

TALK TO CATHOLIC EDUCATION MELBOURNE CONFERENCE ABOUT AOD AND ADDICTIONS

By Gerard Koe

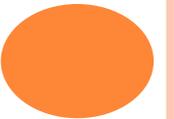
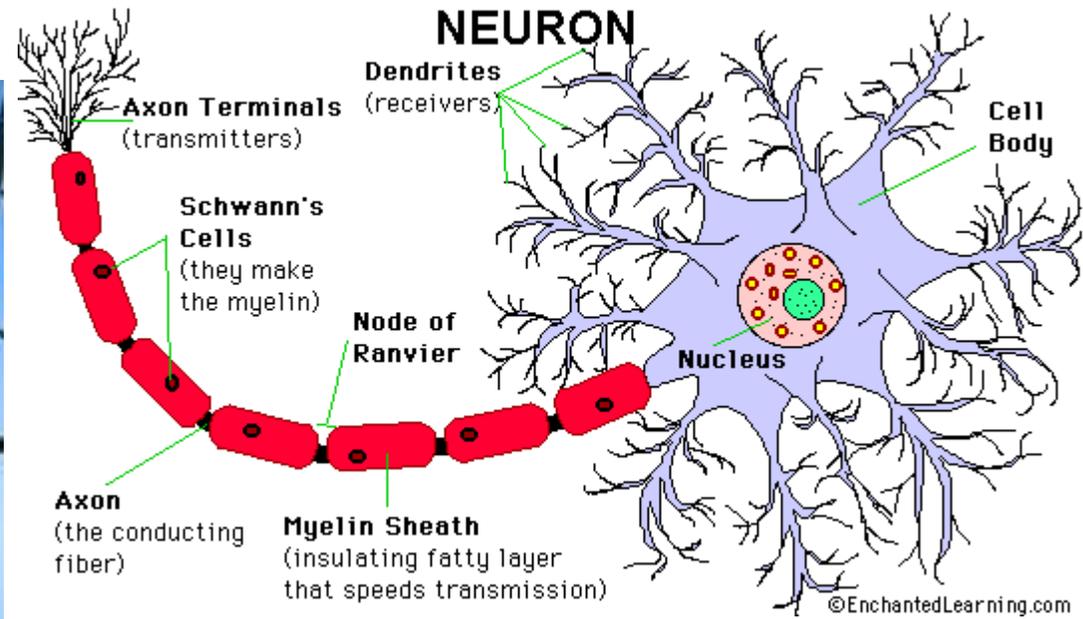
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MYELIN THEORY OF MEMORY



QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS

1. How pervasive is the problem of substance addiction in modern Australian culture, particularly youth culture.
2. Understanding the nature and problem of addictions. Are there character traits that can predispose a person to more easily becoming addicted to substances.
3. The relationship between substance addiction and the significant increase in mental health problems among the young over the last 20 yrs.
4. Helping our young develop greater resilience. In particular through mindfulness and purposeful living.



*1. HOW PERVASIVE IS THE PROBLEM OF SUBSTANCE
ADDICTION IN MODERN AUSTRALIAN CULTURE,
PARTICULARLY YOUTH CULTURE.*



(STATISTICS FROM 1998-2008)

- Between 1998-2001 proportion of girls 14-17 drinking at risky levels rose from 1% to 10%(Dr.Tanya Chikritz of National Drug Research Institute, Curtin University Perth. In VicHealth letter Summer 2007. p4)
 - Figures in 2004 show that rising to 13% (Dr.TanyaChikritzhs p4)
 - Youth Violence related to excessive alcohol consumption is a major social concern. (Kieran Walshe dep.Commissioner VIC police . In Vic Health letter Summer2007 p4)
 - 7500 people a year are admitted to Australian hospitals because of alcohol related assaults. Mostly between 15-25 (Kieran Walshe p4)
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CONT...

