

Abstinence Violation Effect (Ave)

Encyclopedia Article

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Abstinence Violation Effect (Ave)

The abstinence violation effect (AVE) occurs when an individual, having made a personal commitment to abstain from using a substance or to cease engaging in some other unwanted behavior, has an initial lapse whereby the substance or behavior is engaged in at least once. Some individuals may then proceed to uncontrolled use. The AVE occurs when the person attributes the cause of the initial lapse (the first violation of abstinence) to internal, stable, and global factors within (e.g., lack of willpower or the underlying addiction or disease).

In RELAPSE PREVENTION, the aim is to teach people how to minimize the size of the relapse (i.e., to counter the AVE) by directing attention to the more controllable external or situational factors that triggered the lapse (e.g., high-risk situations, coping skills, and outcome expectancies), so that the person can quickly return to the goal of abstinence and not "lose control" of the behavior. Specific intervention strategies include helping the person identify and cope with high-risk situations, eliminating myths regarding a drug's effects, managing lapses, and addressing misperceptions about the relapse process. Other more general strategies include helping the person develop positive addictions and employing stimulus-control and urge-management techniques. Researchers continue to evaluate the AVE and the efficacy of relapse prevention strategies.

See Also

Treatment)

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