

Presentation Narrative – Is Addiction a Brain Disease?

Hi Kids! I'm Mr. Happy Crackand ...you know what?
Addiction just ain't what it's **cracked** up to be!

Okay Kids.. Why is it that a prostitute can make more money than a drug dealer?
'Cause she can wash her **crack** off and use it again!!
...but seriously, Go to the next slide...

Addiction is an all-encompassing “disease” of society, culture, sub-cultures, ignorance, violence, abuse, poverty, war, catastrophes, and other pre-addiction causes such as depression or other mental health issues, and the intoxicating substances that, over time, will change brain physiology through neuroplasticity. The neural pathways in the brain become ‘hard-wired” for addiction creating *a machine that powers addiction*. Just as all these things can change and affect a person, the mind is yet flexible and able to change by virtue of the same processes when using the solutions.

I say that addiction is not simply a brain disease. The brain plays an extremely significant part in addiction and may even change to such a point that the addict never recovers, but there can always be a way out and the solutions are there and waiting for a decision and action on the part of the addict.

Definition

Is addiction a disease? **Yes**. Is addiction a “brain disease?” **No**.

Webster's Definition: an impairment of the normal state of the living animal or plant body or one of its parts that interrupts or modifies the performance of the vital functions, is typically manifested by distinguishing signs and symptoms, and is a response to environmental factors (as malnutrition, industrial hazards, or climate), to specific infective agents (as worms, bacteria, or viruses), to inherent defects of the organism (as genetic anomalies), or to combinations of these factors”

Addiction qualifies on these terms, but cannot be narrowly assigned to just one of its manifesting agents such as the brain. That would be like saying “Johnnie's blisters have chickenpox.”

“...addiction itself is an all-encompassing disease involving a variety of interchangeable causes most of which originate from an individual's environment.”

The Brain

“Property Dualism” seems applicable here because the physiological and psychological, though being inseparable and intertwined, are essentially *not* the same thing.

Thought and behavior may be utterly dependent upon the gray matter it originates from, but thoughts, behaviors, and choices cannot be predicted through observation of the gray matter itself. Observing the molecular components from a scrap of air will not enable you to predict which way the wind will blow.

Childhood neglect and abuse, along with catastrophic events like hurricanes, tornados, earthquakes, auto accidents, war, etc. and with other influencing factors such as negative socioeconomic conditions, substance abuse in the family, a dysfunctional family, severe loss such as death of a loved one, or being part of a cultural group with inherent stressors are all things that can predate and set the stage for the onset of addiction. Genetic predispositions have been measurable.

All these things and more can serve to alter brain pathology to create a susceptibility or predisposition to addiction.

Through neuroplasticity changes to neural pathways will have begun and rewards associated with normal life events will begin to be associated with the drug. The addict's brain structure and functionality will change such that use of the drug is equivalent to food, sex, rewarding relationships, earning money from employment, etc.

...the fact that countless addicts make a decision to abstain and seek treatment and with many achieving success for the rest of their lives, cognitive decision making is shown to override and go on to change and alleviate the disorder. The power to make decisions may be severely inhibited in the throes of active substance abuse, but that power yet remains.

Social, health, financial, and other circumstantial consequences are expressed by any given subject as the reasons they have stopped using and sought help.

They hit their "bottom" and they can't take it anymore.

An addict or alcoholic will need a genuine desire for the recovery they seek if they are going to be successful. The hardest part can be in the beginning months when the brain has not yet changed, their situations can be hard to deal with, and they will not yet have the comforts of life that they are seeking.

As time progresses, they will be able to change their lives to a point where the happiness and joy they were seeking with drugs comes from living in recovery.

If addiction is to be successfully treated, open mindedness is not only required from the addict, but also from the medical community along with the community at large. The brain is like addiction's engine giving it the power to manifest in an individual's life. That engine is fueled by influences in the individual's environment as it moves towards ultimate destruction. The opportunity to change course is always there. Active addiction began with a decision and it can end with one.
