

Addiction: What is it? A Brain Disease or a Social Psychological Misunderstanding?

Richard Wilmot, Ph.D*

Clinical Director/Path to Recovery, College of Alameda, Staff Psychologist/Schuman-Liles Clinic Oakland, San Francisco Bay Area, San Francisco, California, USA

***Corresponding Author:** Richard Wilmot, Ph.D, Clinical Director/Path to Recovery, College of Alameda, Staff Psychologist/Schuman-Liles Clinic Oakland, San Francisco Bay Area, San Francisco, California, USA. E-Mail: dr.docwilmot@gmail.com

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Addiction as a Misunderstanding

There is a growing world view on drug addiction as a brain disease. And 'jest' to prove it, here are a bunch of MRA scans of the brain showing an abnormal dispersion of blood flow. Which one would expect when someone is doing drugs as if prohibition were tomorrow. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DaifOWSKjdA>

But if addiction is a disease it certainly has been around for a long time:

Even before America was founded as a nation, puritans living in the American colonies drank wine and beer rather than water. Water was often contaminated. However, beer and wine drinking was to be done without becoming intoxicated which was disavowed and considered sinful. One Puritan statesman and physician, Dr. Benjamin Rush, was the first to declare distilled spirits (hard liquor) substances that damaged that part of the brain that governs morality. No such specific moral part of the brain has yet to be discovered, but Rush considered antisocial, immoral, and criminal behavior developed from brain damage due to drinking "ardent spirits", and he was the first to describe "alcoholism" in 1785 as an "addictive disease". The disease concept of alcoholism had its origin in historical Puritanism and has been around for that long.

The definition of addiction has three components:

- Compulsion/Obsession;
- Tolerance and
- Withdrawal.

Tolerance occurs when increases in drug dose are necessary to achieve the same psychological effect (which is subjective). And withdrawal occurs when a lack of use produces physiological symptoms. Such as occurs during the spontaneous contractions of the muscles, particularly in the legs with heroin withdrawal, which mimic kicking as in "kicking the heroin habit."

The initial compulsion to use any euphoric drug including alcohol and to continue to obsess about using it and to compulsively use it is what makes addiction a misunderstanding.

Obsession May be something negative when using drugs but it is something positive when using make-up.

September 11, 2017: L'oreal has a two page ad in People Magazine. The ad says: Matte Red Lip Stick is the Richest most Obsessive color and a Matte Addiction is good "because your worth it".

So it appears that some addictions are rewarded if they are culturally congruent. Make-up is a 'good cop' addiction in an otherwise puritan culture.

Most of us do not realize how much our behavior is culturally controlled, and how much our behavior is unconscious and controlled by social institutions.

When I teach: I take all the desk/chairs and pile them in the middle of the room so that when students enter the classroom it looks like a "cluster ph'k of desks".

I say and do nothing but always students disengage the "ph'king" desks and place them: in the usual manner that you would find in any classroom... in rows facing forward toward the blackboard.

When they are all settled, I ask them to write down what they thought, felt, and did when they first saw the desks in a pile...

The point is that these students have unconsciously performed their role as a student by arranging desks as they expected them to be and that the role is in their heads and fulfilled by their behavior.

This exercise demonstrates the power of role behavior... made so powerful as it is unconscious and taken-for-granted. We fulfill our institutionalized roles without thinking about doing so... robotic-ally. The point of this exercise is to make the unconscious conscious.

Applying this unconscious role playing to alcohol/drug addiction we can begin to analyze the role of the drug abuser. I'm user of heroin, I might as well act like a junky, confirmed by others treating her/him as such. The point of DrugCraft is to make unconscious role playing drug use, conscious.

By playing different roles at different times-- unconsciously-- consumer addict vs. the real thing, we can live with such inconsistency: viewing addiction as bad unless it is to a commodity and in particular a BRAND NAME.

The puritan meme of our time is: drugs are bad and should not be taken. So even though there is a harm reduction science for taking drugs: DrugCraft, which deals with sensations, sets and settings, it's not the right meme which sends the 'wrong' message that there is nothing wrong with taking drugs if done correctly. Intoxication in a puritan culture requires coaching i.e. DrugCraft.

Book: <http://www.amazon.com/American-Euphoria-Saying-Drugs-ebook/dp/B0053ZH1PY>

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