enters with take out food says cheerfully: "Dinner is served!"

Nicole curtly: "Did you see my text?"

Craig pretending like nothing is wrong: "Uh, no, sorry, what's up"

Nicole angrily: What the hell took you so long?!

Craig annoyed: what do you mean what took me so long?!

Nicole accusatory: "You left over an hour ago to pick up food that's less than 10 min away"

Craig casually: They were still pulling our order together when I got there

Nicole annoyed: You were super late leaving to get the food so it should have been ready.

Craig shrugs, resignedly: Well, I don't know what to tell you, it wasn't ready.

Nicole confused: Hm. Why do you smell like beer and weed?

Craig meekishly: Um, well, as I was waiting for the food, I decided to go to the bar next door and have a drink.

Nicole suspicious: You sure it was one drink? Because you look and smell like you had a lot more than 1.

Craig combatively: What's with the interrogation?! Will you just relax?! It was just one beer! Jeez. Maybe you could use a beer to chill out. This is not a big deal.

Nicole: It's a big deal to me. It seems like every time you go to do an errand; it takes longer than it should, and you come home smelling like beer and weed. I think the food was ready and you just wanted to go to get messed up, that's why it took so long.

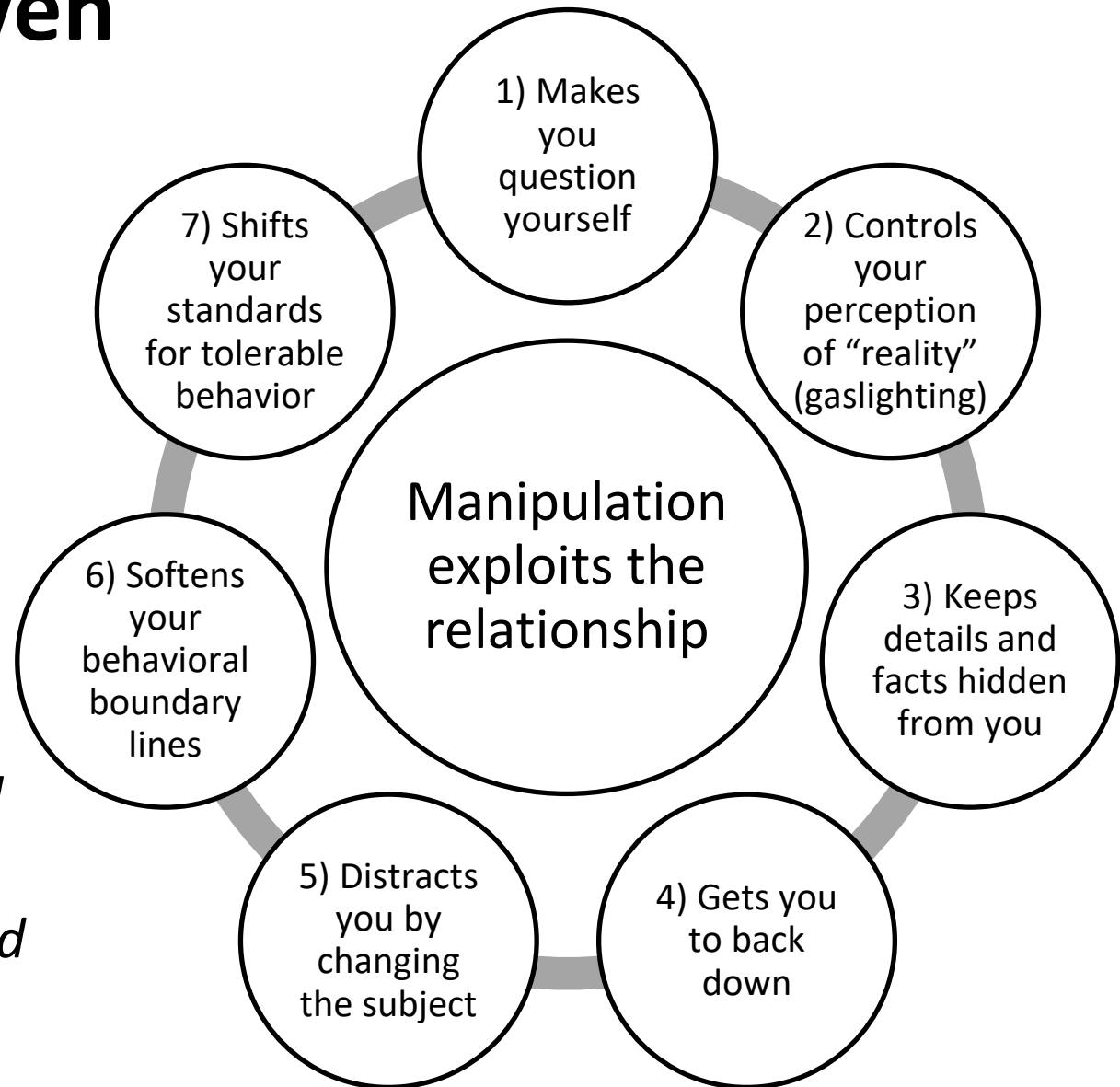
Craig explodes: "I don't have to put with this!".....storms out of the room.

