

PSYCHOLOGY BRIDGING ACTIVITY



One of the topic areas we study in psychology is Addictive Behaviour.

Addiction is an increasing problem among the population. In psychology we look at the characteristics of addictive behaviour – these can be used to decide whether someone has an addiction to a behaviour or substance.

[Watch this crash course video \(the bits specifically on addiction are from 7 mins 22 secs\)](#)



Read the 6 criteria for addictive behaviour below. Once you have an idea of what characteristics make an addict, have a go at the activity analysing behaviour in the scenarios included.

MOOD MODIFICATION

An individual uses the substance or behaviour as a way of altering their mood, this could be described as giving them a buzz or high or it may lead to feelings of relaxation or escapism.



SALIENCE

The behaviour or substance becomes the most important thing in a person's life. It takes over their behaviour and thoughts. Even when they are not engaging/using they will be thinking about it.



TOLERANCE

As the person engages in the behaviour or uses a substance overtime they develop tolerance to it. This means they need more of it to get the same effects – so they have to engage more often or in bigger amounts.

CONFLICT

The persons use of the behaviour or substance causes conflict in their life. This conflict can be with other people – such as their family/friends. Or this conflict may be with themselves (e.g. they know they should quit but can't).

WITHDRAWAL

If the person stops engaging in the behaviour or using the substance they will get unpleasant withdrawal symptoms. These can be physical (nausea, headaches) or psychological (irritable, anxious)



RELAPSE

If a person manages to give up the behaviour or substance, even after long periods, they may start again and relapse

Can you identify the characteristics of addictive behaviour in the following individuals? Pick out examples from the scenarios...

- 1. Jas is doing her GCSEs and is in her final year at school. She has struggled with her work recently and she is finding school stressful. One night Jas was very worried about an assessment, the next day she stole a cigarette from her sister. As she inhaled the smoke she felt calmer and her head felt clear. Initially she didn't smoke very often, only the odd cigarette when she felt school was getting on top of her and she needed to relax. After a few weeks Jas frequently finds herself planning out when she can fit in her next cigarette around her lessons at school, and as it got closer to her exams starting, she was smoking 10-15 cigarettes per day to help her chill out. Jas's mum and dad found a pack of cigarettes in her school bag and they had a big argument about it. Jas knows smoking is not good for her but she feels like she needs to smoke to help her relax. She agreed with her mum and dad that she should try and quit. She managed to give up for 3 weeks, even though she found it made her feel very moody and irritable. On the day of Jas's first GCSEs exam she smokes a cigarette before going into school.**

Pick out examples of where you think Jas is showing examples of the following criteria:

- Mood modification:
- Salience:
- Tolerance:
- Conflict:
- Withdrawal:
- Relapse:

2. Simon went to the corner shop one lunch break. He bought a £2 scratch card and got a real buzz from scratching the boxes to see if he had won or not. Under one box he had won £5, he forgot all about his boring morning and returned to work feeling great. He started buying scratch cards every day, sometimes more than once, and the cards he was buying were more expensive to get the same rush. Buying the £2 one was a waste of time –he just didn't feel the same rush. Within weeks' gambling became all Simon could think about. He began to spend time at work playing instant win games on his phone. One day his boss called him into a meeting and gave him a formal warning for making mistakes at work and being distracted. Simon felt embarrassed. He knew his gambling was getting out of hand and wanted to stop but couldn't. Weeks later on payday he spent £500 on gambling sites and only won £10. He knew it was getting out of hand and must stop. In the weeks he quit gambling, he felt horrible. He would wake up with sweats in the middle of the night, felt sick, and was short-tempered. After two months without buying a scratch card or playing online, Simon found himself on his lotto account playing instant win games when he became bored at work.

Identify where you think Simon is showing examples of the following criteria:

- Mood modification:
- Salience:
- Tolerance:
- Conflict:
- Withdrawal:
- Relapse:

3. Dion is an introvert. When he started college he didn't enjoy meeting new people or going to social events, he preferred to stay at home and started playing online games with a small group of friends he knew from school. Playing these games gave him a real kick, as it made him feel confident and like he can show off his skill to his friends. Initially he was just playing for an hour or so after college but as time went on this increased to the point where he was playing into the early hours of the morning and then struggling to wake up for college the next day. When he is in his classes he's so tired he can't concentrate and he often finds himself thinking about strategies for playing his games that evening, instead of listening to what his teachers are saying. He stopped doing homework as he was spending all his free time online. His grades had started to drop and he told his parents he wanted to drop out, this made them angry with Dion. He was playing online so frequently he barely spent any time with his girlfriend, so she broke up with him.

Identify where you think Dion is showing examples of the following criteria:

- Mood modification:
- Salience:
- Tolerance:
- Conflict:
- Withdrawal:

If you want to you can submit your answers to the Psychology department at shawkins@qeliz.ac.uk