

If Addiction Isn't Willful Bad Behavior, What Is It?

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Learning Objectives

Participants will be able to:

Increase their understand of neurobiological factors related to Addiction.

Become familiar with the criteria by which Addiction is defined as a chronic disease.

Be able to verbalize whether addiction is simply a matter of choice.

What is addiction?

If we asked the average person in our neighborhood to describe an “addict” to us, what are some of the things they’d be likely to say?

Question:

Does this describe most of
you or your loved ones?

Addiction is...

A lifestyle related health problem.

Let's look at another example.

Heart disease.

Has a genetic pre-disposition.

Involves choices we make.

-Choices are impacted by social influences.

-Choices are impacted by psychological influences.

When Biology and choices meet, there are predictable outcomes.

Question:

Would most people say they can develop heart disease?

Question:

Would most people say they could develop an addiction?

ADDICTION IS A BRAIN DISEASE

What is a disease anyway?

According to the American Medical Association, a disease must have:

- A cause (may or may not be known)

- Symptoms

- A prognosis

- May have a treatment

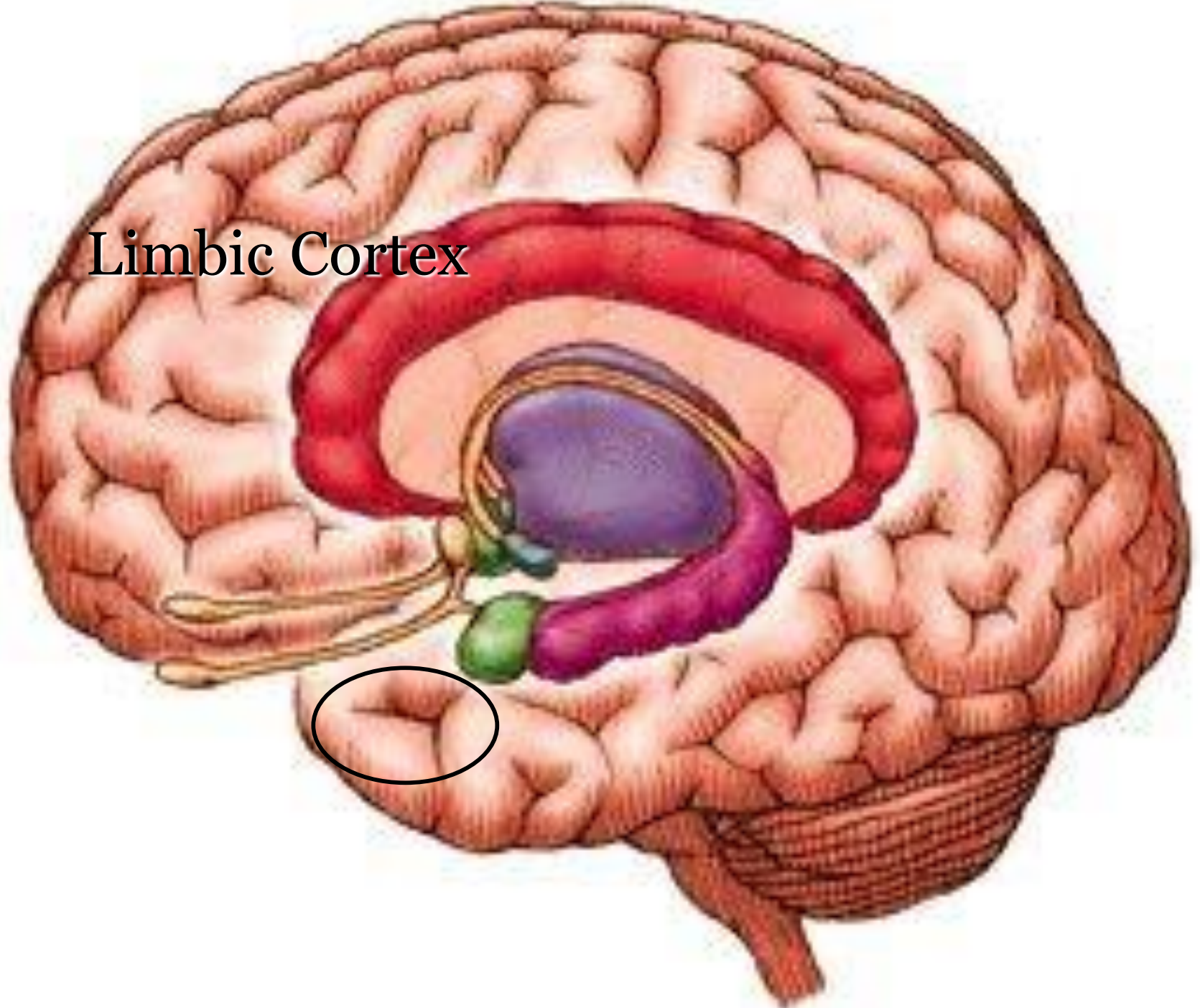
- May be chronic or not?