Addiction-driven control

A few manipulation tactics:

- Gaslighting
- Changing the subject
- Guilt trips
- Sympathy appeals
- Tone and body language
- Withholding information
- Escalating conflict

Persuasion and control can be accomplished through words, tone and body language



What if we could educate the loved ones about SUD driven manipulation?

Here is one tough truth about manipulation:

- It takes two people, one to do it, and one to participate or allow it to be done.
- SO, if the loved one doesn't participate, it doesn't work.

Secondary (Indirect) Trauma to the Loved Ones:

*Mental & emotional states common with SUD
can cause unintentional “collateral damage”*

A long list of SUD topics which can cause secondary (unintentional) trauma

- Addiction is a disorder, not a moral issue or character flaw
- The shame with the words addict and alcoholic (it's a family affair)
- Addict-alcoholics are not just in denial, they are also in a delusion
- Why do addict-alcoholics use?
- Addiction is usually not substance specific
- What substances can be abused?
- Addict-alcoholic versus problem drinker/user
- Physically addicted versus addict-alcoholic
- Smashing the stereotype: the many flavors of addict-alcoholics
- Once an addict-alcoholic, is it forever?
- What do addict-alcoholics feel about their situation?
- How do addict-alcoholics feel about themselves?
- What is "hitting rock bottom"?
- Compliance versus Surrender
- How can you help the addict-alcoholic?
- The "identified patient"
- Support from the family groups of Al-Anon and Nar-Anon
- Their addiction is NOT your fault
- You can't control their addiction
- It is not your job to fix the addict-alcoholic
- What does "enabling PwSUD" mean?
- What is "gaslighting"?

Topic 1: “Compliance vs Surrender”



TWO RECOVERY STATES



Compliance (logical)

External pressure

- appeasement
- “outside bottom”

Temporary

- actions taken begrudgingly
- recurrence more common

Surrender (emotional)

Internal motivation

- for the self
- “inside bottom”

Lasting change

- actions taken because they deeply *want* to
- recurrence is minimized

Secondary (indirect) trauma from *“Compliance vs Surrender”*

When the loved one is unaware the PwSUD is in compliance, they:

- Might miss obvious red flags, not see the situation for what it is
- Join the emotional roller coaster of hope & relapse
- Are pulled into co-dependancy with PwSUD
- Frequently manage PwSUD’s recovery from fear & lack of trust
- Unintentionally enable the PwSUD

Educate: What if the loved one knew about “*Compliance vs Surrender*”?

Educating the loved ones will help them:

- More accurate view of where the PwSUD is at with recovery
- More realistic hopes and expectations
- Distance themselves from emotional roller coaster
- Minimize emotional and mental strain on themselves
- Be in best position to provide positive support for the PwSUD without enabling

Topic 2: “*Identified Patient*” mentality

The person with the obvious problem in the family system



Loved Ones

Blame the PwSUD for everything

Don't realize they have developed a problem too

PwSUD

Feels like the focus is always on them

Burden of the household problems are put on them

Secondary (indirect) trauma from the “*Identified Patient*” mentality

Loved Ones

Develop an obsession with the state of the PwSUD

Outward focus is distraction from self reflection

- Lack of ownership for their own problems and feelings (victim mentality)

Even when PwSUD recovers, they are stuck in old, SUD driven behavior patterns

PwSUD

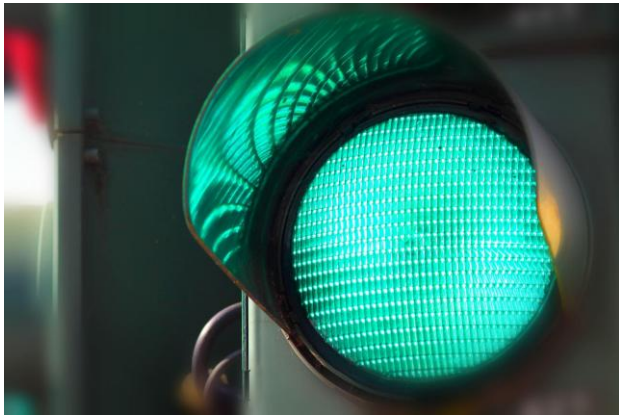
Feels alone

Feels like they can never get out from under the problem

Develops resentment towards loved ones

Carries even more guilt and shame

Educate: Adopt a *“Recover Together”* mentality



Everybody moves forward:

