



TREATING ADDICITON

Beyond Drugs & Alcohol: The Deeper Roots of Addiction

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Addiction is a huge and growing issue for Americans—just take a look at these statistics:

- The rate of deaths due to drug overdoses more than quadrupled from 1999 to 2017, up to more than 70,000 deaths a year. During that period a total of more than 700,000 Americans died from drug overdoses. Almost half of all these deaths were due to abuse of fentanyl and other synthetic opioids.
- The financial costs of drug abuse and addiction cost close to \$200 billion in healthcare, criminal justice, legal and lost time at work in 2007.
- In addition to the death toll of drugs, another 80,000 Americans die from alcohol-related causes each year.

Why this huge spike in people abusing drugs in recent years? There are many explanations, including increasing financial insecurity, rapid pace of societal and global change and ready availability of powerful synthetic opioid pain-relievers that are highly addictive. The drug crisis is also partially a by-product of injustices in our society as more and more wealth is concentrated in the hands of fewer people. All of these are real and growing challenges.

Just as a skilled acupuncturist looks at both Root and Branch - causative factors and presenting symptoms, so do we need to look deeper to see the underlying reasons for this epidemic. In this article I will present what I believe is the deepest root cause of addiction and drug abuse, one that few people even consider.



Before presenting that view, let's take a look at the roots of acupuncture to create some context.

The Roots of Acupuncture

The illumined sages who originated acupuncture in ancient times meditated on Tao, the experience of one-ness at the heart of the constantly shifting experiences of external life. They developed acupuncture as a method for bringing people back into harmony with Tao, the Way. From that experience they worked with the polarities of Yin-Yang to understand the cycles of the body in relation to the environment so that effective therapeutic treatments could be developed and administered.

In modern times acupuncturists make good use of these systems for helping correct our patient's imbalances, but have often lost focus on Tao itself. We are taught to use our skills to help relieve our patient's pain and disease so they can return to functioning. This is certainly of great value, but is it a fulfillment of the highest potential of our art?

The syllable "hu" in "human" refers to divinity in many traditional languages, and "man" comes from the Sanskrit "manas" which means mind. To fulfill this word human beings are designed to keep our minds connected with the divine, which exists in a state of one-ness. The dark side of our human experience, which is so apparent in today's news, has a lot to do with losing this connection and coming to believe that the dualistic externals of life are our reality. This fall in consciousness is what is behind mythic stories from many cultures, including the story of Adam and Eve eating the apple of the dualistic knowledge of good and evil, thereby being evicted from the one-ness of the Garden of Eden.

As one of my spiritual teachers memorably said, living with duality as our inner state of mind is

torture, but it is a torture that we have gotten used to, so we now believe it to be normal.

Relieve From the Separated Mind

Drugs, alcohol and other addictive experiences often give people temporary reprieves from the torment of the separated mind, with fleeting experiences of the bliss of one-ness. This is particularly true of opioid drugs, which can relieve pain and promote euphoria by flooding the brain with dopamine. Therefore we can compare the craving of an addict for fentanyl or heroin to the motivation meditators have to practice meditation.

The difference is that meditators have to be willing to bravely face themselves and accept feelings of discomfort on the path of knowing themselves while addicts are running from their inner pain and seeking a quick fix. Addicts often have to hit the bottom of their experience before they are willing to starting doing the necessary work of inner healing. It is likely that most meditators and yogis have had their own experiences of that as well.

Acupuncturist Diane Connolly wrote a book called "All Sickness is Homesickness" in the 1980s. Her brilliant title provides great insight into our epidemic of addiction (and so much else). The rapid pace of change in our world on all fronts is challenging us to go within and connect with the stillness and peace of our inner self more than ever. This is the real homecoming that Diane wrote about. Those who rise to the occasion and commit to the often hard work of cleaning up their act physically, mentally and spiritually can experience elevation of consciousness and have new, exciting opportunities to expand their service. Those who don't often fall prey to the false allure of addictive substances and experiences.

Connecting the Mind to Tao

I believe that it is the duty of acupuncturists and holistic practitioners to rise to this occasion and cultivate our ability to keep our minds connected into Tao (other terms for Tao are divine self, true self, I AM Presence and Zero Point). This is not only for our own health and well-being, but also so we can better guide those coming to us to learn how to be on their Way of developing inner connection and self-responsibility.

There are several simple meditative practices I teach to my patients as homework that help them to get in touch with their inner calm center. I also guide many of them in practicing inner connection while they are receiving treatments. These practices include:

- Visualizing being within a pyramid of light while on the treatment table
- The Unified Field meditation - progressively expanding their sense of self to the energy bodies surrounding their physical body
- Zero Point meditation - meditating on the center point of their awareness
- Special breathing techniques such as 7-7-7 breathing

These and similar practices create immediate results in making patients more relaxed and receptive to what they can receive in the sessions. They also empower patients with tools to take charge of their own inner states, so they are less likely to turn to addictive behaviors.

I want to conclude by making it clear that these consciousness practices are not intended to replace the powerful tools already at our disposal for treating addiction such as the NADA auricular protocol. As I have explained in past articles in *Acupuncture Today* there are three levels of clinical methods -

3D (third dimensional - the physical), 4D (4th dimensional - mental/astral) and 5D (5th dimensional - spiritual/one-ness).

Auricular needling is a powerfully effective 3D method, which can positively influence the 4D level at times. It is not a complete solution to addiction. The perspectives and methods offered in this article work on the 4D and 5D levels, and more understanding of those levels is needed to adequately respond to the challenges of our patients and ourselves, and the crises of our planet.

Editor's Note: Readers wishing to access the special meditations referred to in this article can receive them free of charge by writing to Darren at darren@drstarwynn.com, or by requesting information at www.bridgetomastery.com.

Resources

- National Institutes of Health. Overdose Drug Rates. National Institute on Drug Abuse, [2018](#).
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Understanding the Epidemic. Opioid Overdose, [2018](#).
- Emre S. Sound Archetype: Hu. *Renaissance Universal*, [2010](#).

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