

# **Addiction Assessment: A Key Component**

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Southdown offers a comprehensive five-day program of psychological, spiritual and physical assessment. Using an integrative, interdisciplinary approach, the objective is to evaluate an individual's areas of strength as well as conflict, and then to make clear recommendations directed toward continued growth and healing. An important part of the assessment process is the addictions component, which seeks to fully explore the person's lifetime relationship with potentially addictive substances and behaviors.

During a wide-ranging interview with a certified addiction counselor, a number of topics are discussed. The more obvious ones such as alcohol history, prescription drug use, over the counter medications, street drugs and tobacco usage are reviewed. In addition, behaviors such as debt and spending habits, gambling, caffeine usage, eating patterns, work habits and sexuality issues are also explored. The objective is to identify not only the duration or amount of possible substance abuse or harmful behavior, but to clearly ascertain the impact that the substance and/or behaviors are having on the individual's life.

Addiction is often secretive. It can engulf the life of the person, consuming ever-increasing amounts of time directed toward anticipating, planning for, and attaining a 'fix' of the particular substance or behavior. Frequently, a number of what might be seemingly innocuous behaviors provide indicators of a potential problem. For example, being chronically late for assigned tasks, forgetfulness, fabrication of stories, excessive financial concerns or sudden changes from normal behavior, including loss of interest in work or social activities, are all potential warning signs of an addiction problem.

The addictions component of the assessment process, coupled with the psychological, spiritual and physical dimensions of the week, reflect the assessment team's focus on the inter-connected aspects of health. The goal is to promote personal insight that can foster change and, ultimately, to provide individuals with the help and resources they may require, enabling them to engage in ministry more effectively.