**Addiction**

For many years, our therapists have provided counselling for people struggling to overcome an addiction of some kind. Dependency on a particular behaviour or substance can co-exist alongside other issues such as depression, anxiety and low self – esteem (amongst others).

Many people will have tried to treat their addiction by managing the behaviour itself- the focus being ‘stopping’ or abstaining in some way. This can be effective for some, though exploring the reasons behind why that person has become addicted in the first place can give greater understanding for more helpful outcomes.

To use the definition employed by renowned physician and addiction specialist Gabor Mate, addiction is a ***“complex process that is manifested in any behaviour that a person craves, finds temporary pleasure or relief in, and therefore craves, but cannot give up despite its negative consequences”***. This does not necessarily relate exclusively to alcohol or other substances; we can be addicted to *any behaviour,* such as *shopping, sex, gambling, work, eating, and so on.*

Addictions are often an extremely common response to *stress and/or trauma* when we may not have adequate stress regulation skills available to us. It is an attempt to regulate a painful inner state of some kind; so, when someone experiences stress, anxiety or other heightened challenging feelings over a prolonged period of time, they may resort to using things that will provide (temporary) relief. Whether that might be substances such as *alcohol, drugs or food or other unhelpful responses.*

**Where does addiction come from?**

We all hold our emotions, including emotional pain - in our bodies - much of which can be attributed to *neglect, abuse and trauma* during our early years. If we aren’t equipped to manage these intense feelings, we may shut down from them or disconnect. This process may continue into adulthood where we might find relief from the pain through using substances or behaviours, thus helping us avoid the feelings. Being in this continuous cycle can lead us into addiction.

*The greater the pain, the greater the need to escape. Addiction, in this sense, is never the primary problem, it is instead an attempt to mask a problem.*

**If you would like to know more about how our** [**counsellors**](https://plymouthcounselling.com/our-counsellors-therapists/) **in Plymouth can help with your addiction, please give us a call or** **email** **and we'd be happy to answer any questions you might have.**