

The background of the slide features a wide-angle photograph of majestic, snow-covered mountain peaks under a bright blue sky. In the foreground, there's a dark, textured surface that looks like asphalt or a paved area.

# The Importance of Community-Based Leisure in Recovery from Addiction

Ann Marie Kieley, MHKR Student, BRec (Hons)



# About the presenter

- Master of Human Kinetics and Recreation student
  - Master's thesis: "Exploring lived experiences of community aquatic fitness participation"
  - Researcher and teaching assistant
- Bachelor of Recreation (Honours)
  - Majored in Community Recreation
  - Honours thesis: "From strength athlete to opioid addict: An autoethnographic exploration of injury, sport dropout, and opioid addiction"
- Over a decade of recovery experience
- Six years volunteering with SWAP



# Objectives

- Opening Remarks
- Basic Leisure Concepts
- Boredom in Recovery
- Fun and Addiction: A Complicated Relationship
- Exploring Identity: Interactions with Addiction and Leisure
- Community Recreation: What Do We Get?
- Case Studies
- Role of a Treatment Provider
- Summary
- Questions

A photograph showing a person's hand holding a circular compass over a paved road that curves through a dry, hilly landscape under a clear blue sky.

Where does recovery happen?

Recovery takes place in many places...

but often in the COMMUNITY



Adapted from Best et al. (2017)

# Basic leisure concepts

Leisure

Flow

Functions of Leisure

Community Recreation

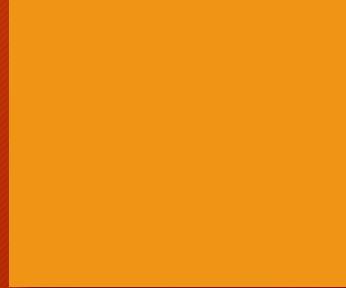
Leisure Boredom

# Leisure

Consists of activities which are:

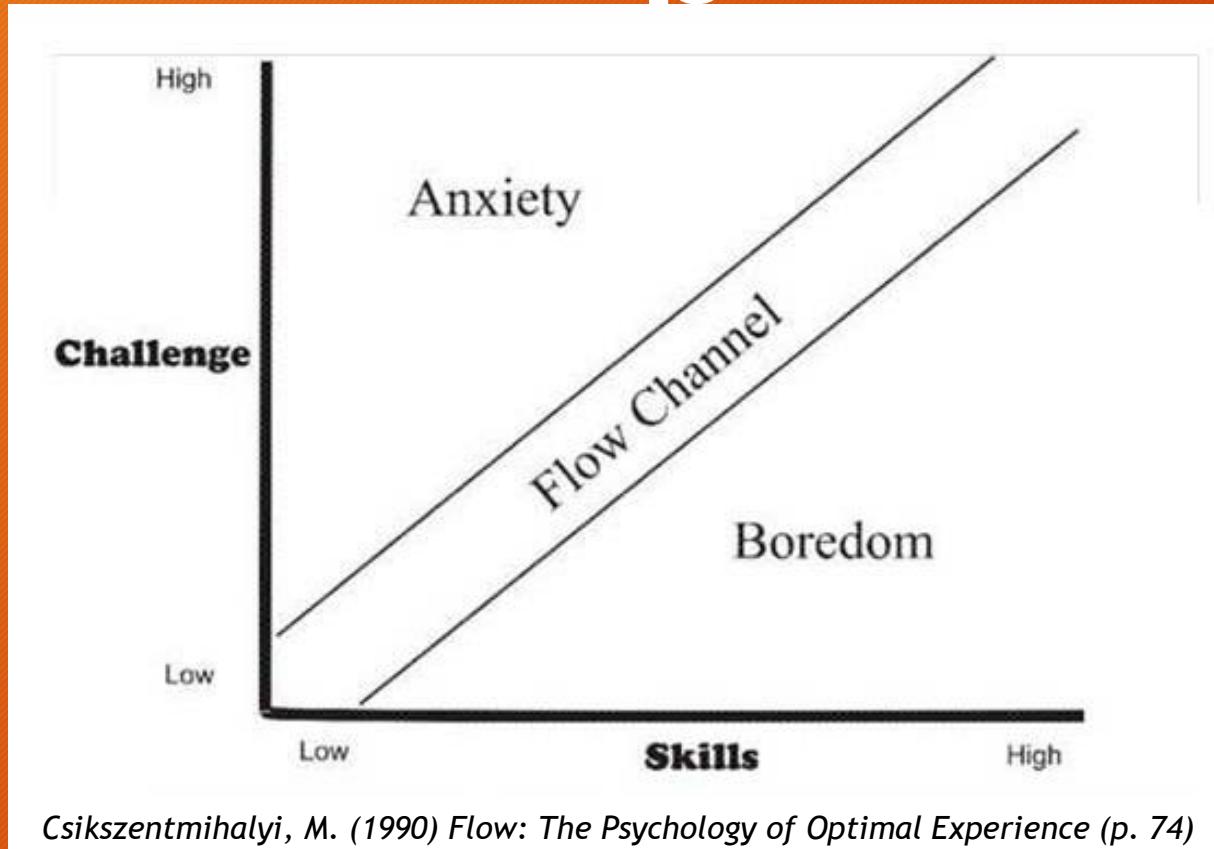
- Enjoyable, intrinsically motivated
- Freely chosen, pursued during free time
- Engaging and/or appropriately challenging

(Hurd & Anderson, 2010)



Substance use can be a leisure behaviour  
(Iso-Ahola and Crowley, 1991)

# Flow / optimal experience



“The process of total involvement”

(Csikszentmihalyi, 1990)

During flow:

- Action and awareness are brought together
- Focus is purely on the activity at hand
- There is a loss of self-consciousness
- Time seems to pass faster or slower

(Kleiber et al., 2011)

# Functions of Leisure (Kelly, 1982)



Skill acquisition and development



Self-expression



Health and physical activity



Socialization and belonging

“ ”

Leisure, however, is social as well as existential. It takes place not in the mind alone, but in the social world.

