



HELP FOR YOU

May / Jun
2023

Overcoming a Loved One's Addiction

'Assumptions re an Addict and Change'

By Rosemary Brown

You may have read in other stories or publications I have written that state when it comes to addicts and change, the 'Common Sense Rule' does not apply. If the only statement you remembered was this one key thing, those who care about an addict would save themselves countless nights of worry and sometimes a myriad of hours trying to figure out why their loved one continues to drink or drug, despite the problems they experience.

Unfortunately, our human brain considers everyone else the same as everyone else and unless there are obvious signs of deficit or injury those on the outside looking in have a filter - if it appears normal then it must be normal and expectations regarding performance are the same.

For those who suffer mental health issues, versus those who suffer physical health issues, there can be noticeable differences in standards, abilities, and coping strategies. When it comes to those in addiction the difference in expected standards is even more evident.

Often families refer to their loved one's abilities and strengths prior to addiction, and they do not understand where these things have gone. Family members can have the expectation that their loved one is capable of logical decision-making processes, problem solving abilities and as I say capable of utilising 'Common Sense'.

I want you to know that this is setting your loved one up for failure. Addiction impacts the Brain. Research confirms that an addict's compulsive use of drugs (or alcohol) is because of the impact drugs has on the brain.

Drugs impact the 'feel good receptors', and increase the level of Dopamine in the brain, and since our brain is trained to seek and repeat things that feel good, an addicts urge to use and cravings for drugs is understandable.

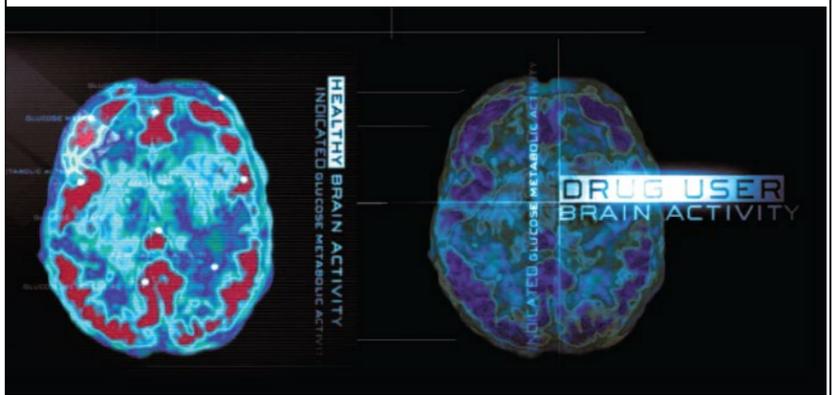
To change these perceptions, we need to go back to the 1930's and the values and beliefs of that time. In the 1930's addicts were regarded as 'morally lacking' and without 'will power', inferring addicts had a 'choice' to use or not and that addicts, as human beings, were 'less than' those who could 'control' their alcohol or drug use.

This led to community judgement and criticism of addicts, and in turn self judgement and criticism of self for an addict. These beliefs and attitudes have continued into society today and are not generally challenged unless you happen to research addiction and the impact of addiction on the brain.

We continue to see society judge addicts; we continue to be challenged by an addict's judgement of self. Even when it comes to addiction services, when addicts relapse back to substance use, the underlying messages are they are 'in denial', or not 'ready to change'.

Maintaining the belief that an addict (your loved one) is 'less than' and has 'choice' around control of their alcohol or drug use sets everyone up for failure. These beliefs impact your relationship with the addict, and they disable your ability to truly understand a pathway forward toward positive change.

"Drug addiction is a brain disease that can be treated."



Nora D. Volkow, M.D.
Director
National Institute on Drug Abuse

NIH Pub No. 14-5605
Printed April 2007
Revised February 2008, August 2010, July 2014

As a society we are encouraged to have Zero Tolerance for Discrimination, Racism, Sexism, & many of the other ism's that are in society today - yet it is still okay to openly judge an Addict & their family!!!

