

ADDICTION...
is a treatable, chronic medical disease involving complex interactions among brain circuits, genetics, the environment, and an individual's life experiences.

People with addiction use substances or engage in behaviors that become compulsive and often continue despite harmful consequences.

*Adopted by the ASAM Board of Directors
September 15, 2019*

Defining Addiction

People have been trying to come up with a good definition of addiction for a long time. The above definition was adopted by the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) in 2019 and many people feel that this definition seems to work for a variety of reasons. Review and discuss this definition of addiction below and share your personal thoughts and experiences

For each aspect of this ASAM definition of addiction listed below, answer the two following process questions as a group. Everyone is invited to participate and give their opinion however try to be open minded and flexible in this discussion to avoid arguing. Rather share and discuss these points to increase awareness and share views:

1. Do you agree? (Why or why not?)

- a. For example, in the first item "Addiction is treatable" – Do you agree and believe that addiction is a treatable condition? Why do you feel as you do?

2. How does this apply in your personal situation and experience?

- a. For instance, in the first item "Addiction is treatable" someone may say answer this question in this way, for example: *"I think that addiction is treatable because I am living proof as treatment has helped me a great deal. I believe that I definitely have been really improving my life since I entered treatment..."*



Discuss the following aspects of the “Definition of Addiction” below by answering the two discussion questions for each item – Items for discussion are underlined

1. Do you agree or disagree (Why or why not)?
2. Did this apply in your personal situation and if so, how?

- Addiction is treatable: Treatable, adj. - “Able to be healed”
- Addiction is chronic: Chronic, adj. – “Persistent or long lasting (Not acute)”
- Addiction is a medical disease: Disease, adj – A disorder or harmful condition in a living thing
- Addiction is complex: Complex, adj. – Not simple; complicated
 - Addiction involves interaction between several factors:
 - Brain circuits – Addiction affects and impacts the “wiring of our brain” including decision making and overall mental health
 - Genetics – There are hereditary factors in addiction as we can inherit addictive traits
 - The Environment – Our surroundings in life can impact the likelihood of addiction as well as recovery. The world around us can have an impact on the processes of addiction and recovery. Where we live and whom we live with and associate with play a role.
 - Individual Life Experiences – What we live through and go through in life, both good and bad can impact addiction and recovery. Trauma can be a potentially harmful factor while positive experiences, supports and opportunities can be protective factors which enhance recovery
- People with addiction:
 - Use substances – What was your use like?
 - Engage in compulsive behaviors – Compulsive, adj.- Driven by obsession – How did this apply to you?
 - Continue despite harmful consequences – Consequences, n. – Outcomes of negative behaviors - what kinds of consequences did you experience and for how long did you keep using?

Closing questions:

What are you going to take away from this discussion? What stood out the most to you?

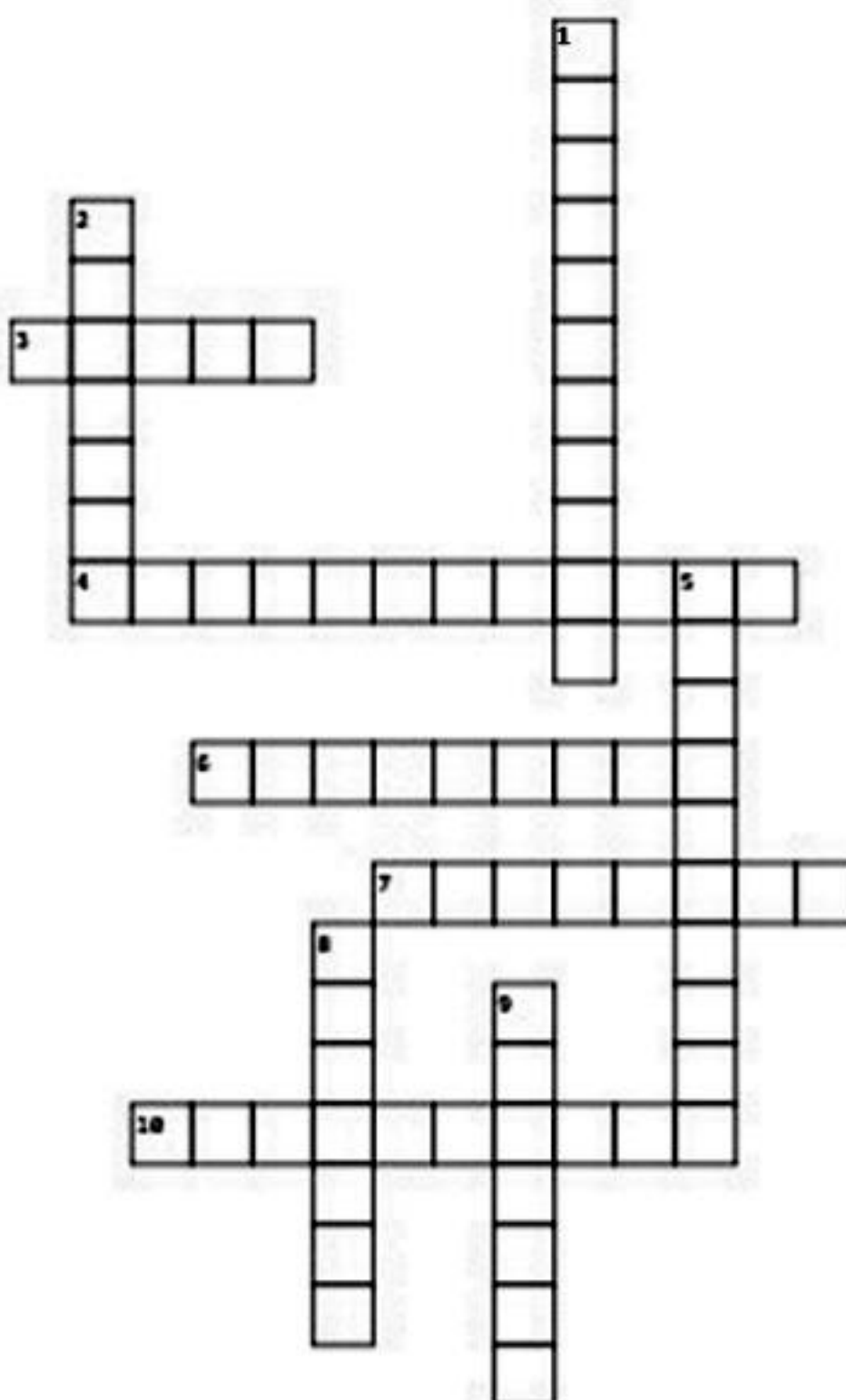
How can some of the things you discussed today help to motivate you to make positive changes in your life?