Kelly, 1982 (p. 5)

# Community Recreation



- Recreation: “Re-creates the individual so that [they] may be refreshed to enable them to resume daily obligations”

(Veal, 1992)

- Publicly accessible leisure activities that leave a participant feeling physically, emotionally, and socially refreshed

(Khasnabis et al., 2010)

- Increase physical and psychological wellbeing

(Holland et al., 2005)

# Leisure Boredom

---

“The subjective perception that available leisure experiences are not sufficient to instrumentally satisfy needs for optimal arousal”  
(Iso-Ahola & Weissinger, 1990, p. 4)

---

When people feel that there are not meaningful leisure activities that are realistically accessible, there can be negative affective and behavioural consequences.

# Boredom in Recovery

When an individual stops using substances, they also give up:

- Their daily activities
- Social relationships associated with active addiction



# Boredom in Recovery

- They may find themselves sitting on the couch watching television or scrolling social media, dependent on recovery meetings for socialization and structure
- Boredom can increase the likelihood of substance use

(Cohen, 1977; LeClair et al., 2015; Patterson & Pegg, 1999; Simpson et al., 1980)



# Why is leisure an important component of recovery?



Habitual substance use and its accompanying lifestyle can be a form of leisure. Other leisure activities are seldom pursued.



In early recovery, individuals are often plagued with leisure boredom.



# Addiction AND Fun

A complicated relationship

# Addiction and Fun



Substance use often begins in adolescence, a critical period for developing leisure preferences



When addiction-related leisure is prioritized, other forms of leisure may not be pursued

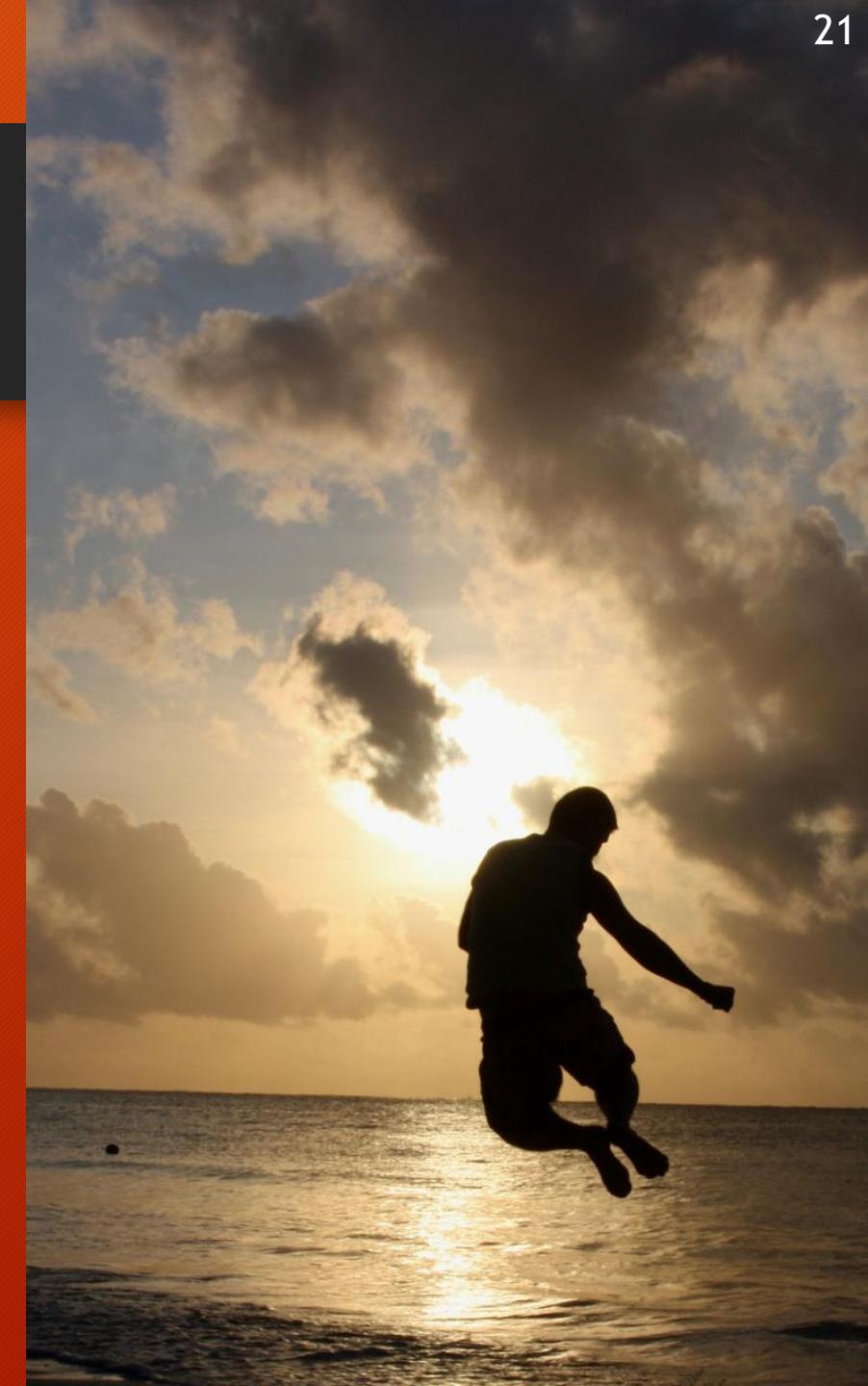
# Addiction and Fun

- In recovery, a lack of established leisure preferences may become apparent
- Lack of identity and leisure boredom can hinder the transition into a healthy life after active addiction



