2. Work with Addictions

# Overview

Unit 1 explored the complexity of trauma, why it happens, and how to deal with it when it shows up in our work. This unit is designed to provide you with some research, theory, and practical resources so that you will feel confident and competent when you encounter trauma at work or in daily life. Although you will not be expected to become an expert on every topic we will examine, it is imperative that you are able to locate information when confronted with it, and not become overwhelmed by the amount of information and numerous sources available.

## Topics

This unit is divided into the following topics:

1. What is Addiction?
2. How and Why Does Addiction Develop?
3. Working With Addictions

## Unit Learning Outcomes

When you have completed this unit you will be able to:

1. Identify and discuss some of the major authors in the field of addiction
2. Interpret the phrase, “Not why the addiction, but why the pain?”
3. Conceptualize an addictions case
4. Practice the skill of validation as outlined in emotion-focused family therapy
5. Develop a preliminary treatment plan and know where to find resources and further specialized training

## Learning Activities

Here is a list of Learning Activities that will benefit you in completing this unit. You may find it useful for planning your work.

**<Begin learning-activity>**

1. Read: *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts*, pp. 1–3 and Chapters 11–16
2. Watch: A Visual Portrayal
3. Read: Key Terms
4. Read (Optional): A Biblical Reflection
5. Visit: Six Fundamental Theories Website
6. Read: *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts*, Chapters 17–19
7. Exploration (Optional): Brain Imaging with Dr. Amen
8. Read: *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts*, Chapters 29–33
9. Read: *Emotion-Focused Family Therapy*, Chapters 2–3 and pp. 153–154
10. Watch: Visual of Emotion Coaching
11. Reflect: Looking Back
12. Practice: Validation Exercise
13. Read: *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts*, pp. 1–3 and Chapters 11–16

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Working through course activities will help you to meet the learning outcomes and successfully complete your assessments.

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**<End learning-activity>**

## Assessment

Please see the Assessment section in Moodle for assignment details.

## Resources

Here are the resources you will need to complete this unit.

* Maté, G. (2010). *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts*. North Atlantic Books.
* Lafrance, A., Henderson, K. A., & Mayman, S. (2020*). Emotion-Focused Family Therapy: A Transdiagnostic Model for Caregiver-Focused Interventions*. American Psychological Association.
* Other online resources will be provided in the unit.

# 2.1 What is Addiction?

An addiction is a chronic brain disorder with reward, motivation, and memory components. Basically, it refers to a tendency to seek a reward in a compulsive or obsessive manner without taking into account consequences. This is just one definition of addiction; you will probably encounter others.

In the long term, addiction can significantly interfere with a person’s daily activities. Those who suffer from addiction may also experience cycles of relapse and remission. It is therefore possible for them to cycle between intensified and mild usage. Over time, addictions often worsen despite these cycles. These types of problems can cause permanent health complications as well as having serious consequences such as bankruptcy, alienation from family, and rejection by society.

There are a wide variety of resources available on the topic of addiction; they describe types of addiction, triggers, the signs and causes of addiction, as well as stages of addiction and their complications.

There are many definitions of addiction available online. Through the Learning Activities in this unit we will explore some of the most important terms in this field, as well as hear from some of the leading researchers.

## 2.1.1 Activity: Reading | In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts, pp. 1–3 and Chapters 11–16

**<Begin learning-activity>**

* Read *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts*, pp. 1–3, and Chapters 11–16 (2010)

Gabor Maté’s book *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts* is a very important and valuable course resource. Given the time available for this course, it is recommended that you complete specific readings, but the book as a whole is very valuable.

The chapters are quite substantial in and of themselves so it is strongly recommended that you follow along with the questions provided below as you read; as a result, you will be able to retain more information.

Additionally, before you complete this reading take a moment to consider your own definition of addictions and what automatic thoughts or assumptions you have about people struggling with addictions.

**Questions to Consider**

You will be able to check your understanding of the topic by considering these questions.