The Cause

How does this happen?

Nature or Nurture?

Limbic Cortex



How does this work?

(Dr. Susan Holman)

Let's assume that an average person has a dopamine level of 10,

...and they try cocaine.

Their body may read this as a dopamine level of 18 with 10 being natural and 8 being drug-induced.

The body want to get back to “normal”; so it backs off on its dopamine level to 8.

Oh-oh.

Now without the drug the “normal” level of 10 isn’t there! We’re at an 8!

THIS IS A CRAVING!

So...

The person either uses or doesn't.

If the person does not use, eventually their natural level will usually return to 10.

If they use the same amount, however, it brings the level back up to sixteen.

Questions...

Is it still higher than the natural high?

Is the high as good as before?

What is the body likely to do to its natural level of dopamine?

So what happens over time?

10	8	6	4	2	0	0	0
8	8	8	8	6	4	2	<u>1</u>
18	16	14	12	8	4	2	1

Question: Why don't they just quit?

Is your biology now working for you or against you?

Isn't it just a question of willpower?

Krispy Kremes

Drowned or murdered?

When the Line is crossed

NON ADDICT

ADDICT

Non User

Experimenter

User

“Abuser”



Drug = Drug

Drug = Survival

Vulnerabilities for Addiction

Genetic

Developmental/Emotional

Psychiatric Co-Morbidity

Chronic Pain

Stress

Early Physical or Sexual Abuse

Witnessing Violence

Drug Used

Route of Administration

Dose

Frequency

Length of Use

Availability

Acceptability (peers who use)