# Addiction and Fun

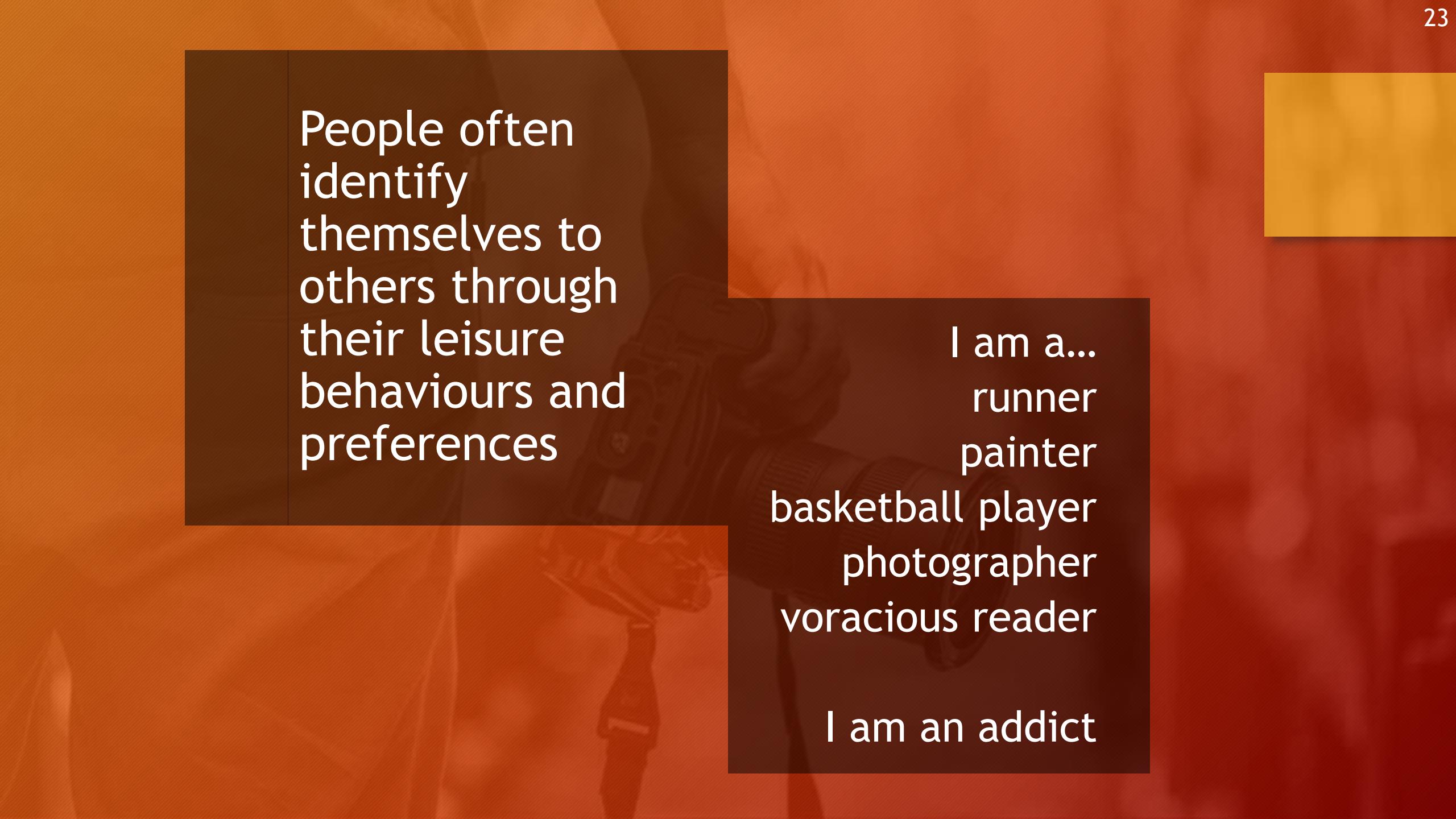
- Recovering adults of all ages find themselves bored as they realize they have not yet learned how to have fun outside of those “adult” things
  - I have met individuals in their seventies who found themselves in this predicament
- Boredom can be a serious problem in recovery if leisure needs are not appreciated as a part of the recovery plan



A photograph of an elderly man with a white beard and hair, wearing a maroon hoodie, smiling and laughing. He is outdoors in a grassy field with other people in the background.

# Exploring Identity

Interactions with addiction and leisure



A person is sitting at a desk, looking down at a laptop screen. The background is a warm orange color.

