

Addiction Treatment and Relapse Prevention through Commitment to Body Oriented Self Soothing (BOSS)

The **BOSS** method developed by Arturo C. Andrade MA, MPH and Penelope Young Andrade LCSW

Executive Summary: "Feel good now/hurt later" is the hallmark of the addiction process. (Gorski 1989) When addicts seek out mood altering substances for stress reduction and pleasure; we believe they are, unknowingly, half way to the solution. The problem is in looking for pleasure in all the wrong places. Our research project, **Body Oriented Self Soothing or BOSS**, channels this healthy impulse away from unhealthy outlets and toward the instinctual soothing mechanisms the human organism offers.

Current addiction treatment, research and literature has under explored the myriad resources body oriented approaches offer for non drug relief of emotional pain, trauma, and stress. Most people in general and addicts in particular haven't learned that emotions are part of a charge/discharge cycle designed to balance hormones, blood pressure, fluid levels in tissues and bring the body back to a state of 'streaming' pleasure and pulsation typically in two -- twenty minutes. (Boyesen 1969, Boadella 1987, Young Andrade 1992.) There is a similar lack of understanding of the body's natural restorative laws for coping with the agitation and immobilization associated with trauma and post traumatic stress. (Levine 1997).

BOSS concentrates on using a short term (8 week), small group format with an ingenious learning aid, **Oral Focus™** to instruct addicts how to respect their impulses for pleasure by discovering and making a commitment to using the body's natural self soothing abilities. **BOSS** teaches addicts how to reconnect with the body's ever present drive for restoration; giving them a coping strategy to manage that 'feel good now' demand without 'hurting later'.

What is novel about the **BOSS** approach? We are liberating addicts' impulses to seek relief and pleasure from the shame of their addictions. We are shifting the focus of attention of treatment away from the psychology of stress events (the stories we tell ourselves about what's happening) to the physiology of stress events (what is actually happening in our neuro-biology moment by moment). While the psychology of trauma and wounding may be never ending loop tapes of misery (imagine the movie, "Leaving Las Vegas", on endless replay), the physiology of trauma and wounding includes the drive to recover, restore, heal (more like the "Rocky" series).

Teaching addicts how to use and commit to the body's natural highs with no side effects will provide 'right here, right now' resources for dealing with stress and significantly increase motivation for sobriety. Why?

One reason is that a major factor addicts weigh while contemplating quitting addictive behaviors is the "the amount of effort, energy and loss it will cost to overcome the problem." (Prochaska, Di Clemente et al 1992). Showing addicts how reasonably easy it can be to use resources right in their own bodies can diminish the perceived cost factor and increase likelihood of moving toward sobriety .

We also know addicts change in stages, with particular processes more helpful in some stages than others.(Prochaska, Di Clemente et al 1992). The **BOSS** method offers processes for each stage of change: from Increasing Information, to Reframing Problem, to Commitment Enhancing, to Substituting Alternatives to Reinforcement Management, to Helping Relationships, to Dramatic Relief.

Finally, and most importantly, in 35 years of clinical experience with both addict and non-addict populations, we have observed it is axiomatic: when clients are relieved of shame about their basic impulses and discover they have resources within themselves to cope with life; they gravitate naturally toward healthy behaviors. We have seen again and again, when people discover there is a force for healing and health intrinsic in our human design; notions of higher self, living with dignity become real and accessible. It is almost as if discovering this instinctive force for healing opens the door for faith in life/god/spirit again. Energy is freed up for commitment to change.

We are under no illusions that **BOSS** is a magic bullet. Addictive patterns have a devastating, treatment defying grip. Our method adds resources to the arsenal of strategies and skills ultimately needed to achieve sobriety. Although we believe **BOSS** will work well as a stand alone program, we also envision it may increase the effectiveness of **12 Step**, **CENAPS**, or any of the other excellent addiction treatment and recovery programs currently available. In any case, **BOSS** research will increase our understanding of the feasibility of body oriented approaches for addiction treatment and relapse prevention.

Addiction Relapse Prevention through Body Awareness, Oral Anchoring, and Skillful Will