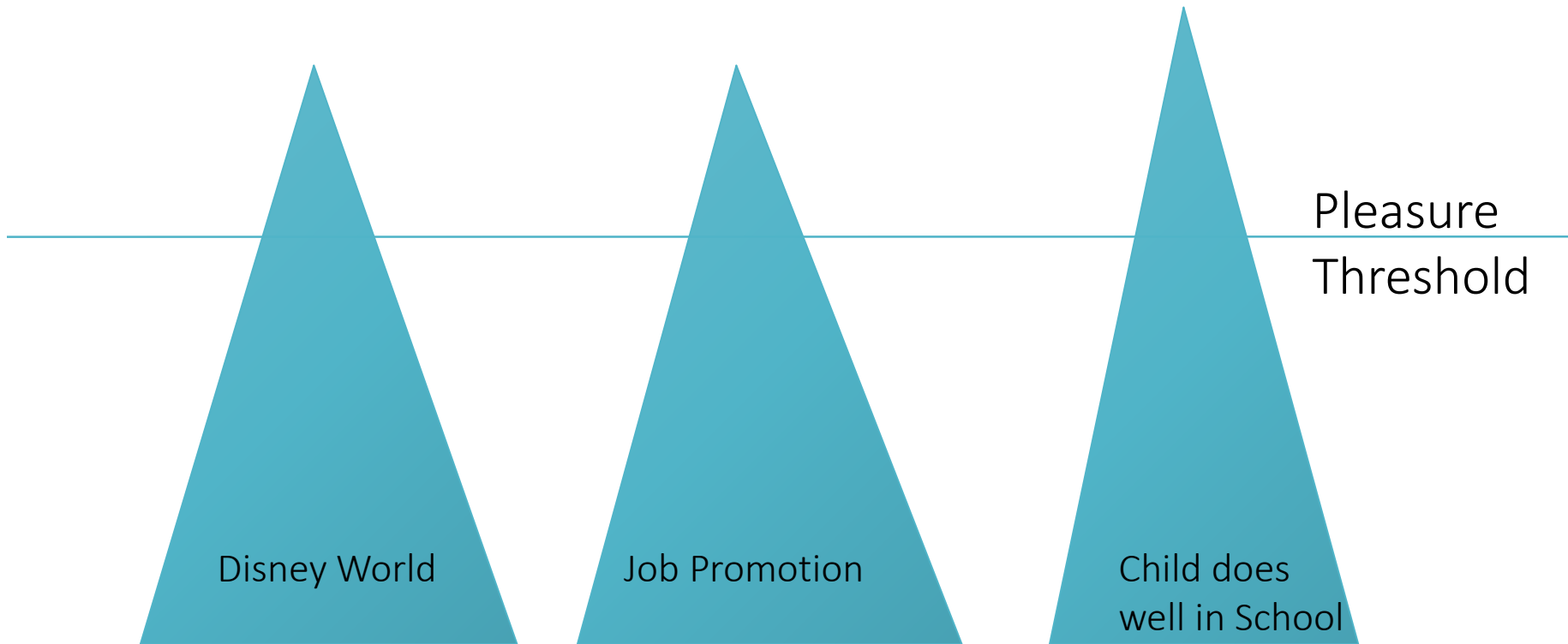
What pushes someone over the
line is

STRESS!

Chronic stress

Chronic levels of Stress Hormones cause a defect in the Limbic System of the Brain (production of dopamine). This defect affects the brains ability to properly perceive Pleasure