People often identify themselves to others through their leisure behaviours and preferences

I am a...  
runner  
painter  
basketball player  
photographer  
voracious reader

I am an addict

# Substance use as A leisure identity



- Young adults often use leisure to develop their identity  
(Layland et al., 2018)
- When substance use is the central component of an individual's leisure lifestyle, it may become the central component of their identity

## Vederhus et al. (2020)

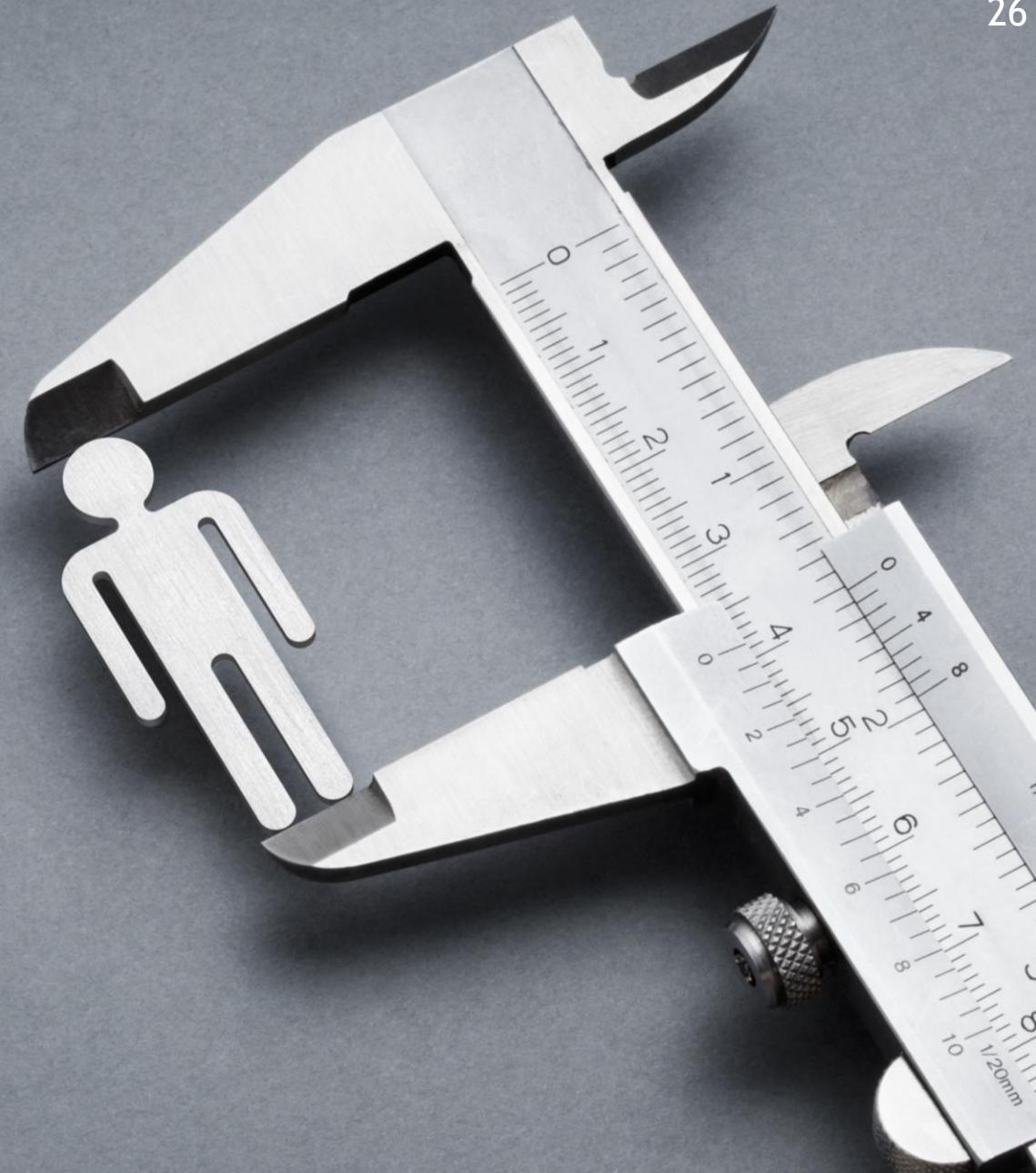
One size doesn't fit all: A thematic analysis of interviews with people who have stopped participating in Narcotics Anonymous in Norway

