

# The Biology of Reward and Deficiency

The biology of reward has been well-studied and is linked to numerous mental health diagnoses. Researchers identified an anomaly in this reward cascade called Reward Deficiency Syndrome or RDS. This anomaly and its impact on psychotherapy are less evident in psychological literature, yet it provides useful knowledge in one of the most prevalent and challenging of all mental health disorders...addiction. This seminar will help you understand the cascade theory of reward and provide you with working knowledge of RDS. You will be able to talk about how RDS affects the brain, what research has found regarding the impact of RDS, as well as discuss a model of therapy that considers highly this biological aspect of mental illness. The focus of this seminar is biopsychological and psychopharmacological in nature.

## Target Audience

Psychologist      Social Workers      Counselors  
Teachers      Therapists      Case Managers  
Marriage and Family Therapists      Nurses  
This seminar is for intermediate to advanced level clinicians

## Learning Objectives

At the end of this seminar, participants will be able to:

1. Name the four neurotransmitters and brain regions thought to play a significant role in the cascade theory of reward.
2. Name the primary neurotransmitter of reward and describe the two main variants of it.
3. Define/Explain Reward Deficiency Syndrome (RDS).
4. Name three disorders that associated with RDS.
5. Describe a model to enhance psychotherapy with addiction and other disorders in which the frontal lobe of brain is affected.

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# Outline

## Begin 4:30 PM ET

Introductions and Housekeeping  
Review of Neuroanatomy/Neurobiology  
What's Addiction  
Cascade Theory of Reward and Deficiency  
Break 6-6:15 PM ET  
Disorders Associated with RDS  
What's Attachment  
Treatment and Psychotherapy  
Wrap-Up/Review

## End 7:45 PM ET

### The Presenter

Dr. Sarah Shevchuk, Psy.D., earned her doctorate in clinical psychology from the Georgia School of Professional Psychology in 2011. With specialized training in the treatment of serious and persistent mental illness from the Cleveland VA Medical Center, Dr. Shevchuk has provided psychological services throughout New York State, including in state prisons, psychiatric hospitals, and within the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). She has held several pivotal roles, including Residential Crisis Treatment Program Coordinator, Psychological Evaluation Coordinator, and Inpatient Clinical Coordinator. For the past five years, Dr. Shevchuk has concentrated on integrative mental health care, particularly within Primary Care Mental Health Integration. She has also held various academic appointments throughout her career. Dr. Shevchuk has chaired numerous committees dedicated to mental health environments of care, program evaluation, and process improvement, drawing on her Lean Six Sigma Yellow and Green Belt certifications. She has been actively involved in the national deployment of evidence-based psychotherapies within the Department of Veterans Affairs. Additionally, Dr. Shevchuk has served as a major rotation preceptor and assessment supervisor for an APA-accredited predoctoral psychology internship program. Identifying as a generalist, Dr. Shevchuk is largely informed by cognitive-behavioral therapy and acceptance and commitment therapy. She emphasizes care that is recovery-oriented, patient-centered, and inclusive of holistic health and wellness. Early in her career, Dr. Shevchuk conducted research in biological sciences and neuroscience, focusing on the impact of psychoactive substances on brain cells involved in pain pathways. Outside of her professional life, Dr. Shevchuk enjoys spending time with her family during what she humorously refers to as her "Hockey-Soccer-Dance-Cheer-Basketball-Lacrosse and Gymnastics Mom Era." Despite her Ukrainian surname, she proudly identifies as an American of Italian descent, and her neighborhood delights in her Sunday suppers.



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This seminar has been reviewed and approved by Keith Hannan, Ph.D., Phil Rich, LICSW, Daphne Fatter, Ph.D., and Loreen Yearick, MSN, RN. This approval expires on March 1, 2025.

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