OPTIONAL EXERCISE – Defining Addition Crossword

Many of the addiction related terms used in this worksheet have been uploaded into a crossword puzzle which can be accessed online using the following link - <https://crosswordlabs.com/view/defining-addiction>

Or to do this in person with a pen or pencil, here is a copy of the same crossword puzzle below. Clues are on the following page and answers on the last page.





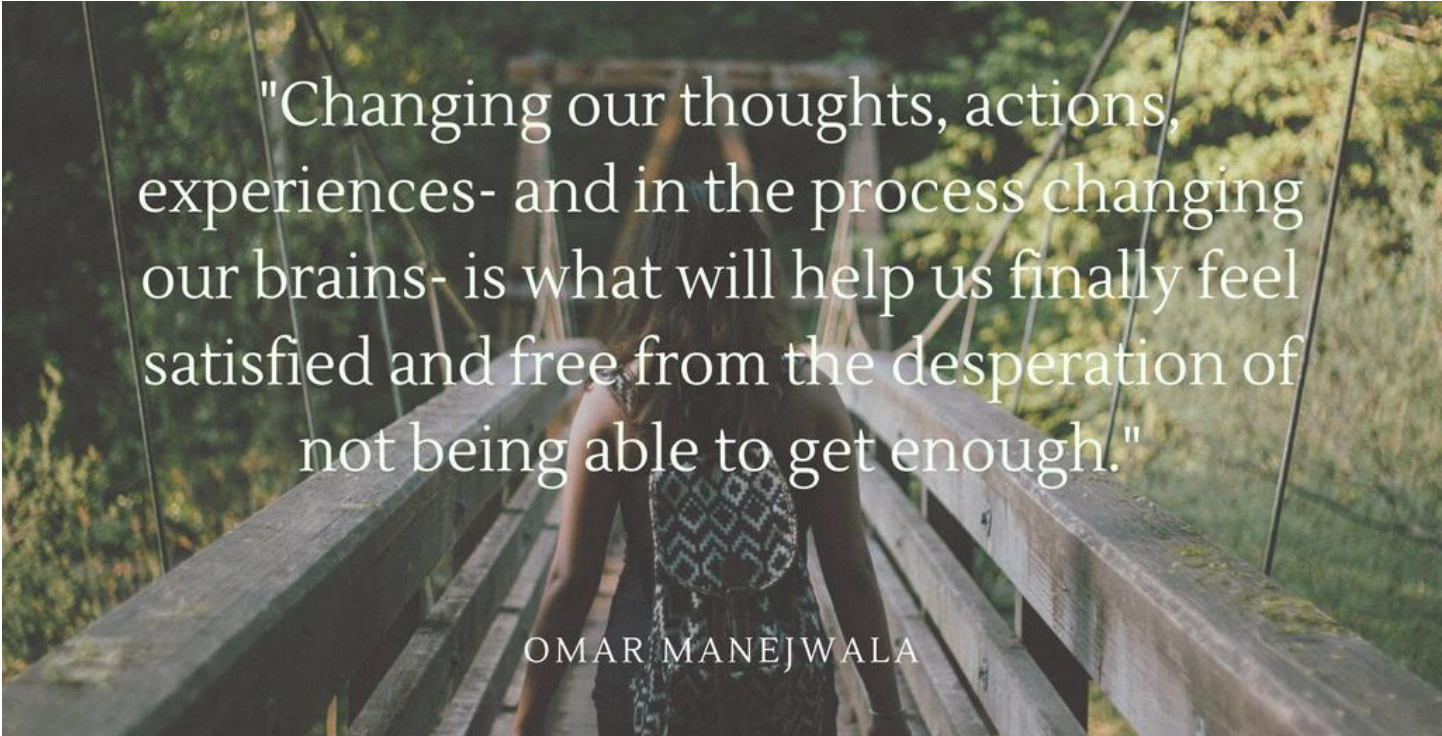
Defining Addiction Crossword Clues:

Across

3. Organ for thought and intellect
4. Outcomes of negative behaviors
6. Able to be healed
7. The study of heredity
10. Describes a behavior driven by obsession

Down

1. Surroundings, the world around us
2. Persistent or long-lasting (not acute)
5. Knowledge and wisdom gained from life
8. Complicated, not simple
9. A disorder or harmful condition an organism



"Changing our thoughts, actions, experiences- and in the process changing our brains- is what will help us finally feel satisfied and free from the desperation of not being able to get enough."

OMAR MANEJWALA



Crossword Answers:

