

Women & Addiction: A Gender-Responsive Approach

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Gender Differences?



Sex Differences?

Definition: Gender-Responsiveness

Creating an environment through site selection, staff selection, program development, content, and material that reflects an understanding of the realities of the lives of women and girls and that addresses and responds to their strengths and challenges.

(Covington and Bloom)

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Guiding Principles for Gender-Responsive Services

- Gender
 - Environment
 - Relationships
 - Services
 - Economic & Social Status
 - Community
- 

Guiding Principles

- **Gender:** Acknowledge that gender makes a difference.
- **Environment:** Create an environment based on safety, respect, and dignity.



Guiding Principles (cont.)

- **Relationships:** Develop policies, practices, and programs that are relational and promote healthy connections to children, family, significant others, and the community.
 - **Services:** Address substance abuse, trauma, and mental health issues through comprehensive, integrated, and culturally relevant services.
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Guiding Principles (cont.)

- **Socioeconomic status:** Provide women with opportunities to improve their socioeconomic conditions.
- **Community:** Establish a system of comprehensive and collaborative community services.

(Bloom, Owen, Covington 2003)



Women's Issues: An International Perspective

Shame and Stigma

- **Physical and Sexual Abuse**
- **Relationship Issues**
 - fear of losing children
 - fear of losing a partner
 - needing partner's permission to obtain treatment

Women's Issues: An International Perspective

- **Treatment Issues**
 - lack of services for women
 - not understanding women's treatment
 - long waiting lists
 - lack of childcare services
- **Systemic Issues**
 - lack of financial resources
 - lack of clean/sober housing
 - poorly coordinated services

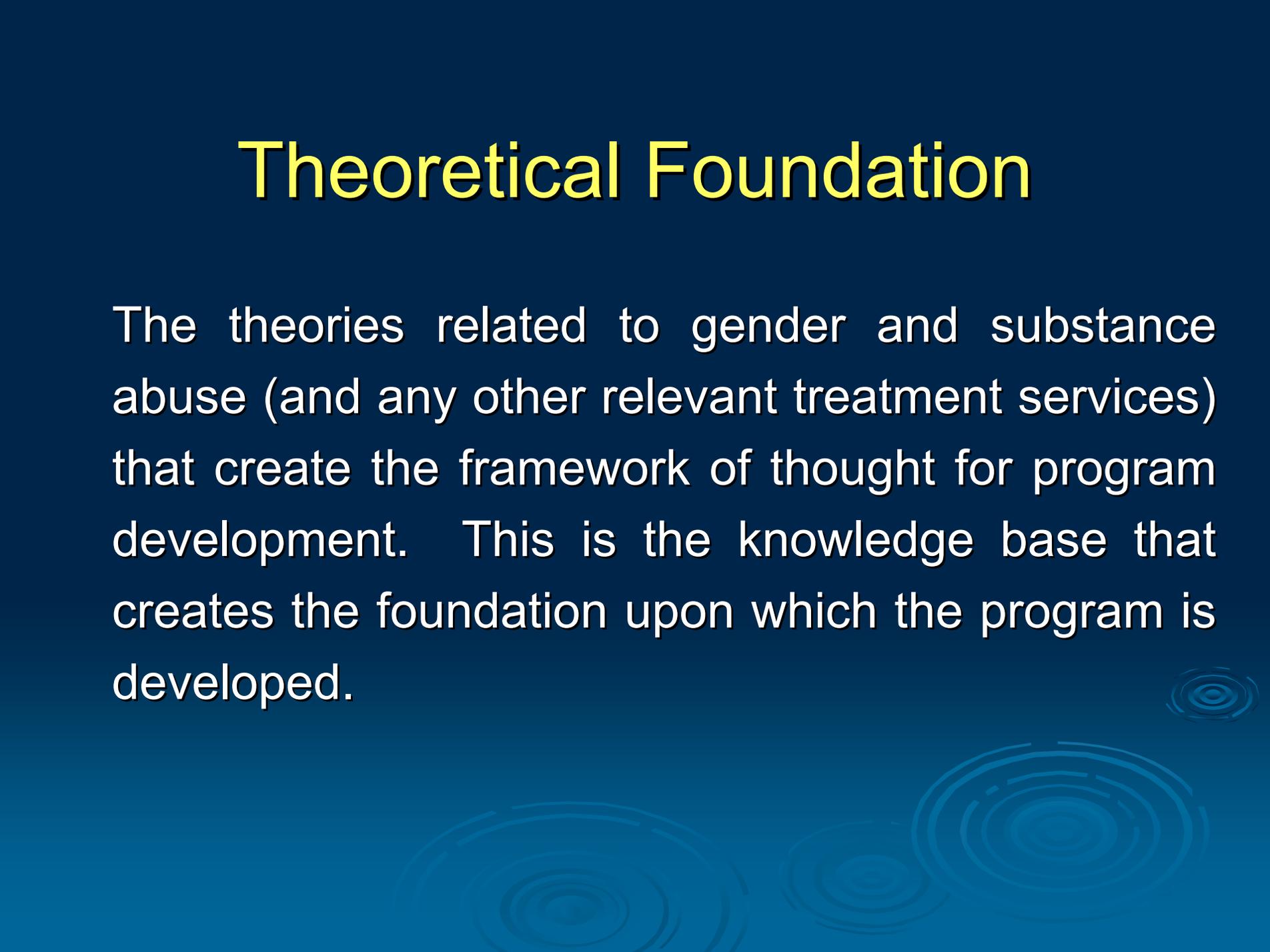
THE ATMOSPHERE OF THE INSTITUTION THE SPIRIT OF THE “GOOD FAMILY” ENVIRONMENTAL THERAPY



