



Editorial

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Role of Textiles in Combating Addiction



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Editorial

Textiles and the textile industry play a specialized, rehabilitation-focused role in combating addiction, primarily by offering vocational training, fostering creative expression, and promoting social reintegration. While they do not directly treat the chemical dependency, they provide essential structural support for recovery. Key roles of textiles in this context include

Vocational Training and Skill Development

Programs like the “Blixtjobb” (Flash Jobs) in Sweden, in collaboration with Stadsmision, utilize tailor shops as part of a “work-first” approach. Individuals recovering from addiction, such as those transitioning from street life, are trained in sewing and garment repair, providing them with a routine and marketable skills.

Social Integration and Rehabilitation

The process of repairing or transforming clothing (e.g., in “Remake” workshops) helps individuals build self-esteem and re-engage with society, reducing the isolation that often fuels addiction.

Therapeutic Creative Expression

Textile art and crafts can serve as a form of creative therapy, offering a constructive outlet for emotions and aiding in the development of new, healthy habits.

Economic Rehabilitation

Textile recycling and upcycling initiatives create jobs, offering individuals a path toward financial independence and reducing

the likelihood of relapsing due to poverty. These initiatives are often part of broader, community-based, or non-profit programs designed to support rehabilitation through structure, purpose, and skill-building. Textiles play a unique, multifaceted role in combating addiction, ranging from therapeutic expression and vocational rehabilitation to sensory regulation and addressing basic humanitarian needs.

Therapeutic Expression and Art Therapy

a) Narrative Storytelling: Textiles serve as a graphic medium for individuals to “tell their stories” and process trauma, which is often a root cause of substance use disorders.

b) Story Cloths: Community-based creation of “story cloths” provides a sense of connection with others and an opportunity to cope with traumatic events in a safe, non-verbal environment.

c) Neurobiological Stimulation: The sensory-based experience of textile art can stimulate the release of neurotransmitters like dopamine and acetylcholine, providing “natural rewards” that can help compete with the chemical rewards of drug use.

Vocational Rehabilitation and Skill Building

I. Economic Empowerment: Programs like “Remake” in Sweden train individuals recovering from addiction in tailoring and garment rework, transforming donated items into high-fashion products.

II. Structured Employment: These “flash jobs” provide immediate, low-barrier employment that helps individuals transition from homelessness and drug abuse to stable housing and professional roles.

III. Self-Confidence: Learning craft skills such as sewing and design builds self-efficacy, which is a critical factor in long-term prevention and recovery.

Sensory Regulation and Grounding

a. Tactile Stimulation: The physical properties of textiles—texture, weight, and warmth—provide sensory grounding that can help regulate emotions and reduce the frustration often experienced during withdrawal.

b. Mindfulness: The repetitive nature of textile crafts (like knitting or weaving) can induce a meditative state, assisting in impulse control and stress management.

Addressing Social and Humanitarian Needs

a) Social Stability: Meeting basic needs, including providing clean and adequate clothing, is a prerequisite for successful healthcare access and recovery, particularly for vulnerable populations like women who use drugs.

b) Symbolic Responsibility: The fashion industry is increasingly called upon to exercise social responsibility, ensuring that designs do not inadvertently glamorize drug culture while also supporting rehabilitative initiatives.



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