Pleasure Threshold



Stress Induced Defect

Pleasure
Threshold

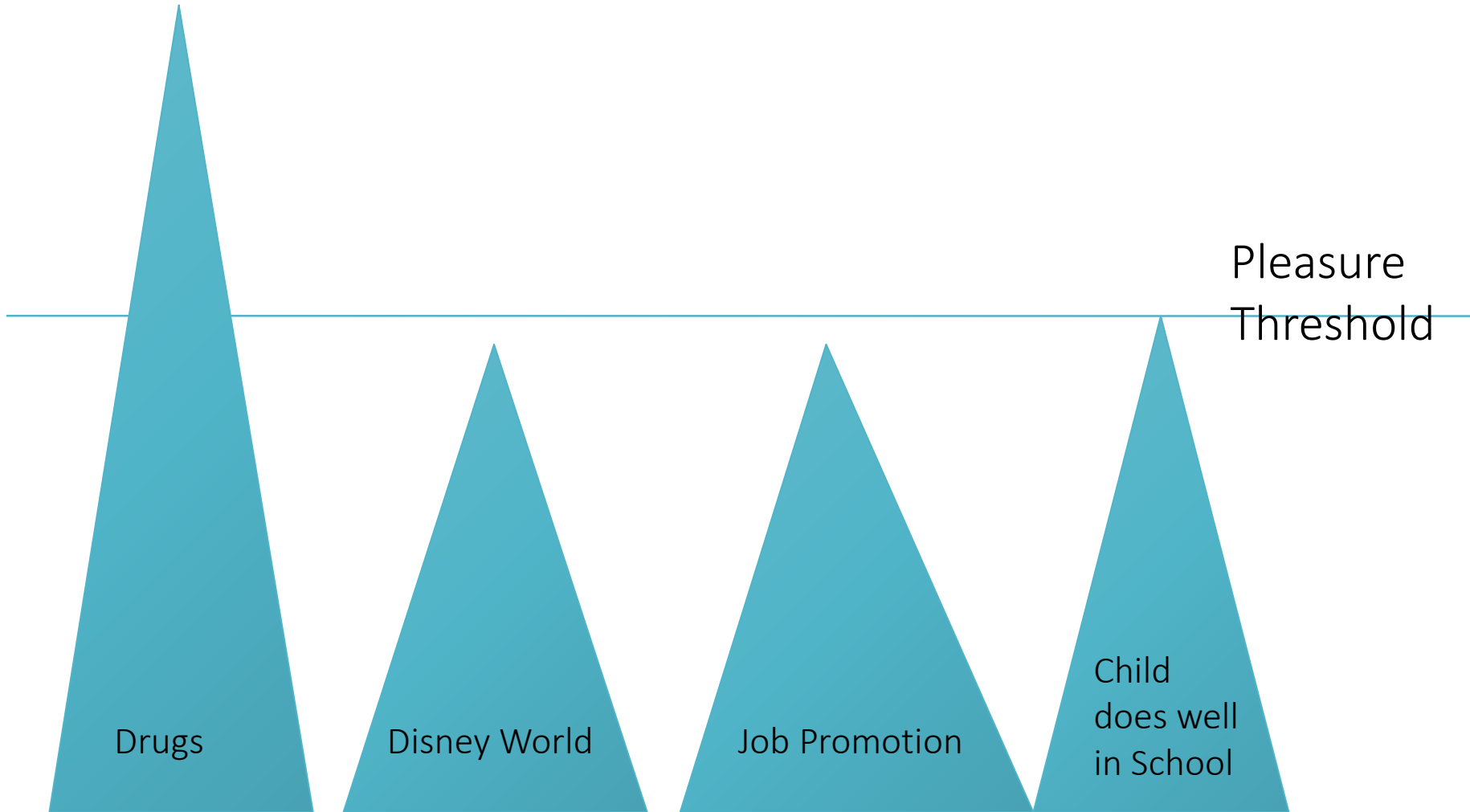


Disney World

Job Promotion

Child does
well in School

Add in Drugs



Stress = Craving

Failure to account for “Craving” is one reason why the “Choice” theory breaks down.

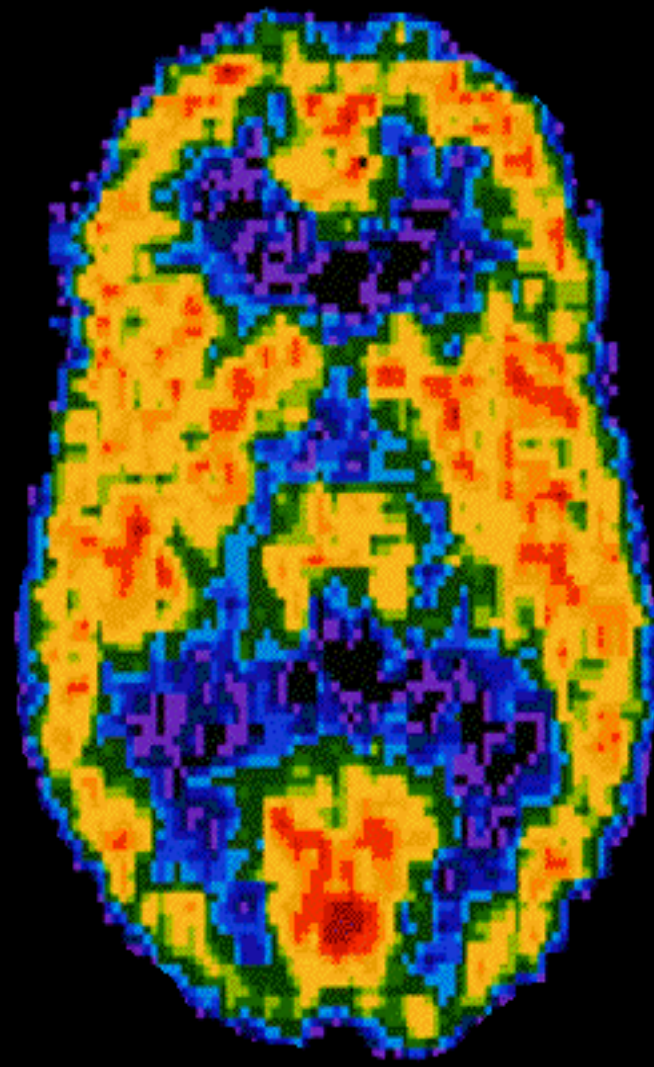
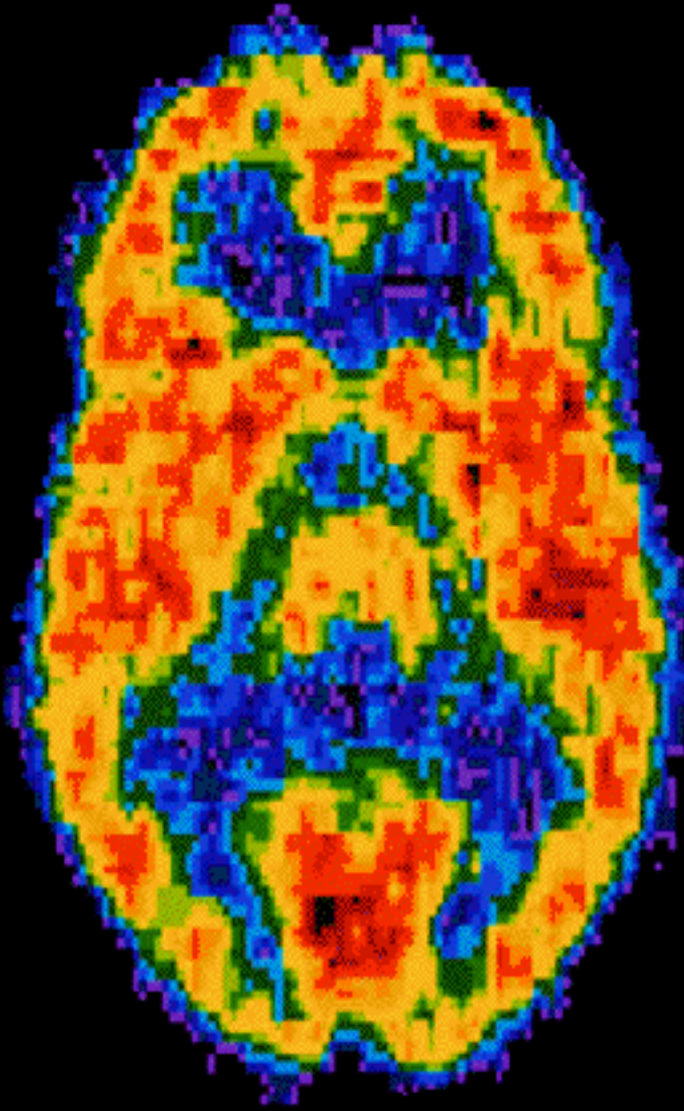
People with addiction can't “choose” not to Crave.