Lotta Länne, Sweden, 2006

Theoretical Foundation

The theories related to gender and substance abuse (and any other relevant treatment services) that create the framework of thought for program development. This is the knowledge base that creates the foundation upon which the program is developed.



Helping Women Recover: A Comprehensive Integrated Approach

Theory of Addiction

- Holistic health model
- Chronic neglect of self in favor of something or someone else

Theory of Women's Psychological Development

- Relational-Cultural Model (Stone Center)

Theory of Trauma

- Three Stage Model (Herman)
- Upward Spiral – A Transformational Model (Covington)

Addiction: A Holistic Health Model

- Physiological
 - Emotional
 - Social
 - Spiritual
 - Environmental
 - Political
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Relational Theory

Some women use drugs:

- To maintain a relationship
- To fill in the void of what's missing in a relationship
- To self-medicate the pain of abuse in relationships

(Covington & Surrey, 1997)

Addiction as a Relationship



Love



Love-Hate

Trauma-informed Services

These are services that are provided for problems other than trauma but require knowledge about violence against women and the impact of trauma thereby increasing their effectiveness.



Trauma-informed Services

Trauma-informed services:

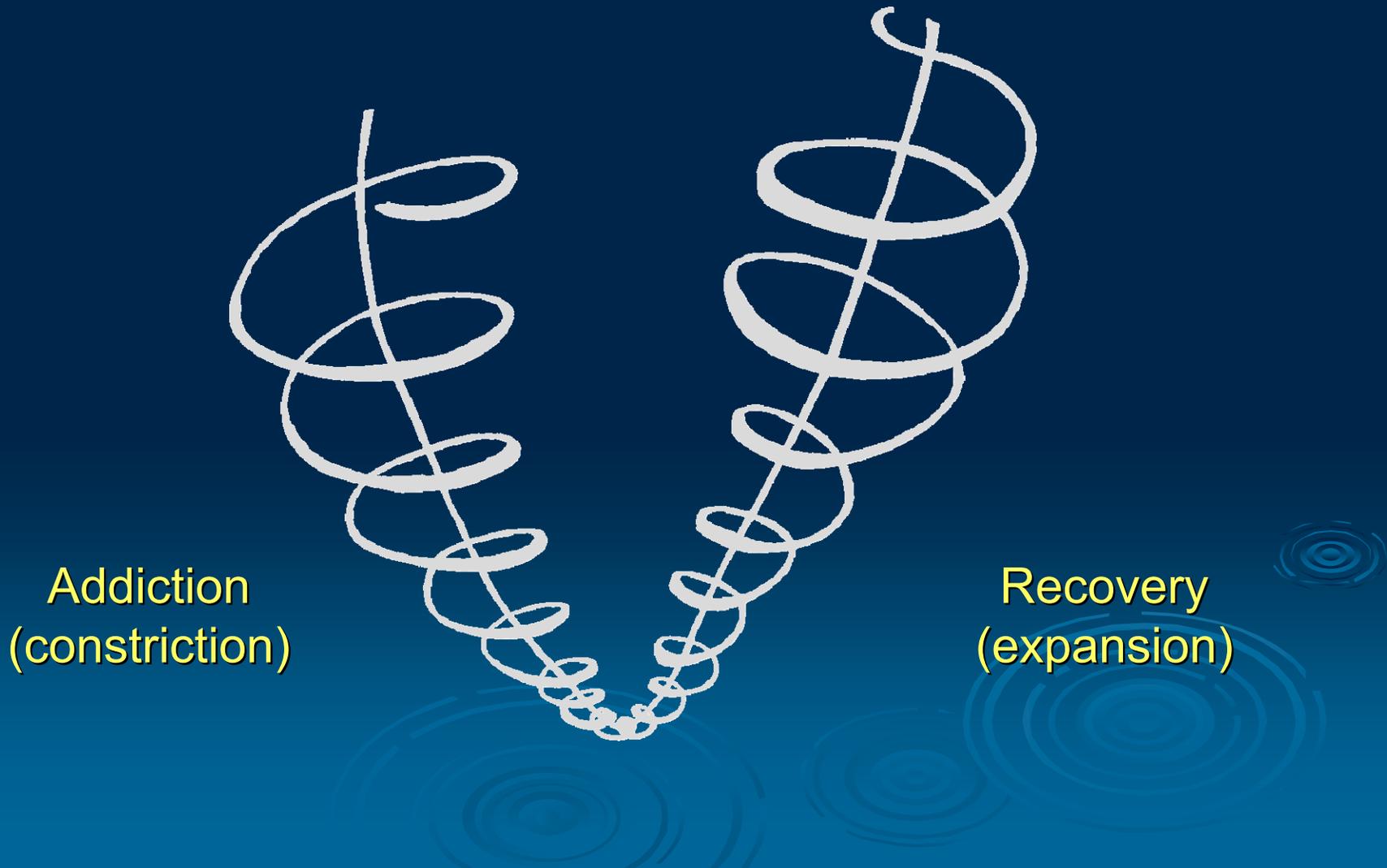
- Take the trauma into account.
- Avoid triggering trauma reactions and/or traumatizing the individual.
- Adjust the behavior of counselors, other staff and the organization to support the individual's coping capacity.
- Allow survivors to manage their trauma symptoms successfully so that they are able to access, retain and benefit from the services.

Trauma



Upward Spiral

Transformation



Addiction
(constriction)

