



## Is addiction a choice? New perspectives on substance use disorder

*Featuring  
Arlene Stanich-Prince,  
Ohloff Recovery Programs*

### ***This time on Code WACK!***

**What are some of the most common misconceptions about people who are addicted to substances like opioids? *What medicines are revolutionizing the way people are being treated today - and how accessible are they?***

To find out, we spoke to **Arlene Stanich-Prince**, executive director of [Ohloff Recovery Programs](#) in San Francisco, one of the longest standing treatment programs in the area. This is the first of two episodes with Stanich-Prince.

# SHOW NOTES

## WE DISCUSS

*Tell us a bit about yourself. Can you share your own experience and recovery from substance use disorder?*

"I have 32 years of the recovery journey myself, and 22 years of consecutive abstinence so recovery is not linear. You know, I'm from the generation where we did not talk about addiction. We did not talk about treatment. And being one, a female and a mother of three small children, when I realized I needed help beyond just stopping and [I] couldn't stop on my own, there was a big stigma about taking the mom out of the house and going to treatment. And that was 32 years ago.

And after five years I relapsed and went back into treatment. It was not as easy the second time. And it took me about another three years before treatment itself, I think, had changed a lot...

And here I am today, 22 years later, I never imagined ... *working in this field was not my path*. I was a ballerina. I had a dance school, I was a mom, I was a wife, artist, all these things. – **Stanich-Prince**

*Today you're the executive director of Ohlhoff Recovery Programs, one of the longest standing treatment programs in the San Francisco Bay Area. Based on your experience, why do people become addicted?*

"There's a lot of factors. You know, it could be the environment, it could be genetics, it could be mental health disorders, even stress. It doesn't mean that experimenting with drugs, everyone's gonna become addicted.

Obviously the alcohol or the substance works in the beginning. It does something. It has a purpose.

“Some of it could be peer pressure ... It's something that's just, you know, been taught or around, you know, the family. You see it in the family. Curiosity - it may be even prescribed. Some medications are prescribed.

“And what it does is it affects the brain's, you know, reward circuit. It floods it with dopamine and so the pleasure is what, maybe it gives people confidence, maybe it just calms you down.

And so it has a purpose in the beginning, unfortunately, what happens is you become dependent, the tolerance that you build. Some people are trying to capture that first time.

“But the disturbing part is when people wanna say that it's a choice. I think ... nobody wants to be addicted. Nobody wants to be in the place where they feel like - in order to just feel normal or to be able to function - they need a substance.” – *Stanich-Prince*

### *What treatment trends are you noticing?*

“It used to be that you could not be prescribed certain medications like buprenorphine, (an ingredient in) Suboxone, unless you were in a residential program or certain doctors, you know, have to be able to prescribe them. It was very hush hush. It wasn't that well known. ... I did not realize that it was just gonna explode. Right now it's available at outpatient level of care. You can go see a doctor and, and continue to live at home and go to work, and nobody knows that you're getting treatment for opioids, which is great. This is good. And with that comes education. It somewhat normalizes it, which helps with the stigma. And that would be called **Medication Assisted Treatment** or MAT, and that's huge. ...

Benzos [Benzodiazepines] such as Librium and Gabapentin are huge ... so that people do not have to suffer as much. Back in the day, someone coming in to treatment on heroin, it (was) gnarly. It's a horrible detox. They're extremely ill. And many addicts at that point would just leave. They would give up.

“And so I think it's wonderful to come in, have them, you know, there's a little bit of discomfort, but there's also a lot of hope with this medication that you're able to take it. And it really helps, not only with the cravings and, and, and the horrible, you know, physical withdrawal. And the thing is, what people don't understand is that buprenorphine is an antagonist. It's not an opioid.” – *Stanich-Prince*

## Helpful Links

[Ohlhoff Recovery Programs](#)

[Medications for Substance Use Disorders](#), *Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA]*

[Information about Medications for Opioid Use Disorder \(MOUD\)](#), *U.S. Food and Drug Administration*

[Heroin Withdrawal Symptoms, Timeline & Detox for Heroin](#), *American Addiction Centers*

[Does Insurance Cover Treatment for Opioid Addiction?](#), *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*

[Key Facts about Uninsured Adults with Opioid Use Disorder](#), *Kaiser Family Foundation*

[Insurance Coverage for Medication-Assisted Treatment \(MAT\)](#), *Bicycle Health*

# Episode Transcript

*Read the full [episode transcript](#).*

## Biography: Arlene Stanich-Prince

**Arlene Stanich-Prince, CADC-11-CA, CCAPP** is a Certified Alcohol and Drug Counselor, mental health therapist and clinical supervisor. She has served as **Executive Director, Ohlhoff Recovery Programs**, since 2010.

She has experience as an Addiction Specialist, Addiction Therapist, Admissions Coordinator, Clinical Supervisor, Insurance Specialist, and Ohlhoff Program Director from Detox to Outpatient

Her focus is on Substance Use Disorders, Dual Diagnosis, Drama Therapy, Women in Recovery, Family Intervention, Family & Couples Counseling, and Alumni Aftercare Group.

Highlights of her career include starting the Internship Practicum and the Adolescent Program in SF High Schools; building a freestanding classroom in a Historical District; creating the Ohlhoff Women's Residential Program; and expanding the Steiner Campus to include a new women's long-term residential facility.

Arlene celebrates long term recovery and is very open about her own struggles with addiction and mental health. After 25 years of dancing, she never imagined changing careers and landing at a magical place like Ohlhoff.

Arlene graduated high school at 16 years old with a scholarship to the University of California, Berkeley, where she earned a BA in Dramatic Arts/Dance.

She was a professional dancer with the Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Belgium Ballet, and SF Jazz Company.

She was the owner and Artist Director of Duets Dance Studio and Company, SF, CA, and has served as Instructor, performer and choreographer specializing in *Ballet, Jazz, Tap and Ballroom Dance*. She's been a Guest Choreographer at the Adda Clevenger Theatre School and the SF Conservatory of Music/Opera and Creator with the Sunset District Outreach which offers Free Jazz/Hip-Hop classes to adolescents and young adults

After graduating in CCSF-Drug and Alcohol Studies (with a 4.0 GPA), she transferred from CAADE (CATC-1 & II) to CCAPP (CADC-II); approved CCAPP Clinical Supervisor for practicum students.

She joined Ohlhoff in 2005.

Arlene also holds a First Degree Black Belt in Kenpo Karate and Jujitsu. She lives in San Francisco with her loving husband, Charles Prince. Private time is spent with their amazing adult children and precious grandchildren, Leon, Sawyer, Paz Remington and Ozzy.

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