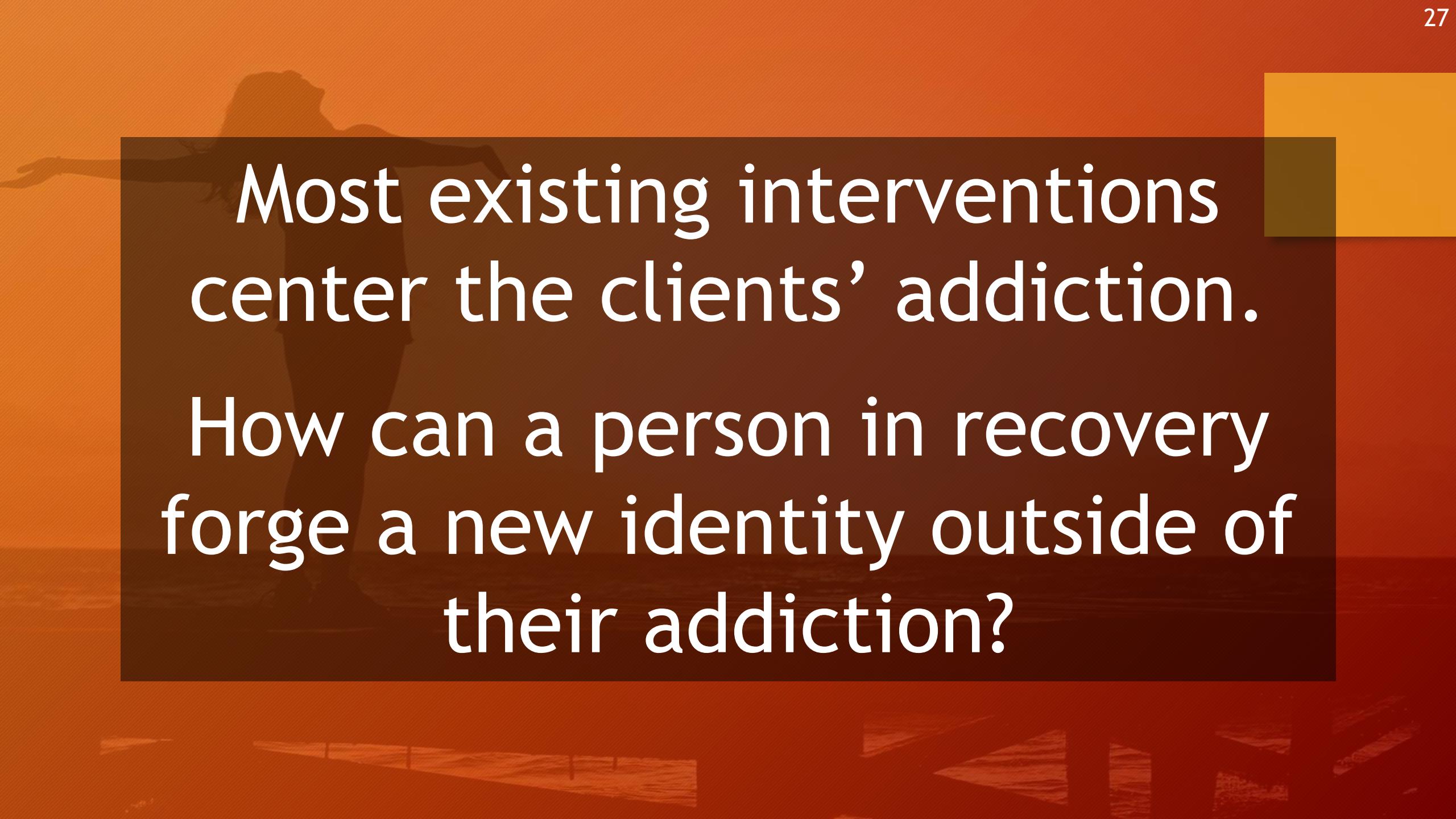


- “...participants might have been afraid to weaken their identity as ‘addicts,’ because the NA literature suggests that this self-reminding is a crucial defense mechanism against relapse”
- “respondents [who] finally left the fellowship... were unable to integrate their social identity in NA with a new social identity (e.g., being an ‘ordinary’ citizen)”

“Identification with an  
addictive activity may  
lead to increased  
involvement in that  
activity”

(Walters, 1996)



A faint background image of a person sitting at a desk, facing a laptop computer. The person is seen from the side and back, appearing to be in deep thought or concentration.

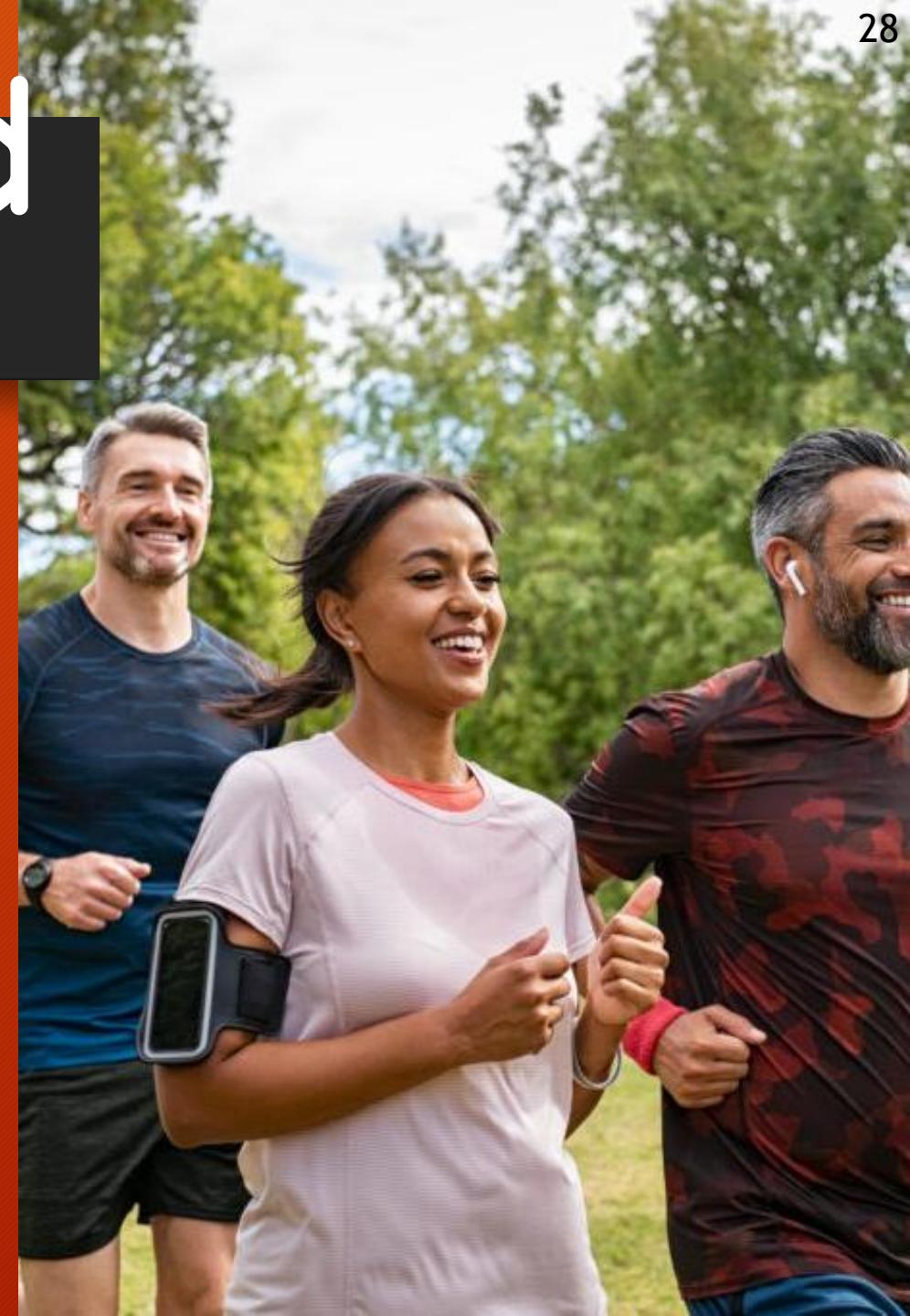
Most existing interventions  
center the clients' addiction.

