Behavioral Couples Therapy (BCT) for Alcoholism and Drug Abuse

**TARGET AUDIENCE**

This program is for couples in outpatient alcohol or drug abuse treatment.

**SUMMARY**

Behavioral Couples Therapy (BCT) for Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, a community-based substance abuse treatment program, is designed to strengthen a couple's relationship and encourage substance use avoidance using communication and relationship reinforcement skills.

**EVIDENCE**

Evaluations of this program suggest that, compared to participants in individual therapy, BCT for Alcoholism and Drug Abuse participants experienced a larger reduction in substance use and greater improvements in their relationship quality, including less partner abuse. Participants' children also experienced better behavioral and emotional outcomes. The duration of effects was less clear. While child outcomes and partner abuse outcomes persisted for at least 1 year, relationship outcomes faded after 6 to 9 months. Substance use outcomes lasted 6 months or more depending on the type of substance use.

**COMPONENTS**

This program intends to reduce or eliminate conflict in the home, enhance relationships, encourage substance use abstinence, and prevent participant relapse. Components for the BCT for Alcoholism and Drug Abuse program include the following:

- Recovery/sobriety contract - Centers on open couple communication, positive affirmation, treatment medications, and an agreement to nondisclosure about past substance abuse.
- Activities and homework - Emphasizes communication skills and supportive relationship skills.
- Relapse prevention - Focuses on developing a plan to help guard against relapse.

A typical session includes the following:

- The therapist inquires about substance use since the previous meeting;
- The couple discusses their compliance with the contract, examines their homework assignment, and considers troubling relationship issues they have encountered since the previous meeting; and
- The therapist covers new information and assigns homework.

Situations that provoke conflict should be discussed in therapy sessions.

**PREVIOUS USE**

Since its inception, the BCT for Alcoholism and Drug Abuse program has been used throughout the United States and Canada in outpatient substance abuse treatment programs.

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**TRAINING**

Training is not required but is available. Master's level therapists can complete a 2-day, in-person training. Please contact the program developer for more information.

**CONSIDERATIONS**

Considerations for implementing this program include obtaining funds to cover program and training costs, recruiting and retaining participants, and locating therapists who can devote their time to the program throughout its implementation.

It should be noted that the lead author in the articles used for this placement was arrested for fraud related to his research; however, the researcher died before the case could go to trial.

The Clearinghouse can help address these considerations. Please call 1-877-382-9185 or email Clearinghouse@psu.edu

**IMPLEMENTATION**

If you are interested in implementing the BCT for Alcoholism and Drug Abuse program, the Clearinghouse is interested in helping you! Please call 1-877-382-9185 or email Clearinghouse@psu.edu

**TIME**

This program includes 15 to 20 1-hour sessions implemented over 5 to 6 months.

**COST**

According to a 1997 cost effectiveness study, the average cost per couple for the program is $1,400, which includes therapist salaries, the workbook, and clinical services.

**EVALUATION PLAN**

To move the BCT for Alcoholism and Drug Abuse program to the Effective category on the Clearinghouse Continuum of Evidence at least one evaluation should be performed demonstrating positive effects lasting at least two years from the beginning of the program or at least one year from program completion. This study must be conducted independently of the program developer.

The Clearinghouse can help you develop an evaluation plan to ensure the program components are meeting your goals. Please call 1-877-382-9185 or email Clearinghouse@psu.edu

**CONTACT**

Contact the Clearinghouse with any questions regarding this program.
Phone: 1-877-382-9185 Email: Clearinghouse@psu.edu

You may also contact Dr. Timothy J. O'Farrell by phone 1-508-583-4500 EXT 63493 or email timothy_ofarrell@hms.harvard.edu

**SOURCE**