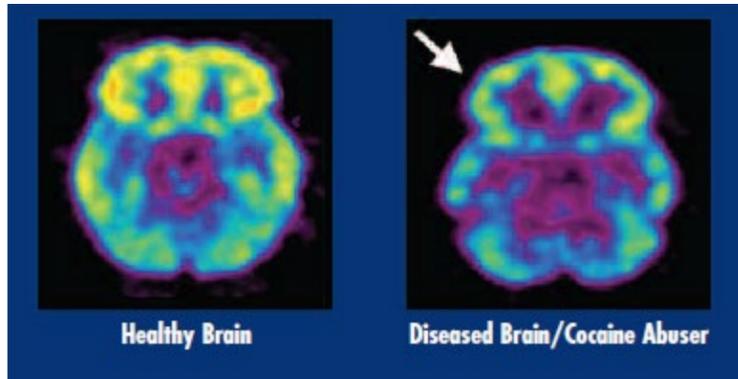
Educating others that Addiction is a brain disease opens the door for greater understanding and less discrimination.

Advocate for changes in community attitudes - so your loved one is not ostracised, judged, and has an opportunity to receive appropriate intervention.



The Science of Addiction

I have chosen to reproduce some simple explanations & understandings regarding drugs and the brain – hoping it will be helpful to read this from an external source, the National Institute on Drug Abuse



How do drugs work in the brain to produce pleasure?

Most drugs of abuse directly or indirectly target the brain’s reward system by flooding the circuit with dopamine. Dopamine is a neurotransmitter present in regions of the brain that regulate movement, emotion, motivation, and feelings of pleasure. When activated at normal levels, this system rewards our natural behaviours.

Overstimulating the system with drugs, however, produces euphoric effects, which strongly reinforce the behaviour of drug use—teaching the user to repeat it.

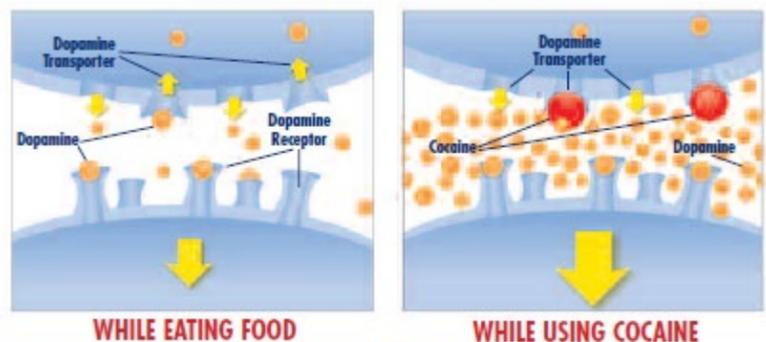
How does stimulation of the brain’s pleasure circuit teach addicts to keep taking drugs?

Our brains are wired to ensure that we will repeat life-sustaining activities by associating those activities with pleasure or reward. Whenever this reward circuit is activated, the brain notes that something important is happening that needs to be remembered and teaches us to do it again and again without thinking about it. Because drugs of abuse stimulate the same circuit, we learn to abuse drugs in the same way.

When some drugs of abuse are taken, they can release 2 to 10 times the amount of dopamine that natural rewards such as eating and sex do. In some cases, this occurs almost immediately (as when drugs are smoked or injected), and the effects can last much longer than those produced by natural rewards.

