

Trace Taylor

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Wendy P. Guastafarro

INTRODUCTION

In the United States, 23.5 million persons aged 12 or older are in need of treatment for an illicit drug or alcohol abuse problem (SAMHSA, 2011); 65% of people in prison or jail meet the medical criteria for an alcohol or drug use disorder, yet only 11% receive any treatment (CASA, 2010).

Drug courts:

- Developed as an integrated community-based program of judicial supervision and community treatment
- There are more than 2,600 drug courts in the United States serving more than 120,000 people (NADCP, 2012)
- Work with nonviolent offenders, charges range from possession to forgery to shoplifting
- We know very little about what happens to the individuals who go through a drug court program, especially from their own perspective

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES & METHODS

- Describe how drug court participants view and experience recovery
- Use inductive methods to explore conceptual themes about recovery and the rehabilitative experience in drug court
- Conduct five focus groups with 40 drug court participants discussing their views and understanding of the recovery process
- Create photographic portrayals of each recovery theme that portrays the ambiguity, depth and complexity of the experience
- Provide a different lens with which to view the effectiveness of drug court

UNMANAGEABILITY



Addiction is a powerful disease that is an unrelenting, permanent drive. It is selfish. It affects relationships with friends, families, and communities. Often the ones closest to the addict are left hurting the most. Because of these devastating factors and the incredible association between crime and addiction, drug court programs are becoming more prevalent in the criminal justice system.

“My life was two questions: How much do I have and how long will it last me?”

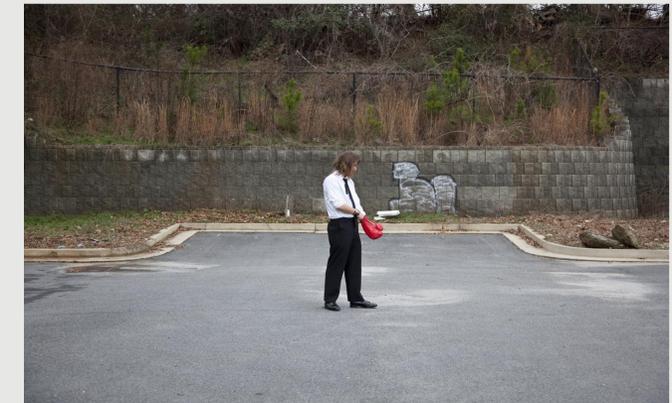
SURRENDER



This transitional phase of recovery is arguably the most important, and at the same time, the most difficult. It can be challenging because these are uncharted waters, so there must be a great level of trust involved to accompany the fear. Here, the drug court can provide a healthy foundation for participants to build upon until treatment gets traction. This is ultimately where the work begins.

“The first thing that I had to learn was that, in here, surrender was not a bad word.”

RELAPSE



Relapse is a commonly misunderstood part of recovery because it is not just a physical phenomenon. Instead, a relapse begins with a mental lapse that can be triggered by a host of environmental factors that may or may not be predictable. Drug courts respond to this by introducing replacement thought strategies that are used to counter potential risk behaviors that may jeopardize sobriety.

“Anyone can relapse, addiction knows no bounds. You can have fifty years clean and that doesn’t make you immune from relapsing. I have a little bit over a year and I know that at any point in time I can relapse and you have to keep that in check.”

ACCOUNTABILITY



As human beings, it is hard for us to admit guilt or wrongdoing and it is often difficult to accept responsibility for our own mistakes. The easy thing to do is to shift the blame, and point the finger in the other direction so we can avoid the truth. This alleviates nothing. There comes a time where we have to focus on ourselves and take responsibility for our own actions. Drug courts emphasize the values of responsibility, honesty and accountability.

“Learning to love myself and love someone else and let someone love me, for a change. For a change.”

PURPOSE



Just as addiction bears the responsibility of destroying, drug courts bear the responsibility of restoring. There is a graduation ceremony for each individual once all program requirements are met. Participants receive a diploma yet this is where the real test begins. Participants leave the structure and security that drug court provides and the individual is given a chance to use all the tools that he or she has learned.

“Everybody in drug court believes in me and I’ve never had nobody believe in me before. That’s one of the reasons why I’m going to graduate from this program. When I was on the streets, I didn’t have nobody believe in me, not even my own family.”

Listen to the participants talk about recovery by using your Smartphone to scan the Quick Response Code.



You can also view the photos and listen to drug court participants talk about each recovery theme by visiting *The Discovery Project* at www.tracetaylor.com