- 80% of calls for police assistance are alcohol related.(Kieran Walshe p4)
- The current common age for kids to start using alcohol socially has now dropped from 17-18 to 14.(Proff. George Patton. Dtr of Adolescent health Research at Centre for Adolescent Health. Uni of melbourne. Vic Health summer 2007 pg.6)
- By 18, approximately 50%for both males and females who drink are risky drinkers)(more than 6 standards for males and 4 for females in their last drinking occasion.(findings from 2004 national Drug Strategy)



CONT

- 23-25 Feb 2008 AGE: Every weekend, about 300,000 young people go into the CBD to get drunk.
- 25 Feb AGE: 1 in 200 kids ,12 and under get drunk weekly.
- Alcohol treatment for teenagers has increased x5 in 2007 than 2002 (Australian National Council on drugs)
- Australian Democrats youth polls 2006 of 1000 15-20 yr olds found that:
- **40% tried marijuana; 17% speed, ecstasy and LSD**
- **40% binge drank more than 5 standards within the last week**
- 52% knew someone who had attempted /committed suicide.
- 4 Corners, ABC march 05: reported that 50% teenagers between 16-18 have used marijuana and 10% will have a serious problem.
- 20% teenagers use cannabis in problematic way that could lead to mental illness.(4 corners march 05)



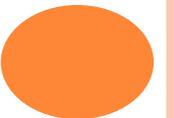
AUSTRALIAN TEMPERAMENT PROJECT

- A collaborative joint longitudinal study between University of Melbourne; Australian Institute of Family studies and Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne.
- Followed 2443 infants born in 1983 till 2002, with 13 waves of data collected thru mail surveys first to their parents then to them.
- Aim to study how young people are functioning in Australia and their Wellbeing.
- Looked at temperament, behavior and emotional adjustment, academic progress, health, social skills, peer and family functioning, mental health etc.
- By 2002 , 1157 remained in the study and were 19



FINDINGS OF THE ATP

- 20% had moderate to severe depression in the past month.
- 19% moderate-severe anxiety disorder in the past month.
- 15% could be diagnosed as having an antisocial personality disorder , with 3 criminal offences in the past year.
- **64% reported high risk drinking ie. 7 or more standards for male and 5 for females in last month**
- **25% binge drank at least once a week**
- **22% reported using marijuana in last month**
- **6% highly problematic marijuana use**
- 21% reported having long term health conditions from skin problems, allergies, diabetes to cancer.
- Overall between 30-40% don't seem to be doing too well.



DRUG TRENDS AND STATISTICS

NATIONAL DRUG STRATEGY HOUSEHOLD SURVEY 2016 UPDATED

22/9/17

Alcohol

- **Young adults are drinking less, and fewer 12 to 17 year olds are drinking.**
- More people in their 50s are consuming 11 or more standard drinks in one drinking session.

Illicit use of drugs

- In 2016, around 3.1 million Australians reported using an illicit drug.
- In 2016, the most common illicit drug was cannabis, followed by misuse of pharmaceuticals, cocaine, and then ecstasy.
- While overall use of amphetamine has decreased, use of crystal methamphetamine (ice) continues to be a problem.
- People who are using crystal methamphetamine (ice), are using it more frequently which increases the risks and harms.



AUSTRALIAN SECONDARY STUDENTS' ALCOHOL AND DRUG SURVEY 2014

More than 23,000 secondary students aged between 12 and 17 years participated in the Australian Secondary Students' Alcohol and Drug survey 2014. They were asked about their lifetime and current use of:

tobacco

alcohol

analgesics, such as Disprin, Panadol and Nurofen

tranquilisers

illegal substances.

The key findings for the survey are shown below:



Alcohol

- In 2014, almost half (**50%**) of **all Australian secondary students aged between 12 and 17 years** had consumed alcohol in the year preceding
- The proportion of students who consumed alcohol in the week preceding the survey (current drinkers) increased with age, from 4 % of 12-year-olds; to **36 % of 17-year-olds**.

