

**The Hong Kong Council of Social Service  
Seminar on Working with Female Substance Abusers :  
Attending to the Gender Difference**

***Emotion Management and Interpersonal Relationship***

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# I. Emotion Management

## (i) What is Emotion?

➤ Emotion is “a strong feeling such as love, fear or anger; the part of a person’s character that consists of feelings” (Oxford, 6th Edition)

➤ Emotion  E-motion   
Energy in motion – 情緒是能量；可以是正面，可以是反面。(李兆康、區祥江，2003)

## (ii) Female lives with emotion

- a. Female values relationship and interpersonal relationship plays an important part in their lives.
- b. Female leads a more dependent life than male, their needs for closeness and nurturance are more obvious. (Bell, Foster & Mash, 2005, pp.46-47).
- c. “How do other people think about me” is the usual concern of female, as a result, other’s reaction towards her would affect her emotions in one or another way.
- d. Chinese culture encourages people to control feelings and emotions rather than to “express” or “letting it out”.



## (ii) Female lives with emotion (cont'd)

- e. Traditional Chinese family teaches girls to behave themselves and to act like a 'girl', their "anger" or "feeling" are supposed to be "suppressed" rather than "expressed".
- f. Females are more involved in other's problems, that would put them in higher risk of being emotional.
- g. Physical development and cycle makes female more prone to emotional disturbances (e.g. puberty, pregnancy)



### (iii) Sources that affect female client's emotion

1. Residual effect of drug abuse
2. Physically sickness during withdrawal
3. Adjustment problems – missing friends and family, group living
4. Self-identity – i.e. body image, appearance
5. Negative self-concept/low self-esteem
6. Personality – introvert, shy, self-centered, weak to express herself
7. Interpersonal relationship – peers, boyfriends, parent-child relationship



(iii) Sources that affect female client's emotion  
(cont'd)

8. Family problems – i.e. family conflicts, parental discord or divorce, single-parent family, stepparent, etc.
9. External stress – i.e. courtship, loan or shark's loan, “false” marriage
10. Sleeping disturbances
11. Suffering from depression or other mood disorders
12. Unable to function effectively – i.e. participations in training courses, stress in learning new things



(iii) Sources that affect female client's emotion  
(cont'd)

13. Stressful life events – e.g. illness or death of significant others or friends, un-wed pregnancy
14. Sickness/Complaints of pains
15. Negative feelings
  - feelings of inadequacy/unlovable
  - guilt feelings towards friends and family
16. Problems on diet
17. Past traumatic experience, i.e. different forms of abuse
18. Adverse family experience – e.g. punitive parents



## (iv) Attitude in Handling Emotions

1. It's no shame to have emotions
2. Be honest to your own feelings
3. Listen to your emotions
4. Accept your feelings and emotions
5. Identify the source
6. Treat your emotion nice doesn't mean treating others bad
7. Finding ways to let it out
8. Do something about it



## V. Prerequisites in handling client's emotion

1. Establishing trustful working relationship always comes first.
2. When client is ready .
3. Provide a secure environment and setting whenever possible.
4. Provide an environment with supportive, stable and reliable relationships
5. Give room (both physical and psychological) for client to express her emotion.
6. Let client decide where to start and where to end.
7. Be a listener and watchman.
8. Accept client's way in expressing her emotion.



# VI. Tools in Emotion Management

1. Cognitive Restructuring
2. Positive Parenting
3. Problem solving skills
4. Communication skills
5. Improvement in interpersonal relationship
6. Enhance self-understanding – ‘knowing how you feel’
7. Nurture ‘empathetic understanding’ towards others
8. Learning to delay gratification
9. Enhance self-awareness



## (vi) Tools in Emotion Management

10. Sharing with people you trust (e.g. social worker)
11. Counselling groups
12. Ways to let emotion out – sports, music, words (e.g. diary, letter), art work, etc.

The ultimate goal of emotion management is to attain the state that the individual is able to free from its disturbance and to re-decide how to deal with the issue behind.

*Unless one is aware and is willing to be responsible for one's own emotion, otherwise, one is not going to be able to manage it.*



# II. Interpersonal Relationship

## (i) Common Characteristics observed in female drug abusers:

- Self-centered
- Impulsive
- Anti-social
- Low self-esteem
- Lazy
- Irresponsible
- Escape from reality
- Sensation Seeking
- Immature
- Seek for immediate gratification
- Lacking sense of security
- Strong emotional attachment . . .

(ii) Usual problems female clients encountered in interpersonal relationship

- Short-term relationship
- Conflict relationship with family
- Weak communication/little communication in relationships
- Interpersonal vulnerability – e.g. rejection sensitivity and fear of abandonment (Bell, Foster & Mash, 2005, p.47).
- Weak self-identity - easily influence by peers
- Unstable relationship
- “Multi-intimate” relationship



(ii) Usual problems female clients encountered in interpersonal relationship (cont'd)

- Sense of helplessness and powerlessness in relationship
- Low sense of security
- Display of manipulation
- Play a victim role
- Play a self-blaming role



### (iii) Tools/Concerns in handling client's interpersonal relationship

- Community Living
  - Sectional Job Positions
  - Hierarchical Structure
  - Responsible Concern towards others
  - Emphasis on self-responsibility
  - Encounter groups
  - Training in Transactional Analysis
  - Develop self-identity
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### (iii) Tools/Concerns in handling client's interpersonal relationship (cont'd)

- Training in communication skills
  - Recognition and coercion
  - Group dynamic, support and pressure
  - Role modeling
  - To set the platform for communication, feeling expression and feedback between members in specialized groups, morning meeting and evaluation meeting to deal with here-and-now relationship problems, etc.
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### (iii) Tools/Concerns in handling client's interpersonal relationship (cont'd)

- To help client set realistic expectation and boundary on different kind of interpersonal relationship.
- To help client identify her own role and responsibility in each concerned relationship.
- To help client aware what she's going to get or lose in the relationship and to evaluate whether she is able to pay the price.
- To help client aware that there's no free lunch, and she has to give and to pay effort in whatever relationship she's involved.



# III. Conclusion

*Emotion management and interpersonal relationship are essential areas that need to be cultivated with continued attention, courage and effort in the process of growth.*

Wisdom to share - “God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference.” (Serenity Prayer)



# References:

1. Oxford Advanced Learner's English-Chinese Dictionary (6th edition) (2004). Hong Kong: Oxford University Press (China) Ltd.
2. Debora J. Bell, Sharon L. Foster, and Eric J. Mash (Ed.). (2005). Handbook of Behavioral and Emotional Problems in Girls (pp.34-59). New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.
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