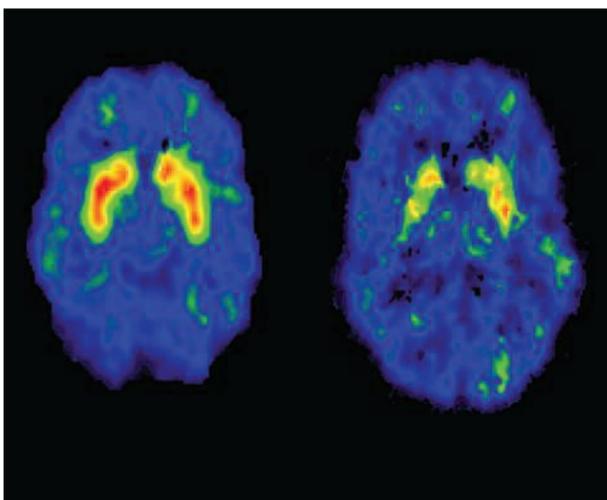
The resulting effects on the brain’s pleasure circuit dwarf those produced by naturally rewarding behaviours. The effect of such a powerful reward strongly motivates people to take drugs again and again.

Drugs of abuse increase dopamine



Typically, dopamine increases in response to natural rewards such as food. When cocaine is taken, dopamine increases are exaggerated, and communication is altered.

Decreased Dopamine Transporters in a Methamphetamine User



What happens to the brain if you keep taking drugs?

For the brain, the difference between normal rewards and drug rewards can be described as the difference between someone whispering into your ear and someone shouting into a microphone.

Just as we turn down the volume on a radio that is too loud, the brain adjusts to the overwhelming surges in dopamine (and other neurotransmitters) by producing less dopamine or by reducing the number of receptors that can receive signals. As a result, dopamine’s impact on the reward circuit of the brain of someone who abuses drugs can become abnormally low, and that person’s ability to experience *any* pleasure is reduced.

This is why a person who abuses drugs eventually feels flat, lifeless, and depressed, and is unable to enjoy things that were previously pleasurable. Now, the person needs to keep taking drugs again and again just to try and bring his or her dopamine function back up to normal – which only makes the problem worse, like a vicious cycle. Also, the person will often need to take larger amounts of the drug to produce the familiar dopamine high—an effect known as tolerance.

KNOWING THIS STUFF – DO YOU UNDERSTAND YOUR LOVED ONE DIFFERENTLY?



Why Do You Think Nothing You Do Works??

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I work with many who want to protect their way of relating to the addict, the old mother / father protective mode, and believing that 'talking to the addict' is going to create change.

What Doesn't Work re Change

I have discussed many times the ineffective results of rehabilitation, yet thousands still put their faith in that system & invest thousands of \$\$\$ to achieve change for their loved one.

Common Mistakes Families Make

'Talking to the Addict' - trying to get them to understand why they need to change and what they need to do, creating unrealistic expectations.

'Focusing on Stopping the Old Behaviours' - for an addict they live the hell of addiction, yet they cannot break the 'Addiction Cycle', this leaves them often feeling powerless over their addiction - and they are. Stop setting them up for failure expecting them to just STOP & STAY STOPPED.

Allowing the Addict to continue to be the Ringmaster - addicts will use power & control tactics to get what they want - manipulation, abuse, threats, coercive control, and family can feel under siege or threat, afraid of their loved one to the point where they believe they are powerless.

Expecting an Addict to Get a Job - working is stressful, and stress triggers the need to feel better, which triggers the brain to drive an addict toward seeking and using alcohol or drugs.

Not Understanding Addiction or Change - when families and family members do not understand addiction there is increased conflict, not just in the relationship with the addict but within the family as well. Addiction tears families apart and leave family members feeling stressed and burnt out.

Having Unrealistic Expectations - sets everyone up for disappointment and failure. Addicts do not generally understand why they do what they do, they struggle and every time they fail, they feel worse about themselves, and family members can feel frustrated, resentful, and disappointed.

Trying to Fix the Addict - you need to be able to figure out whose agenda you are working to, yours or the addicts - needing to 'fix' the addict (rescue) is all about your agenda - especially when the addict does not want change at that time.

What Does Change Take

An important influencer of change is the addict and them wanting a different life, family who are 'well', who are educated re addiction & change are a huge asset to get the addict to this space.