- No victim mentality
- Healthy boundaries
- Compassion
- No more enabling, blaming, or resentment
- Creates best possible support system for the PwSUD

Supporting the loved ones supports the PwSUD

Chronic exposure to SUD trauma changes the loved one

Effects include:

- Hypervigilance
- Anxiety
- Inability to relax
- Loss of connection to intuition
- Irritability
- Anger & resentment
- Rage
- Emotional exhaustion
- Depression
- Need to control the environment
- Physical symptoms such as Bell's Palsy

Chronic exposure to SUD trauma changes the relationship

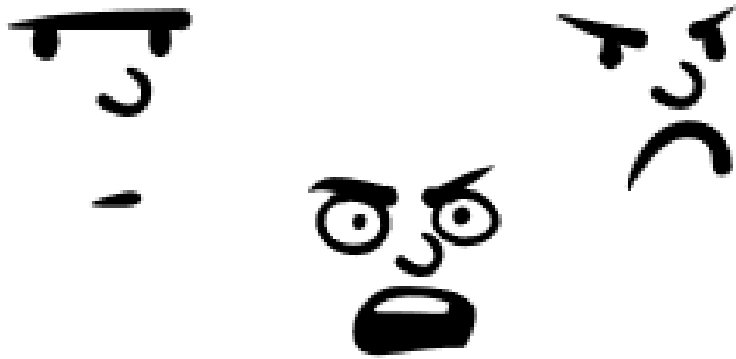
Three big shifts:

- Mutual trust becomes doubt and suspicion
- Love becomes fear (of conflict, of separation)
- Hope becomes distorted perception

A Household without A “*recover together*” mentality

The PwSUD is in treatment,
but lives in a household
where there is still:

- Damaged trust
- Suspicion and blame
- Old reactionary emotional patterns



Is the household a “recovery ready” community?

The First Step: Education

When families understand SUD driven behavior, they are can:

- Stop unknowingly participating in it
- Protect and heal their own mental and emotional health
- Start their own recovery journey
- Create a “recovery ready” household through “recovering together”

A tale of two responses from the loved one

Uneducated

Does not recognize control tactics the PwSUD uses

- Gets caught up in the emotion

Does not stick to the facts

PwSUD controls the conversation

Educated

Recognizes what the PwSUD is doing

Does not take anything personally/keeps emotions in check

Sticks to the facts

Listens to intuition and simply states their truth

Disengages from SUD driven behavior

Skit Continued:
A “recover together”
conversation

A proposed recovery pathway for loved ones



3 steps:

Discover: Educate

Learn how addiction affects relationships

Uncover: Guide

Recognize how living with addiction has affected them

Recover: Coach

Rebuild boundaries, intuition, emotional stability

Roundtable Discussion:

Where do we go from here?

**How do we help the family system
“recover together”, starting with
education?**

Some Ideas

Short term:

Active Support

- Weekly helps groups
- Workshops for the family

Passive Support

- Resource packets

Long term:

- Policy change to pay for help for the family?

Help me help you:

How can we accomplish this the way treatment programs are structured today?

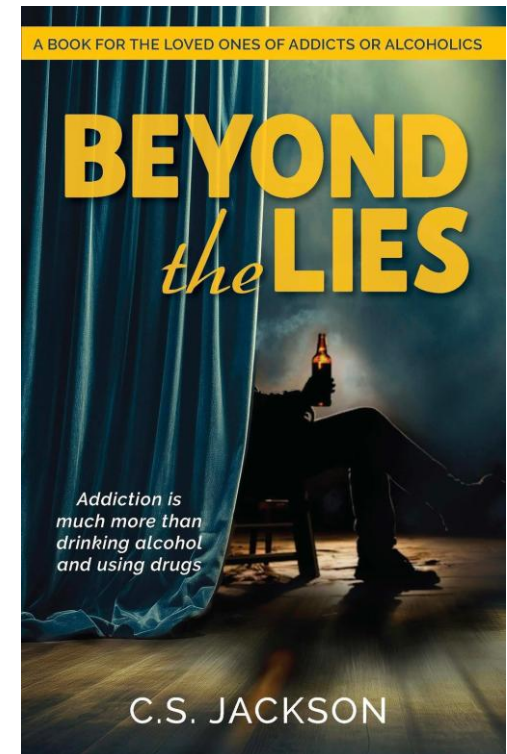
BEYOND the LIES

Craig (C.S.) Jackson



- Speaking engagements
- Workshops
- “Train the trainers”
- Program design

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BEYOND the LIES

Menu of topics

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Let's Recover Together

www.csjacksonsevolve.com