1. What is our present-day definition of addiction?
2. What are the four components of addiction? (Maté, p. 129)
3. Why do all addictions also have a biological dimension to them?
4. Why is it unhelpful to view addiction as a disease?
5. What did the study done with Vietnam War veterans show?
6. What is the significance of “Rat Park”?
7. What three factors need to coincide in order for a substance addiction to develop?
8. What does it mean to have a diminished amount of dopamine receptors in the brain? Why would someone with a smaller number of dopamine receptors be at higher risk for addiction?
9. What are the short-term effects of drugs on the brain and what are the long-term effects?
10. Take note of the story of Claire at the end of Chapter 16 and how her story is described using the information that we have recently learned.

**<End learning-activity>**

## 2.1.2 Activity: Watch | A Visual Portrayal

**<Begin learning-activity>**

Please take a moment to watch the following video. Please be aware that this video may evoke some strong emotions.

* [*Nuggets*](https://www.youtube-nocookie.com/embed/HUngLgGRJpo) (2014)

**Journal Record**

After watching the video, use the following link to record your thoughts. Note that your responses will not be saved once you close the active browser, so you will need to save or download your document before closing it.

* <https://create.twu.ca/h5p/wp-admin/admin-ajax.php?action=h5p_embed&id=458>

**<End learning-activity>**

## 2.1.3 Activity: Key Terms

**<Begin learning-activity>**

Take a moment to read some of the terms below. The purpose of reviewing specific definitions is to reinforce the information presented in this topic.

1. **Tolerance:** decreased reaction to a process or substance after repeated use. Increasing uptake may only increase tolerance.
2. **Relationship between opioids and oxytocin:** oxytocin helps us to not become tolerant to our own natural opiates. When endorphins lock onto opiate receptors they trigger the chemistry of love and connection, helping us be the social creatures we are.
3. **Dopamine receptors:** a decreased presence of these is correlated with a greater uptake of substances or addictive behaviours.
4. **Dopamine system:** most active during the initiation and establishment of drug intake and other addictive behaviours and is key in reinforcing patterns of all drugs of abuse.
5. **Opiates:** these don’t take away pain, but reduce our consciousness of it as unpleasant stimuli. They are responsible for the pleasure–reward aspects of addiction.
6. **Reinforcement:** the triggering of VTA (ventral tegmental apparatus) activation and dopamine release in the NA (nucleus accumbens)
7. **Prefrontal cortex:** responsible for the impulse control center, executive functioning, and is where social behaviours are learned. This becomes impaired in an addicted brain.
8. **Orbitofrontal cortex:** decision-making, inhibiting impulses, initiating cravings, and balancing short-term objectives against longer-term consequences in the process of decision making. Images show that the OFC works abnormally in drug users.
9. **Salience attribution:** the assignment of great value to a false need and the depreciation of true ones.
10. **Epigenetics:** effects are most powerful in early development, the ability for genes to turn on and off based on environmental factors. “As a result of life events, chemicals attach themselves to DNA and direct gene activities” Maté (2010) (p. 204).
11. **Gene expression:** how a gene acts.
12. **Process addictions or behaviour addictions:** gambling, shopping, food, love, sex, internet, dangerous activities, thrill-seeking activities, pornography
13. **Substance addictions:** alcohol, drugs, pain pills, tobacco

**<End learning-activity>**

## 2.1.4 Activity: Optional Reading | A Biblical Reflection

**<Begin learning-activity>**

* Read Deuteronomy 4: 15–16, Isaiah 44: 9, and Colossians 3: 5

The Bible talks about how an idol is anything that takes priority over our ability and willingness to worship and serve God. An idol can “replace” God in our lives, and our relationship with whatever we have made an idol in our lives becomes more important than our relationship with God. An addiction could be considered an idol, as when one is in the midst of an addiction it becomes the sole priority and as we have read, even one’s basic health may be pushed aside for the sake of engaging in the addiction.

In addition, we have read that the same neural pathways in the brain are involved in addictions and attachments. According to *Genesis* 2: 18–23, we were created for attachment. As we have discussed previously, addiction can fill a hole inside of us when we lack the type of attachment that God intended, the secure base that allows us to fail and be okay. This is especially true for people who are trying to numb or eliminate intolerable pain.

Consider how far our world has fallen from God’s intended design for us and how far we have fallen from that design. **How does this context affect your perception of those suffering from addiction?** **Does it make a difference?**

**<End learning-activity>**

# 2.2 How and Why Does Addiction Develop?

Among the most common causes of addiction development mentioned in the literature are chronic stress, trauma, mental illness, and a family history of addiction. Researchers are still uncertain what causes addiction, or how it develops as risks vary from person to person.

