

YOUR INALIENABLE RIGHT TO DECIDE

(The ideas for this article were heavily borrowed and paraphrased from the blog of therapist Confessions of A Banshee. I rewrote some of it but all author credit and copyright belongs to her. I thought it was an important article and wanted to share her ideas here. To read her very interesting blog go to confessionsofabanshee.com)

It is no secret that mental health and AODA therapy is a tough profession. Therapists are overworked, overstressed and sometimes underappreciated. Social workers are graceful absorbers of spite and voluntary experiencers of traumatic stories and events. Social workers are keepers of burdens and secrets, withholders of assumptions and judgements, and givers of hope and care. Among therapists' core values is that of an individual's rights and needs of clients to be free to make their own choices and decisions. If you are a social worker, then you know what self-determination is and have since your post secondary school days. Therapists recognize the fundamental importance of self-determination for every human being. They do not discriminate. Everyone breathing has the right to make their own choices.

A person who has committed a heinous crime, abused a child, taken their own or another's life

or otherwise made a decision that conflicts with widely accepted values has the complete, utter and unarguable right to do so. If a therapist does not believe this, they could not do their job. They do not agree with and probably hate some of their client's decisions but they know that person has free will and the right to make those decisions. Understanding this is part of helping the people who have been victimized by another's negative decisions.

The only exception to this rule are individuals who are not capable of making their own decisions such as newborns, severely developmental disabled people, people in comas, etc.

In mental health and AODA treatment, we talk about self-determination all the time. We talk about why it is important, the fact that it exists despite illness or disability, how it supports recovery, how policies impact it, how we can support and encourage it, and how we can help implement it.

However, there is no doubt it is still very difficult to watch our clients, fellow human beings with whom we have bonded and for whom we care, make choices that cause them harm. We try to meet people where they are. We work hard to accept, respect and support their, right to choose, to self-determine. Yet at the end of the day, the belief in a person's right

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to self-determine does not make it any easier to watch that person drink or drug them self to death, stay in a dangerous relationship, or live vulnerably on the streets.

It is grueling to know people may make choices that will ultimately result in injury, death, or otherwise impactful consequences. Sometimes, being a therapist/social worker/counselor feels heavy, is exhausting, or leads to self-doubt about their ability to do good. Therapists try to think about their work as the act of showing up and genuinely engaging. They work hard to believe they make a difference, even in the lives of people who are self-determined to self-destruct. It is this knowledge that keeps them going and helps them to be the caring, non-judging, and supportive person you meet when you make that big decision to seek help.

When you decide to begin therapy at Affiliated Clinical Services, Inc., you can be confident the therapist will do their best to help you challenge yourself to make the best decisions and changes. You can also be confident they will recognize your right to decide what those changes should be. Their work is designed to support your self-determination and show you a variety of methods to achieve the goals YOU decide are right for you.