Your notes

GCSE Psychology: revision notes

Addiction

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What addiction is

- **Addiction** is a strong desire to take a substance or do an activity, with difficulty controlling it despite harmful consequences.
- Features include **tolerance** (needing more for the same effect), **withdrawal** symptoms when stopping, cravings, and neglecting other activities.
- Substance misuse is using drugs or alcohol in a harmful way; **addiction** is when it becomes a dependence.

Explanations

- Biological: genetic vulnerability. Kaij's twin study of alcohol abuse found a higher **concordance rate** in identical (MZ) twins than in non-identical (DZ) twins, suggesting genes play a part.
- Psychological: **peer influence**. People may start using substances to fit in, copying friends (social learning), especially in adolescence.
- The diathesis-stress idea suggests a genetic vulnerability plus environmental stress can lead to **addiction**.

Treatments

- **Aversion therapy** pairs the substance with something unpleasant, such as a drug that causes sickness when alcohol is drunk, so the person learns to avoid it.
- Self-management programmes, such as the 12-step programme used by Alcoholics Anonymous, use group support and personal responsibility.
- Evaluation: **aversion therapy** can work in the short term but **relapse** is common; self-help groups give support but rely on commitment.

Key terms

Addiction	A strong urge to take a substance or do an activity, with difficulty controlling it.

Tolerance	Needing more of a substance to get the same effect.
Withdrawal	Unpleasant symptoms when a substance is stopped.
Concordance rate	The percentage of twin pairs who share a characteristic.
Peer influence	The effect of friends and people of the same age on behaviour.
Aversion therapy	Pairing a substance with something unpleasant to stop its use.
Relapse	Returning to the addiction after stopping.

Your notes

Quick questions

Cover the answers and test yourself: remembering is what makes it stick.

1. What is tolerance?
2. What are withdrawal symptoms?
3. What did Kaij's twin study suggest?
4. What is a concordance rate?
5. What is peer influence?
6. How does aversion therapy work?
7. Which group uses a 12-step programme?
8. What is relapse?

Answers

1. Needing more of a substance for the same effect
2. Unpleasant symptoms when a substance is stopped
3. Genes play a part in alcohol abuse
4. The percentage of twin pairs who share a characteristic
5. The effect of friends on behaviour
6. Pairing the substance with something unpleasant
7. Alcoholics Anonymous
8. Returning to the addiction after stopping

What to do next

Practise 10 questions on this topic

Try 4 exam questions, with mark schemes

Read the lesson, one step at a time

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