The purpose of this section is to discuss the six basic theories of addiction, followed by an analysis of Gabor Maté’s analysis of how and why addiction develops. To conclude, we will examine some brain scans of addicted individuals and discuss the various categories of addiction that can be identified by such brain scans.

## 2.2.1 Activity: Website | Six Fundamental Theories

**<Begin learning-activity>**

Gabor Maté’s work with and view of addiction, and how and why it forms, is a biopsychosocial one. This view is supported by the most recent research and brain science, so we are focusing primarily on it. To better understand how and why addiction develops, it is worthwhile to examine other theories.

Take a look at the following presentation that discusses five different theories.

* [*Theories of Addiction*](https://www.nwosu.edu/uploads/academics/social-sciences/bjcc/cbrp-training/theories-of-addiction.pdf) (n.d.)

**<End learning-activity>**

## 2.2.2 Activity: Reading | *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts*, Chapters 17–19

**<Begin learning-activity>**

In this section we will explore the reasons and mechanisms behind addiction. You will continue reading *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts* through Chapter 19 in order to gain further insight into addiction and how it manifests in the brain. You have already read Chapters 17 and 18 during the last unit. You can take this opportunity to review the information, or read only Chapter 19 if you feel that you have a good understanding of the information.

* *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts*, Chapters 17–19 (2010)

**Questions to Consider**

You will be able to check your understanding of the topic by considering these questions.

1. What is epigenetics and what is its significance?
2. What can we focus on with regard to prevention?
3. At what stage can one already begin to have a predisposition to alcohol “programmed” in them?
4. When and where are the numbers of and density of dopamine receptors determined?

**<End learning-activity>**

## 2.2.3 Activity: Optional Website Exploration | Brain Imaging with Dr. Amen

**<Begin learning-activity>**

On the [Amen Clinics](https://www.amenclinics.com/locations/seattle-metro-area/) website, you will find information on addiction and how the Amen Clinics use brain imaging to identify types of addiction. Although this presentation of addiction is based on a medical model rather than a therapeutic model, it is valuable information nonetheless. (Scroll down through the webpage to see additional links or information—sometimes it seems as though there is no additional information to be reviewed, but there is more if you continue.)

Visit the link below to learn more about brain imaging for this activity.

* [*Drugs and Alcohol Addiction*](https://www.amenclinics.com/conditions/drugs-and-alcohol-addiction/) (n.d.)

**<End learning-activity>**

# 2.3 Working with Addictions

It may be difficult for individuals who have been affected by addiction for a considerable amount of time to determine moral leanings, personal boundaries, and what kinds of behaviours are normative, rather than simply performative and survival-based. Public policy and literature increasingly recognizes that addiction is a maladaptive response to trauma. It is estimated that approximately two-thirds of those seeking treatment for alcohol and substance abuse issues have been affected by trauma. There is no doubt that addiction is extremely difficult to navigate and overcome, and not everyone is able to succeed for long periods of time.

Addiction is a complex issue that can be addressed with many theories and models, but EFFT remains the main approach and theory that will be discussed in this unit. During the following Learning Activities you will learn about Gabor Maté’s insights into the healing process and what he calls “compassionate inquiry,” which pairs nicely with EFFT. Through compassionate inquiry, the client gains an understanding of how the unconscious dynamics in their lives can be released.

## 2.3.1 Activity: Reading | In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts, Chapters 29–33

**<Begin learning-activity>**

In order to develop a healthy brain two realms must be considered: the external world—environment and support—as well as the internal world, your own self-awareness and ability to be mindful. In reading the following chapters we will explore the concept of wellness and sobriety (versus abstinence), as well as how to maintain both. Take note of the correlations with EFFT principles as you read chapters 29 to 33.

