

# Review of: "A Unified Theory of Addiction"

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I appreciate the intent of this paper to develop a general theory of addiction and the hope that it could lead to more effective treatments. I agree that there are similarities between behavioral addictions like gambling, overeating, and substance abuse, though I believe this paper overemphasizes the similarities at the expense of the unique properties of substance use in terms of the effects of these substances themselves on neural systems supporting addiction. The fundamental mechanism described in the paper is displacement behavior due to stress, equating actions like nervous fidgeting with indulging in addictions. It is certainly the case that stress can potentiate addictive behavior, although it does not seem correct that all addictions arise from stress initially. The paper also describes the importance of cues in eliciting addictive behaviors, but I thought this was underdeveloped. While the author suggests that eliminating stressful conditions can eliminate addiction, as in the example of heroin addiction among soldiers in Vietnam, it also seems like a context shift in general may be more important than simply eliminating stressors. The paper discusses the possibility of training a different displacement behavior in treating addictions- this may be a promising strategy, but a substantial literature in associative learning seems to be missing. This, I am not sure this paper adds much to what is currently known.