

Let's Talk: Music for recovery

Presenter: Ken Ferguson, Clinical Counselor

Hi everybody. My name's Ken. Let's talk a little bit about music in the role of your recovery.

Movie soundtracks are an important part of the feelings about movies, right? So like, for example, in Jaws or The Godfather, those are really iconic songs but they evoke lots of feeling in us. So there are many passages in our lives that have soundtracks too.

Soundtracks include, you know, songs that produce feelings, they produce thoughts and memories from a time in our lives. So, for example, the prom, your wedding, you know, relationships that you have, the songs that you play. My favorite song with whomever and you notice that feelings are attached to those events through music. So it can be fun to remember how that music was a part of life back then. Infomercials, for example, sell those recorded anthologies of songs and they rely on this process when they play little snippets of those songs and they try to get us to remember back, remember when.

Most people who become addicted also say that there's a soundtrack to the time in which they developed and became invested in their addiction. So addiction in lots of ways is really about feelings that you don't like and you wanna numb 'em up a little bit so let's start using some drugs or alcohol or gambling or whatever the addiction is. Music is about feelings too and songs that feed the feelings we try to enhance with the addiction become the soundtrack. So it's been said that the right music, with the right music you can either forget everything or you can remember everything. And when addicts work to leave their addiction behind the addiction soundtrack can serve as a way for urges and cravings to draw you back into the addiction.

The difference between feelings and thoughts

So let's talk about the difference between feelings and thoughts. You need to learn the difference between the two of them. In our country alone, the United States, for example, people try to pass off thoughts as feelings. They'll say things like well I kinda feel like that should cost less. Well that's not a feeling. It's a thought. It's a nice thought but it's not a feeling. Feelings are in your body. Happy, mad, glad, sad, angry, hunger, tired. Those are all feelings. They're in your body. And knowing when feelings are in your body and what they are can be an important part to understanding the kind of things that you wanna numb up.

How music can help

So let's talk about the effects of music. You know, when you hear music, you feel the beat. You know, it's not enough to know that you wanna dance. But what's the feeling underneath it? You know? And so when you have a time in your recovery and you start to hear some music that soothes you, you know, it speaks to the feelings that have been un-numbed, you know, by giving up the addiction. So you wanna let the music soothe the uncomfortable feelings. The goal of music is to manage and stabilize your urges and cravings. They're a very natural part of recovery. But they're gonna come up. Good feelings associated with new music can counteract the feelings that could lead to a relapse.

Manage your feelings with music

So in recovery the job is to try to manage your feelings differently and music is one tool that you can use to help manage those feelings differently. Using music as a way to soothe yourself, to allow yourself to have some new feelings, it can guard against complacency which is a key risk factor in relapse. So I wanna encourage you to stay the course, to try and stay present to your feelings and if music can help you do that it's a good tool to use. Thanks for talking.

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