* *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts*, Chapters 29–33 (2010)

**<End learning-activity>**

## 2.3.2 Activity: Reading | Emotion-Focused Family Therapy, Chapters 2–3 and pp. 153–154

**<Begin learning-activity>**

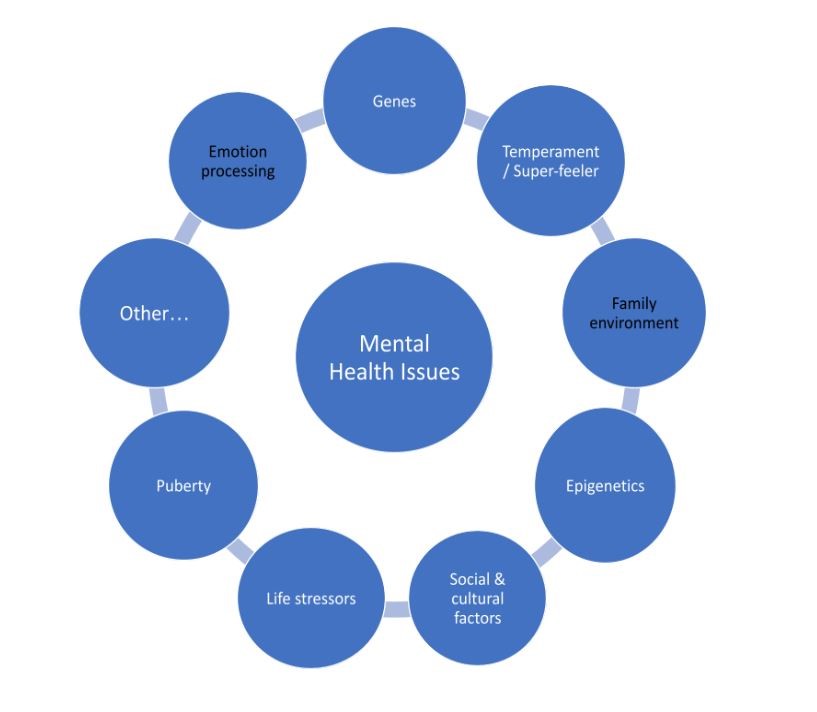
According to Chapter 19 in Maté’s book (2010), there are many things that one cannot control, such as genetic makeup, temperament, where one is born, and so on. Thus, it is important to focus on things that can be controlled.

Two of these areas are highlighted by EFFT: family environment and emotional processing. The diagram below provides a good visual of this; it was created by Adele LaFrance and Natasha Files (2018) for presentation purposes.

**Figure 1 | Two Areas Highlighted by EFFT in Mental Health**

**<Begin fig-image>**

**Figure ID:** #fig-u2\_1  
**Caption:** EFFT: Family Environment and Emotional Processing  
**Alt Text: Diagram showing that Family Environment and Emotional Processing are two areas out of nine that are highlighted by EFFT.**  
**Has Lightbox:** yes  
**Source Text:**   
**Source URL:**   
**Author:** Jasmine Pang  
**Author URL:**   
**Copyright:**   
**License Text:**   
**License URL:**



**<End fig-image>**

As we learned in our previous unit, Maté also emphasizes the importance of caregivers and community in the recovery process, which fits well with the EFFT model that emphasizes parental and caregiver involvement in mental health issues. Family environment and emotional processing are the two areas we can “control” and if we work on both, the healing process will be extremely powerful.

**<Begin note-with-icon>**

During class you will be doing an activity that revolves around the skill of emotion coaching and validation, so make sure you read Chapters 2 and 3 in Lafrance et al. (2020).

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**<End learning-activity>**

## 2.3.3 Activity: Video | Visual of Emotion Coaching

**<Begin learning-activity>**

An excellent illustration of what EFFT emotion coaching aims to accomplish is Dr. Siegel’s hand model. The purpose of emotion coaching is to build a bridge between the prefrontal cortex and the limbic system over time. Siegel’s hand metaphor can be a very effective way to explain the concept not only to parents, as in the video, but also to our clients.

Watch the following video:

* [*Dr. Daniel Siegel Presenting a Hand Model of the Brain*](https://www.youtube-nocookie.com/embed/gm9CIJ74Oxw)

**<End learning-activity>**

## 2.3.4 Activity: Reflect | Looking Back

**<Begin learning-activity>**

In order to do the reflection for this activity go back and read the first chapter of *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts* (Maté, 2010). Take in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside as Maté describes it.

* *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts*, Chapter 1 (2010)

**Reflect:**

* What comes up for you?
* In comparison to your previous attitude toward this area of the city and its residents, do you feel any different now?

**<End learning-activity>**

## 2.3.5 Activity: Validation Exercise

**<Begin learning-activity>**

For this activity read Chapter 4 of *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts*. You will practice how to write a proper validation statement to explain why Serena has been using and continues to use, or if you prefer, you can write a validation statement to explain her inability to see her own inner strength and innate perfection. You may think these will sound too scripted or even strange, but this is an integral part of the learning process.

* *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts*, Chapter 4 (2010)

This exercise can be broken down into two steps:

1. To begin, your statement might look something like this:

“No wonder/It makes sense why you continue to use because ... because … because …”

**or**

“It makes sense to me why you would be struggling with seeing your own inner strength and value because … because … because …”

1. Then make sure you add the second part of emotional support and then practical support.

“I want you to know that …”

“Why don’t we start by …”

There are examples in the behaviour coaching section of the EFFT manual (Lafrance et al., 2014) that are similar to Serena’s situation.

**<End learning-activity>**

If you are interested in accessing more resources, feel free to peruse the following websites:

* [*Recovery Nation*](https://www.recoverynation.com/)(n.d.)
* [*Smart Recovery*](https://www.smartrecovery.org/) (n.d.)

# 2.4 Unit 2 References and Resources

## 2.4.1 Topic 1: What is Addiction?

**Videos**

* Filmbilder & Friends. (2014). Nuggets [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/HUngLgGRJpo>

**Readings**

* Maté. G. (2018). *In the realm of hungry ghosts: Close encounters with addiction*. North Atlantic Books.
* *The Holy Bible*. Deuteronomy 4:15-16, Isaiah 44:9, and Colossians 3:5

**Websites**

* There are no recommended websites for Topic 1.

## 2.4.2 Topic 2: How/Why Does Addiction Develop?

**Videos**

* There are no recommended videos for Topic 2.

**Readings**

* Maté, G. (2018). *In the realm of hungry ghosts: Close encounters with addiction*. North Atlantic Books.

**Websites**

* Amen Clinics. (n.d.). *Drugs and Alcohol Addiction* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.amenclinics.com/conditions/drugs-and-alcohol-addiction/>
* Northwestern Oklahoma State University (n.d.). [*Theories of addiction*](https://www.nwosu.edu/uploads//academics/social-sciences/bjcc/cbrp-training/theories-of-addiction.pdf)[PowerPoint slides]*.* [https://www.nwosu.edu/uploads//academics/social-sciences/bjcc/cbrp-training/theories-of-addiction.pdf](https://www.nwosu.edu/uploads/academics/social-sciences/bjcc/cbrp-training/theories-of-addiction.pdf)

## 2.4.3 Topic 3: Working with Addictions

**Videos**

* FtMyersFamPsych. (2012). *Dr Daniel Siegel presenting a hand model of the brain* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/gm9CIJ74Oxw>

**Readings**

* Maté, G. (2018). *In the realm of hungry ghosts: Close encounters with addiction*. North Atlantic Books.

**Websites**

* [Recovery Nation](https://www.recoverynation.com/). (n.d.). *Welcome to Recovery Nation!.* https://recoverynation.com/
* SMART Recovery USA. (n.d.). *What is SMART recovery?*. <https://smartrecovery.org/>
* Omega Point. (2014). *What is addiction?* *[Gabor Maté]*. [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube-nocookie.com/embed/T5sOh4gKPIg>
* TED. (2015). *Everthing you think you know about addiction is wrong* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube-nocookie.com/embed/PY9DcIMGxMs>

# Unit Summary

You have learned what addictions are, how and when they develop, and how to work with them. Additionally, this unit examined the connection between addiction and trauma. For the summary of this unit I invite you to watch the following two clips—this is the most important information to retain.

* [*What is Addiction? Gabor Maté*](https://www.youtube-nocookie.com/embed/T5sOh4gKPIg) (2010)
* [*Everything You Think You Know About Addiction is Wrong*](https://www.youtube-nocookie.com/embed/PY9DcIMGxMs) (2015)

**<Begin checking-your-learning>**

Before you move on to the next unit you may want to check that you are able to:

1. Identify and discuss some of the major authors in the field of addiction
2. Interpret the phrase, “Not why the addiction, but why the pain?”
3. Conceptualize an addictions case
4. Practice the skill of validation as outlined in EFFT
5. Develop a preliminary treatment plan and know where to find resources and further specialized training

**<End checking-your-learning>**