How can a person in recovery  
forge a new identity outside of  
their addiction?

# Leisure and Identity

- Leisure is a vessel for how we communicate our self-perceptions to the world around us
  - e.g., An athletic person may join multiple sports teams
- Leisure preferences can express the role we wish to play in our communities

(Kelly, 1982)



# Leisure and Identity

- Encouraging new leisure experiences and identities can challenge the idea that being an “addict” remains a person’s central identifying characteristic
- Exploring leisure identities can foster *confidence, competence, and social connection* outside the world of addiction and recovery





# Community Recreation as an Intervention

What do we get from it?

# Community recreation: what do

Generally speaking... we get?

- Socialization among individuals of different backgrounds and struggles while challenging stereotypes  
(Abery, 2003; Khasnabis et al., 2010)

- A venue to experience fun and friendship

(Graupensperger et al., 2019)



# Community recreation: what do

## Group Fitness we get?

- Fosters social connection and improves physical fitness  
(Cruz-Ferreira et al., 2011 ; Komatsu et al., 2017)
- Promotes adherence over time due to commitment to the group  
(Graupensperger et al., 2019)
- Early sport psychology research demonstrated that people push themselves harder in a group setting  
(Tripplett, 1898)





# case studies

Stories are based on several people. Pseudonyms have been used and photos are placeholders

# Case Study 1: Darren's Story

- Entered recovery in early 30s
- Comes from a mid-SES family
- Physical appearance does not indicate addiction history
- Did not identify with 12-step program, sought other opportunities
- Recovery was facilitated by non-profit recreation organization
  - Financial assistance program helped him to afford membership, granting opportunities for active leisure
  - Met many friends and his significant other at this recreation facility
- Attributes participation in active leisure to his success



# Case Study 2: Sarah's Story

- Entered recovery in her 50s
- Long history of mental illness and substance use
  - Includes psychosis, paranoia, self-harm
- Used Eastern Health therapeutic recreation services
- Did not feel welcome in community recreation facilities
- Found most benefit from two non-profit organizations that provided some leisure programming
- Discovered yoga- significantly benefitted recovery
  - Took instructor course with intention to provide free yoga classes to people in recovery
- Outside of yoga, most leisure and socialization occurs within 12-step communities



# General report



- Five St. John's residents in active recovery were consulted
  - Three men, two women
- Men: more inclined to get into active leisure
- Women: less comfortable going to a recreation facility
- Those who managed to participate in active leisure in a publicly accessible facility developed greater self-efficacy and identified with their chosen activities

A photograph of a woman with long blonde hair, wearing a white blouse, sitting at a wooden desk in an office setting. She is looking down at a piece of paper or a laptop screen. In the background, there's a lamp, a small plant, and some framed pictures on the wall.

# The role of addiction treatment providers

# Providers as Leisure Educators



INFORM CLIENTS OF  
BASIC LEISURE CONCEPTS



CHALLENGE NEGATIVE  
PERCEPTIONS OF LEISURE



PROMOTE LEISURE  
EXPERIENCE

# Three Key Leisure Concepts

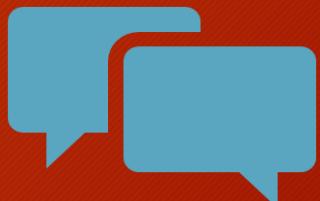


**Define leisure**

Distinguish between active and passive leisure



**Define boredom**



**Discuss leisure and identity**

# Perceptions of Leisure in Addiction Treatment

An important part of leisure education is challenging negative perceptions of leisure

- Many people in recovery strive to feel “productive”
- As a society, we often paint leisure, fun, and play as negative concepts
  - “Stop playing around!”
  - “You’re wasting time”
  - “Idle hands are the devil’s workshop”
  - “What are you doing, killing time?”

(Faulkner, 1991)





Hearing that leisure is a key part of recovery, especially when coming from a practitioner, may help to challenge these ideas.