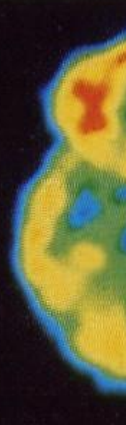
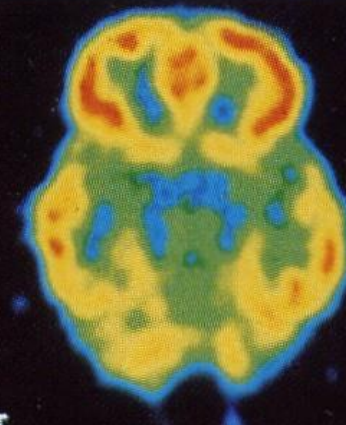
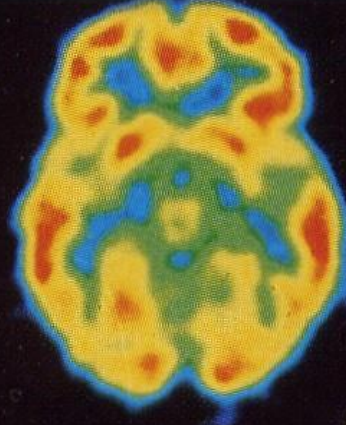
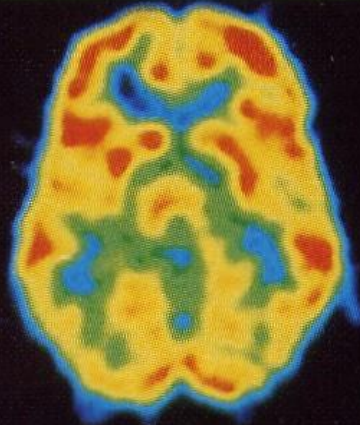
Choice only measures addiction by external behaviors.

It ignores the suffering of the patient.

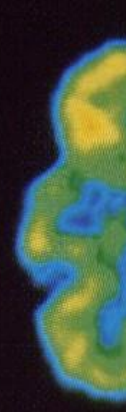
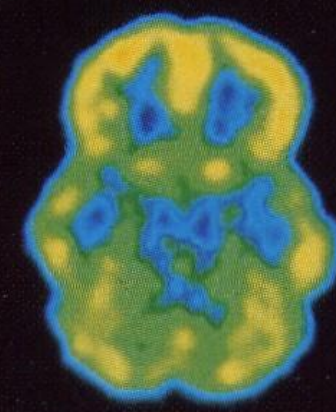
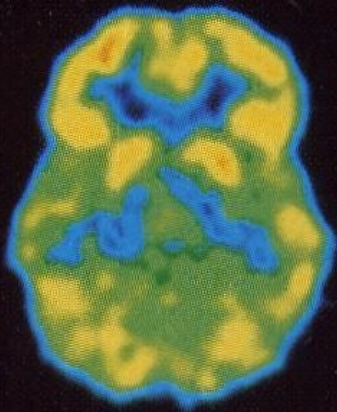
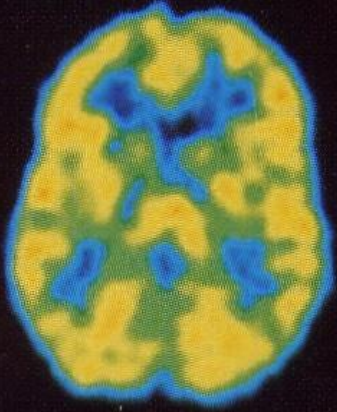
And there's more to the story...

