Symptom-Focused Model: Linear, symptom-focused, behavior-focused.

BIRTH

Substance Use starts
(*'The Problem'*)

Active Addiction

Treatment

SHAME › DEFECT DRIVEN › TREATMENT › RELAPSE › TREATMENT › RELAPSE

Treatment Fails
Early Death

DEATH

Sobriety over **Growth**

Life of Recovery
('Once an addict, always an addict.')
Recovery defined by binary status:
'Sober' or **'Relapsed.'**

This is what's taught in most systems. But it leaves out the roots , and the real path to healing.

Standard Treatment Lens:
- Abstinence only
- Behaviour control
- Willpower / relapse prevention
- Moral inventory / character defects
- Faith reliance
- Peer accountability

Trauma-Specific Model: Root-cause focused, holistic, person-centered

Healing = addressing roots + rebuilding self
- Trauma therapies (ART, IFS, Somatic, EMDR)
- Nervous system regulation (breathwork, grounding, body tools)
- Identity repair (values, self-efficacy, purpose)
- Connection & relationships (attachment repair, safe bonds)
- Spirituality & meaning (belonging, integration)

Critical window
Sensitive stages shape regulation and trust

Identity Adaptations
False self, shame, schemas, distorted beliefs

BIRTH

Adversity / Toxic Stress
ACEs, abuse, neglect, toxic stress

Substance Use (as Coping)
Temporary regulation of unbearable states

Active Addiction
Predictable outcome of unresolved trauma & dysregulation

Treatment

RELAPSE & EARLY DEATH LESS LIKELY › GROWTH › TREATMENT › RELAPSE › GROWTH › RELAPSE

Integration, post-traumatic growth, lifelong adaptation

DEATH

Life of Growth
Recovery defined by healing, connection, purpose, and growth, **not just sobriety.**

Treatment Fails
Early Death

Birth / Early Development
Genetics, in-utero environment, early attachment — supported by DOHaD research (Developmental Origins of Health & Disease).

Trauma-Informed Treatment Lens:
- Integration over Abstinence.
- Safety over Behaviour Control.
- Compassion over Willpower.
- Values over Moral Inventory.
- Holistic Focus over Faith Reliance.
- Connection over Peer Accountability.

Improved outcomes:
Integrated trauma-focused care **reduces relapse risk** and improves long-term sobriety.
(Hien et al., 2015; Han et al., 2021)

This is what's missing in most systems. Addressing the roots opens the real path to healing.

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