Illicit substances

- Cannabis was the most commonly used illicit substance with **16 % of students aged between 12 and 17 years ever using cannabis and 7% using it in the month before the survey**.
- The proportion of students using cannabis increased with age.
- Around 3 % reported having used ecstasy/MDMA in the past year and only 1% indicated in the previous month.



- The vast majority of secondary school students **(98%) never used amphetamines.**
- Lifetime use of amphetamines increased with age from 1% of 12-year-olds; to **4% of 17-year-olds.**
- Use of hallucinogens, such as LSD, was extremely low 3 %.
- Opiates or narcotics such as heroin or morphine was very uncommon, with only 2% of all students ever having tried.
- A small proportion of students (2 %) reported ever using performance or image enhancing drugs, such as steroids, without a doctor's prescription.
- Use of synthetic substances such as synthetic cannabis was very low, with 98 % of all students reporting no use in the past 12 months.
- Page last updated: 22 Sep 2017

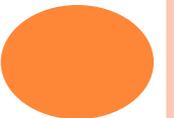


2. Understanding the nature and problem of addictions. Are there character traits that can predispose a person to more easily becoming addicted to substances.



WHAT IS THE NATURE OF AN ADDICTION?

- At what point does a behaviour become an addiction?
- Are some people more likely to develop an addiction than others?
- What are the contributing factors that make one person more likely to develop an addiction than others?



AT WHAT POINT DOES A BEHAVIOUR BECOME AN ADDICTION

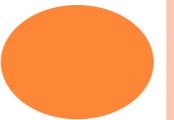
- When it consumes you so much that you have little time for anything else.
- When most of your mental energy is preoccupied with the addiction
- When you start negating your responsibilities.
- When your energy and money is disproportionately used in feeding the addiction.
- When your health gets affected and you cant seem to stop.
- When your relationships deteriorate due to the addiction.
- When you start taking unacceptable risks in pursuing the addiction.
- When it starts to have a negative impact on your work, studies and career duties.
- Roizens 4 L's . Liver, Livelihood, Law, love



2 TYPES OF ADDICTION

- Physical dependency vs psychological dependency
- Physical dependency refers to the grip that the substance you are using has on your physiology so that when you try to stop using, you actually go through very painful withdrawal symptoms. Heroin, alcohol, benzodiazepines especially Zanax. As such you continue using just to avoid the withdrawal pain.
- Psychological dependency refers to the way a person has become so dependent on the substance to regulate their psychological needs that without it, they are lost, bored and feel empty. The drug becomes their comfort, relief, purpose, be all and end all of life that without it, they fall apart psychologically.
- All drugs have psychological dependency, though not all have physical dependency.





WHAT ARE THE CONTRIBUTING FACTORS THAT MAKE ONE PERSON MORE LIKELY DO DEVELOP AN ADDICTION THAN OTHERS.

- **Physical health:** Chronic inflammation due to excessive free radicals, allergies, chronic physical injuries, bad bacterial gut balance.
 - **Biogenetic factors....genes .**
 - **Mental illness:** especially anxiety disorders. But also other mood disorders like depression, bipolar, etc. More than 50% Australians with mental illness abuse substances. Mental illness can be both a cause as well as an effect of substance addiction.
 - Family of Origin dysfunction.
 - Trauma Type A or type B
 - Lack of emotional intelligence.
 - Lack of maturity / wisdom / self reflectiveness.
 - Life's problems...eg divorce, loss of job, bullying, financial disasters
 - Loss of meaning, existential emptiness, mid life crisis.
- 

THE CORE OF ADDICTION

- Internal vs external locus of control
- *Hedonic view of happiness*
- The “Victim mentality”
- Low Emotional Intelligence

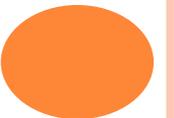


3. The relationship between substance addiction and the significant increase in mental health problems among the young over the last 20 yrs.