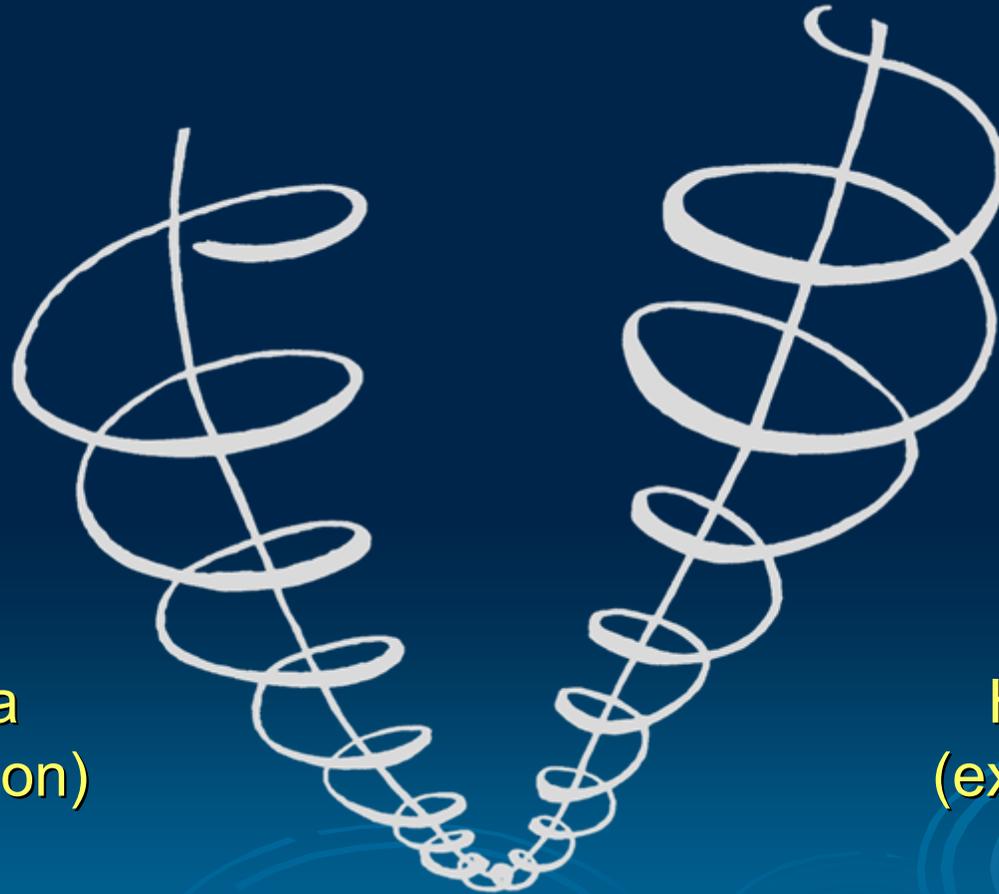
Recovery
(expansion)

Upward Spiral

Transformation

Trauma
(constriction)

Healing
(expansion)



Woman-centered Treatment

“What does each woman need to have by the time she leaves treatment?”



Woman-centered Treatment

Each woman needs an opportunity to:

- Acknowledge that she has an addiction.
- Create a connection with other women.
- Obtain an accurate diagnosis (through assessment) and appropriate medication, when necessary, for any co-occurring disorder(s).

Woman-centered Treatment (cont.)

- Understand the impact of alcohol and other drugs on the female body.
- Understand the connection between trauma and addiction.
- Have a wide selection of clean-and-sober coping skills.



Woman-centered Treatment (cont.)

- Have a recovery plan
- Have her basic needs addressed (for shelter, food, transportation, childcare, literacy, employment, etc.).



Sanctuary



Definition of Sanctuary

- Sacred place
- Place of refuge/protection
- Shelter



Trauma

- Key Elements
- Co-occurring Disorders
- Children
- Relapse Prevention



Trauma

Key Elements for Staff & Clients

- Learn what trauma/abuse is
- Understand typical responses
- Develop coping skills



Trauma & Co-Occurring Disorders

There is a high level of co-morbidity between post-traumatic stress disorder and:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Panic disorder
- Phobic disorder
- Substance abuse
- Physical disorders

Trauma and Mothering

Children

- Can become a trigger

Mother

- Can be overly protective
- May have unrealistic expectations
- May struggle with nurture



Trauma and Relapse Prevention

- Sexual Issues
- Relationship issues
- Trauma issues



Treatment Strategies

The approaches used in the program that create the therapeutic process. These are the ways in which theory is operationalized (how theory is applied).



Therapeutic Approaches

- Relational
 - Group Therapy
 - Cognitive-behavioral
 - Experiential
 - Therapeutic Community
 - Mutual Help
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Importance of Staff

- Attitudes
- Skills
- Knowledge
- Behavior



What makes a difference for women?

- women-only groups
 - integrating substance abuse and trauma services
 - length of treatment
 - completing treatment
 - continuity of care (aftercare)
 - continuity of relationship
- 



Women in the Criminal Justice System



“...women whose lives represent all women’s issues-*magnified.*”

HOLISTIC, SPIRITUAL, INTUITIVE, CREATIVE, RARE

WISDOM

UNDERSTANDING

KNOWLEDGE

INFORMATION

DATA

SEPARABLE, LINEAR, MECHANISTIC, MEASURABLE, ABUNDANT

Women Healing

Working on multiple levels:

- Individual
 - Political
 - Spiritual
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