

Recovery By the Numbers

Addiction & the Integral Model

Young people do drugs for a number of reasons. Some are related to their own inner challenges, some are related to the messages they get from the culture we live in, others are related to the messages that they get from significant others in their lives, and last but not least, the environment that they live in can be a contributing factor. It can often be complicated unraveling the interaction of influences that send a young person down the path of abusing substances but the four quadrant model used in integral coaching models can help provide both understanding and directions for supporting the youngster's path to sobriety. This is particularly helpful for parents and coaches.

The four quadrants provide lenses through which we can understand these influences. Each quadrant represents a different aspect of an individual's life and when looked at in total provides a holographic picture of that person's life. The model I'm using here is borrowed from James Flaherty's work.

Quadrant I represents our inner life. That is what cannot be seen when looking at someone. This includes our beliefs, dreams, visions, feelings, attitudes and beliefs. These are all things that we can infer from behavior but can only be known by asking the individual. Some of us are tortured by a severe inner critic while others view the world as a bountiful place that brings peace and joy.

Quadrant II reflects our public life as observed through our behavior. Do we exercise? What is our diet like? Do we drink too much coffee, smoke cigarettes, sleep enough? Do we understand wellness. Are drugs a part of how we deal with inner life?

Quadrant III looks at our social life and our culture. Who do we interact with? Where do we get support? What relationships are good or bad for us? This is our life with others and within the culture in which we live. Flaherty describes this as

the world of shared interpretation within communities or relationships. Here we come to develop a view of the role of the addict and addiction in our society.

Quadrant IV takes a look at the environment in which we live. Do we have a comfortable peaceful home? Do we spend hours upon hours on the internet? Does our schedule provide for down time and time to enjoy the beauty and peace that nature provides? Do I have to travel a lot? Is there a balance between external tasks and demands and nurturing?

The more balanced we are across all of the quadrants the healthier we can be. When there is a great deal of imbalance in one area we may see evidence in our health, in our relationships, and in our personal satisfaction in our lives. Looking carefully at the quadrants we can begin to get a sense of what we can add to or take out of our lives to regain our balance. We also get a sense of what might lead to and/or support one's choice to drink or do drugs.

In a future article I'll take a deeper look at Quadrant I in relation to substance abuse.

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"Supporting and guiding families from crisis to a renewed hope and of a healthy family and a happy and whole child free from addiction"