# Leisure Promotion

- Highlight importance of both active and passive leisure
  - Active: aim for the recommended physical activity guideline of 150 minutes per week

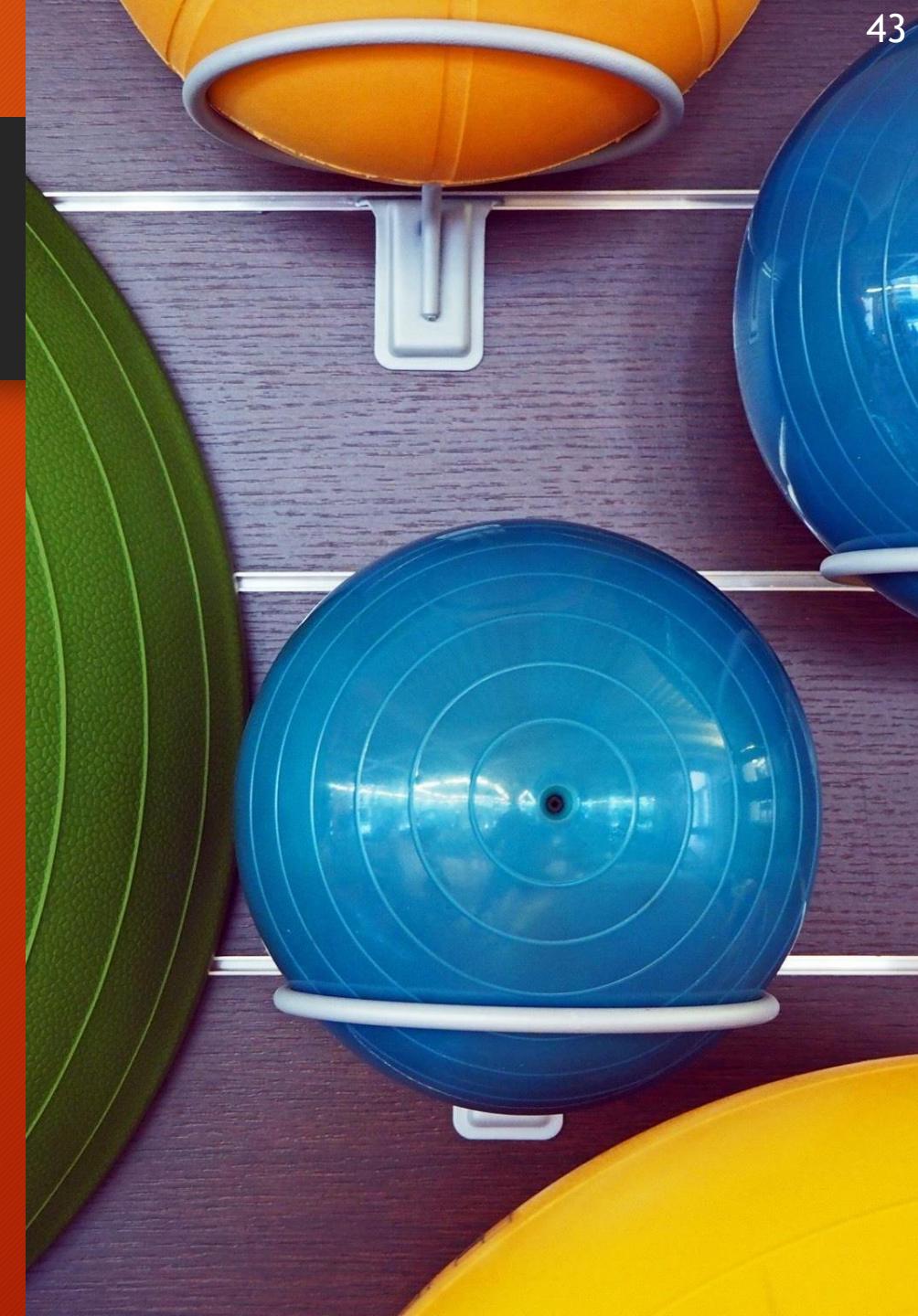
(Canadian Society of Exercise Physiology, 2021)

- Passive: something to do when tired, injured, or unable to access preferred exercise or sport



# Leisure Promotion

- Diversify leisure by engaging in several hobbies and/or forms of physical activity
- Recommend community recreation
  - Group fitness classes
  - Financial assistance programs
    - City of St. John's Adult Program Subsidy
    - YMCA Financial Assistance Program



# summary



Individuals in recovery need opportunities for community-based leisure to thrive and feel a sense of belonging in the community. Barriers must be identified and addressed for equitable leisure access.



Leisure-based communities keep people connected to their recovery, fulfill leisure needs, and promote physical activity and wellness. Practitioners should take an active role in promoting leisure experience.

In the context of recovery, participation in community recreation can be a:

---

constructive use of free time

---

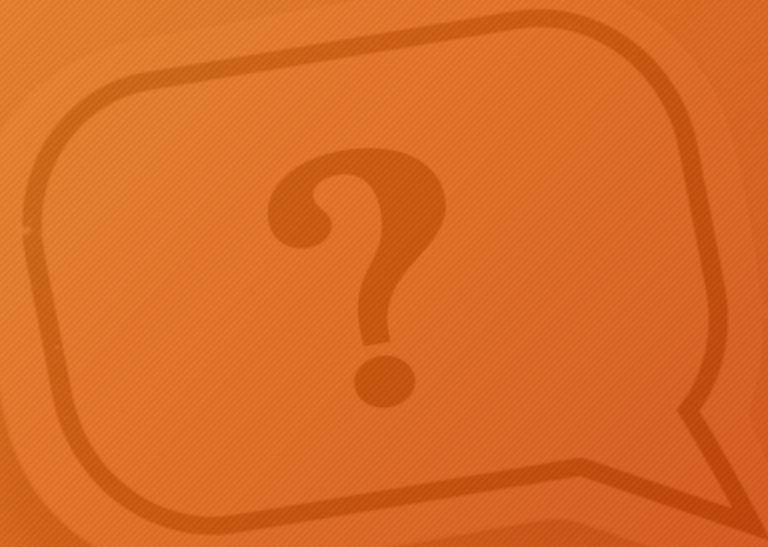
component of a healthy lifestyle

---

part of a new identity beyond one's addiction

---

pathway to forming new relationships



Thank you for listening!

Questions?

Email: [amkieley@mun.ca](mailto:amkieley@mun.ca)

# References

- Abery, B. (2003). Social inclusion through recreation: What's the connection? *Impact*, 16(2).  
<https://publications.lib.umich.edu/impact/16-2/social-inclusion-through-recreation-whats-the-connection>
- Best, D., Irving, J., Collinson, B., Andersson, C., & Edwards, M. (2017). Recovery networks and community connections: Identifying connection needs and community linkage opportunities in early recovery populations. *Alcoholism Treatment Quarterly*, 35(1), 2-15.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/07347324.2016.1256718>
- Canadian Society of Exercise Physiology. (2021). *Canadian 24-hour movement guidelines for adults aged 65 years and older: An integration of physical activity, sedentary behaviour, and sleep*.  
<https://csesguidelines.ca/guidelines/adults-65/>
- Cohen, S. (1977). Alternatives to adolescent drug abuse. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 238(14), 1561-1562.  
<https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.1977.03230150131051>
- Cruz-Ferreira, A., Fernandes, J., Laranjo, L., Bernardo, L. M., & Silva, A. (2011). A systematic review of the effects of pilates method of exercise in healthy people. *Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation*, 92(12), 2071-2081.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apmr.2011.06.012>
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience*. Harper Perennial.
- Faulkner, R. W. (1991). *Therapeutic recreation protocol for treatment of substance addictions*. Venture Publishing.
- Graupensperger, S., Gottschall, J. S., Benson, A. J., Eys, M., Hastings, B., & Evans, M. B. (2019). Perceptions of groupness during fitness classes positively predict recalled perceptions of exertion, enjoyment, and affective valence: An intensive longitudinal investigation. *Sport, Exercise, and Performance Psychology*, 8(3), 290-304. <https://doi.org/10.1037/spy0000157>
- Holland, S. K., Greenberg, J., Tidwell, L., Malone, J., Mullan, J., & Newcomer, R. (2005). Community-based health coaching, exercise, and health service utilization. *Journal of Aging and Health*, 17(6), 697-716.  
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0898264305277959>
- Hurd, A., & Anderson, D. (2010). The park and recreation professional's handbook. *Human Kinetics*.
- Iso-Ahola, S. E., & Crowley, E. D. (1991). Adolescent substance abuse and leisure boredom. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 23(3), 260-271. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00222216.1991.11969857>
- Iso-Ahola, S. E., & Weissinger, E. (1990). Perceptions of boredom in leisure: Conceptualization, reliability and validity of the leisure boredom scale. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 22(1), 1-17.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00222216.1990.11969811>
- Kelly, J. R. (1983). *Leisure identities and interactions* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429025846>
- Khasnabis, C., Heinicke Motsch, K., Achu, K., Al Jubah, K., Brodtkorb, S., Chervin, . . . Lander, T. (2010). Community-based rehabilitation: CBR guidelines. In *WHO Guidelines Approved by the Guidelines Review Committee*. World Health Organization.  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK31092/>
- Kleiber, D. A., Mannell, R. C., & Walker, G. J. (2011). *A Social Psychology of Leisure*. Venture Publishing.  
<https://books.google.ca/books?id=HKT7ewEACAAJ>
- Komatsu, H., Yagasaki, K., Saito, Y., & Oguma, Y. (2017). Regular group exercise contributes to balanced health in older adults in Japan: A qualitative study. *BioMed Central Geriatrics*, 17(1), 190.  
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s13722-017-0584-3>
- Layland, E. K., Hill, B. J., & Nelson, L. J. (2018). Freedom to explore the self: How emerging adults use leisure to develop identity. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 13(1), 78-91.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2017.1374440>
- LeClair, A., Kelly, B. C., Pawson, M., Wells, B. E., & Parsons, J. T. (2015). Motivations for prescription drug misuse among young adults: Considering social and developmental contexts. *Drugs: Education, Prevention and Policy*, 22(3), 208-216.  
<https://doi.org/10.3109/09687637.2015.1030355>
- Patterson, I., & Pegg, S. (1999). Nothing to do: The relationship between 'leisure boredom' and alcohol and drug addiction: Is there a link to youth suicide in rural Australia. *Youth Studies Australia*, 18(2).  
[https://ecys.unimelb.edu.au/assets/pdf\\_file/0010/5693/yua\\_v18n2pp24-29.pdf](https://ecys.unimelb.edu.au/assets/pdf_file/0010/5693/yua_v18n2pp24-29.pdf)
- Simpson, D. S., Crandall, R., Savage, L. J., & Pavia-Krueger, E. (1980). Leisure patterns of opioid addicts : A six-year follow-up of clients. In. Maryland: U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, Alcohol, Drug Abuse, and Mental Health Administration. <https://bit.ly/leisure-patterns-opioid-addicts-us-dept-health-human-services>
- Triplett, N. (1898). The dynamogenic factors in pacemaking and competition. *American Journal of Psychology*, 9(4), 507-533.  
<https://doi.org/10.2307/1412188>
- Veal, A. J. (1992). Definitions of leisure and recreation. *Australian Journal of Leisure and Recreation*, 2(4), 44-48.  
<https://www.csun.edu/~vcrec004/s251/resources/VeaRecDefinitions.pdf>
- Vederhus, J.-K., Høie, M., & Birkeland, B. (2020). One size doesn't fit all: A thematic analysis of interviews with people who have stopped participating in Narcotics Anonymous in Norway. *Addiction Science & Clinical Practice*, 15(1), 18.  
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s13722-020-00191-w>
- Walters, G. D. (1996). Addiction and identity: Exploring the possibility of a relationship. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*, 10(1), 9-17. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0893-164X.10.1.9>