on cocaine

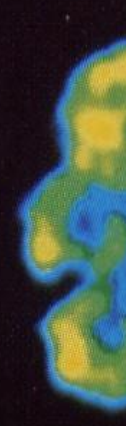
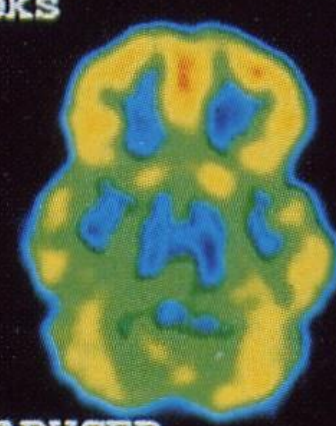
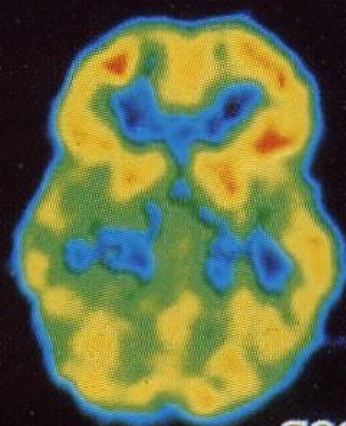
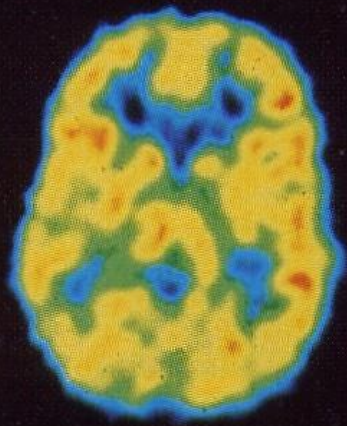




NORMAL



COCAINE ABUSER
2 weeks



COCAINE ABUSER
4 months

Addiction Is.....

A dysregulation of the midbrain dopamine (salience/ reward) system due to unmanaged stress resulting in symptoms of decreased functioning.

Specifically:

1. Loss of control
2. Craving
3. Persistent drug use despite negative consequences

What is “addiction”?

Addiction is a primary chronic disease of brain reward, motivation, memory and related circuitry. Dysfunction in these circuits leads to characteristic biological, psychological, social and spiritual manifestations. This is reflected in an individual pathologically pursuing reward and/or relief by substance use and other behavior.

Addiction is characterized by inability to consistently abstain, impairment in behavioral control, craving, diminished recognition of significant problems with one’s behaviors and interpersonal relationships and a dysfunctional emotional response. Like other chronic diseases, addiction often involves cycles of relapse and remission. Without treatment or engagement in recovery activities, addiction is progressive and can result in disability or premature death.

American Society of Addiction Medicine, 2011

What is a disease anyway?

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A cause (may or may not be known)

Symptoms

A prognosis

May have a treatment

May be chronic or not?





Choice Vs. disease

CHOICE

Free Will Exists

Responsibility

Can Stop

Punishment and
Coercion do work

Behaviors can be
controlled

DISEASE

No Free Will

No Responsibility

Can't Stop

Punishment and
Coercion don't work

They have Symptoms

The Choice argument

Addiction can't be
a "Disease" because
it's a "Behavior"

An Addict can quit
anytime, they just
need the right
motivation

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May be Chronic

Does this mean it is hopeless?

Does this mean it is hopeless?

Contact Information

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Broken: Finding Peace in Imperfection

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Resources

www.samhsa.gov - Educational Information

www.drugabuse.gov - Educational Information

www.cdc.gov - Educational Information

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