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Working Title: Adopting a Non-Violent Approach to Addictions, Lessons from Levinas

Abstract:

In this work the author uses the Levinasian definition of violence to articulate harm done in addiction while pointing toward a path of healing. This work examines how not only is addiction itself harmful, but the very treatment offered is often delivered in such a way as to further disrupt, or harm, the client's continuity of self. This further harm stems from an intention to supplant the meaningful orientations lived by the client with those of treatment professionals or organizations with whom the client is entangled. In this context client progress is measured by the degree to which they adhere to these external expectations, and program success is determined by the ability to induce adherence.

It is the author's contention that this approach, based on compliance, is harmful and ineffective for clients who do not already possess the meanings that are offered by treatment programs. It is concluded that in order to best serve clients addiction treatment providers must work toward an approach that takes place within the context of the client, an approach which is inherently non-violent. This stance toward the client calls the professional to focus on working within the context of the client's experience; as opposed to attempting imposition of an external set of meanings that may be discordant with those which shape a client's experience.