Key Influencers of Positive Change

'The Relationship You Have with the Addict' - An empowering relationship is key to influencing positive change, and to reducing conflict & stress.

'Engaging in Self Care & Healthy Coping Skills' - addicts need to learn how to live life on 'life's terms' without alcohol or drugs in it - role modelling healthy coping strategies, self-awareness and self-responsibility empowers the addict toward a better life.

Stress Leads to Relapse - understanding things that benefit the addict are identification and understanding around triggers and how stress leads to urges & cravings to use. Sometimes it helps just to walk alongside your loved one, no advice or desire to 'fix' them, just 'be' with them.

Change is Personal Growth & Development - Recovery can sometimes hold a stigma, when really to get clean & stay clean an addict is learning new ways to benefit their life.

Engaging in Change Talk - learning Change Talk allows you to spot Windows of Opportunity and to 'Plant Intentional Seeds', that help the addict navigate the Steps toward Positive Change. No one else is there to do this work, especially when an addict believes they don't have a problem.

Knowing & Accepting the Process of Change - change takes time and may take several attempts, little achievements need to be rewarded and when relapse occurs this needs to be treated as an opportunity for learning and growing, rather than a failure.

Knowing self and being honest with self - there are 4 things in personal growth & development - self-awareness, self-reflection, self-acceptance & self-responsibility, these are key to maintaining wellness & good self-care.

Remember - you didn't cause this; you cannot control this, and you cannot cure this!!

Get yourself well first - enroll in the Help for You - Alcohol, Drugs & Change Foundation Course



Help for You - Rosemary Brown

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Connect with Rosemary today

Let's chat about the Help for You - Alcohol, Drugs & Change Foundation Course - take advantage of a free 45 Minute Discovery Call with Rosemary.....

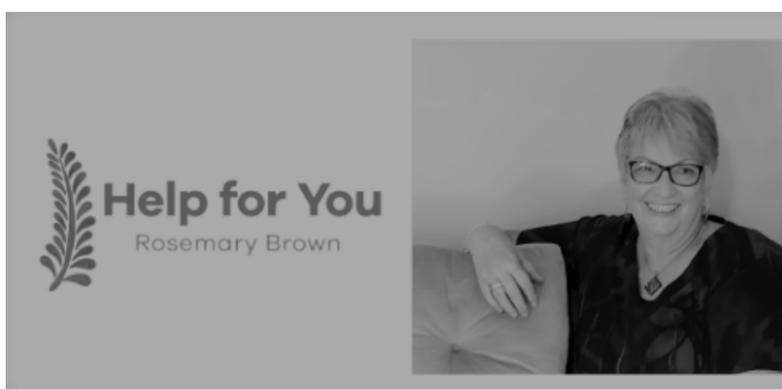
[Click here](#) to book your free time with Rosemary.

Become an effective tool of change in your life - regardless of what your loved one is doing.

If you notice that you are stressed, nearing burnout, have tried everything you can think of, and you recognise your actions in the list of things that don't help - then you need a better way.

Chat with Rosemary to enrol in the Help for You - Alcohol Drugs and Change Foundation Course NOW & work with Rosemary, while learning all you need to learn to experience your own personal growth & development in your journey with your loved one.

Benefit your life too -
[BOOK YOUR FREE CALL HERE](#)



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Afterpay is now available via the website www.helpforyou.com.au - you can now purchase Help for You - Rosemary Brown products & services at no additional costs or interest charges - pay in 4 installments over 6 weeks.

Please Note: During May Rosemary had two significant spinal surgeries - she is planning to be back working 19 June - [appointment spaces will be limited](#)

Rosemary is qualified
Post Graduate Diploma Māori Health
Graduate Certificate in Supervision
Bachelor of Applied Social Sciences (Counselling)

Master Practitioner in Neuro Linguistic Programming
Multiple Brain Coach

ACA Level 4 Registered Counsellor
Previous registration
NZAC Full Membership
DAPAANZ Registered Practitioner