

Chapter 26

The Substance Use Disorder as a Disease of the Human Spirit

How the soul was lost

- The humanities grew from the rediscovery in Europe of the ancient writings of Rome and Greece after the long “dark ages”
- Science replace religion and the idea of mind or soul was replaced with electrochemical laws
- Roger Bacon argued that only those facts that could be observed, measured, and/or replicated were worthy of belief
- Lacking spirituality may leave void in life that individual attempt to fill with alcohols to drugs

The ghost in the machine

- Some believe the story of the Garden or Eden does not relate to Eve biting the fruit of knowledge, but to the development of self-awareness
- Love is an extension of use trying to cross the chasm between “self” and “other”
- Drugs activate some of the same reward pathways triggered by love
- Self-awareness brings right of self-determination, but also responsibility for making choices

Diseases of the mind/diseases of the spirit: the mind/body question

- The question of whether the SUDs are a brain disorder, as is suggested by proponents of the medical model, a result of a psychosocial process, as is suggested by proponents of the psychosocial models of the SUDs, or a spiritual disorder
- There is an emerging body of evidence suggesting that individuals with strong spiritual beliefs are less likely to become addicted to a chemical, to live longer, and more likely to recover should they develop a SUD

The growth of addictions: the circle narrows

- Chemicals assume a role of “central importance” for the individual
- High level of preoccupation and self-centeredness
- Initial choice to use recreational chemical(s) might reflect curiosity or a desire to partake in a social activity
- Those who abuse chemicals often confuse their wants with their needs

The circle of addiction: priorities

- The substance dominates individuals' lives whether they are conscious of it or not
- More and more effort must be expended just to maintain the SUD
- They may engage in behaviors they would not have otherwise to obtain the drug or the money to purchase the drug
- The addicted person, if they were not manipulative prior to the onset of the addiction, becomes manipulative in the service of their addiction

Some of the games of addiction

- Given the individuals demands continued access to a desired substance support system to ensure access
 - May manipulate doctors for various reasons
 - study medical manuals to learn symptoms to present with to get a certain prescription
 - threaten
 - They may make claims of stolen prescriptions
 - They may go from hospital to hospital to get prescriptions for the same medication
- SUDs, especially when at their most extreme, involve both conscious and unconscious lifestyle adjustments

Honesty: a building stone of recovery

- It is often shocking to those around the person with a SUD how they could be so blind to the severity of their condition.
- In a very real sense, many persons with a SUD might be said to have lost touch with external reality
- The layers of conscious and unconscious deception serve to isolate the individual from the reality of his/her substance use disorder, in order to protect it
- As the person with the SUD comes to understanding they were deceiving themselves along with others, they begin to question their perceptions and deceptions

False pride

- Every addiction is a disease of the spirit
- For some the accumulated insults over a lifetime come to disease that person's inner world, and some turn to chemicals to fill the perceived void
- A manifestation of spiritual illness is found in the process of "euphoric recall"
- Seeking gratification of the "self" through externals is dangerous
- SUD's might be viewed as attempt to satisfy "soul" without needing to work to achieve spiritual insights

The role of defense mechanisms in the spiritual model

- Individuals with SUDs will use defense mechanisms, on an unconscious level, to protect the individual from an awareness of the realities that might threaten their adjustment
- Being forced to admit that harmless recreational drug has become addiction is one of those harsh realities that defense strives to keep us from having to deal with
- Reactions to the spiritual model