HOW DOES DRUG ADDICTION IN PARTICULAR CHANGE A PERSONS LIFE?

- When the substance becomes the centre of your life, many of the other priorities are minimised or even neglected. This can have devastating results on intimate relationships, friendships; parental duties, studies, career, job, health etc, leading to depression/anxiety disorders.
- Certain drugs in particular Ice can *alter a persons neurochemistry and predispose them to mental illness*. The ones that are most damaging to the brain are ice, marijuana, speed, GHB. Drug induced mental illness is quite common among medium to heavy drug users. Its worst expression is drug induced psychosis or drug induced schizophrenia. Often the mental illness is irreversible even after the person has stopped using the drugs.



ICE ADDICTION

- Not a pandemic despite how the media sometimes portrays it.
- Reason for 10fold increase is because , ingredients for making ice in last 6 yrs have been a lot more available coming from Asia particularly China.
- As such price has plummeted from \$100 a point to \$40-50 a point.
- Those using speed (about 15-20% of population) have now turned to ice, with devastating consequences.



HOW ICE DAMAGES YOU

- Pushes dopamine and serotonin delivery systems about 300 times more, thus predisposing these systems to rapid wear and tear and breakdown.
- Analogous to driving a car at 200,000 km a year instead of the average 20,000.
- If you are using around half a point a day 3-4 times a week, there is a 60% increase risk of drug induced anxiety / depression
- If you are using 1 point 3-5 times a week, there is a 45% chance of getting drug induced psychosis / schizophrenia.



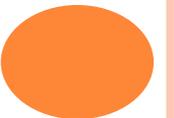
MARIJUANA

- A depressant
- Starter drug for most users
- If you are using about half a gram on weekends / fortnight, that may not be a problem.
- THC Tetrahydrocannabinol mimics Anandamide and affects our memory as well as the reuptake of dopamine which lowers anxiety and stress.
- However statistically half a g a day 3-5 times a week increases chances of getting drug induced depression/ anxiety by 30% and for drug induced psychosis / schizophrenia by 10—15%



WHAT ARE CHANCES OF GETTING DRUG INDUCED MENTAL ILLNESSES FOR DRUG USERS

1. type of drug used
2. How much you are using
3. How long you have used
4. Current life stressors
5. Family of origin baggage
6. Genetic disposition



HOW DIFFICULT OR CHALLENGING IS IT FOR A SUBSTANCE ADDICT TO OVERCOME THEIR ADDICTION?

- Depends on their readiness..
- If they are chronically dependent on the substance, often, reason does not influence their thinking. They are just a heap of wounded emotions desperate for relief
- If the pain of their lifestyle is not greater than the pleasure /comfort they are getting from the drug, there will be no motivation to change.
- There needs to be some realisation that this way of living life is wrong. This often comes from a continuous experience of suffering.
- Pre contemplation stage----> Contemplation --> action---> maintainance.



THE JOURNEY TOWARDS RECOVERY IS A LONG ONE INVOLVING:

- Values clarification..... What matters most in life???
- Rediscover one's purpose in life.
- Resilience building and relapse prevention.
- Re establishing functionality
- Cultivating healthy relationships
- Choosing to live responsibly. Taking on seriously ones duties and commitments.
- Commitment to a healthy lifestyle.
- Working at inner healing.
- Establishing a relationship with one's Higher Power.
- Cultivation of Emotional Intelligence.



4. Helping our young develop greater resilience. In particular through mindfulness and purposeful living.



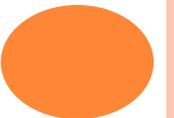
EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

- Is the capacity to understanding the true nature and power of emotions and using this understanding to manage them well so as to maximize our chances of happiness and success as well as minimizing the likelihood of unhappiness and failure.



THE NATURE OF EMOTIONS

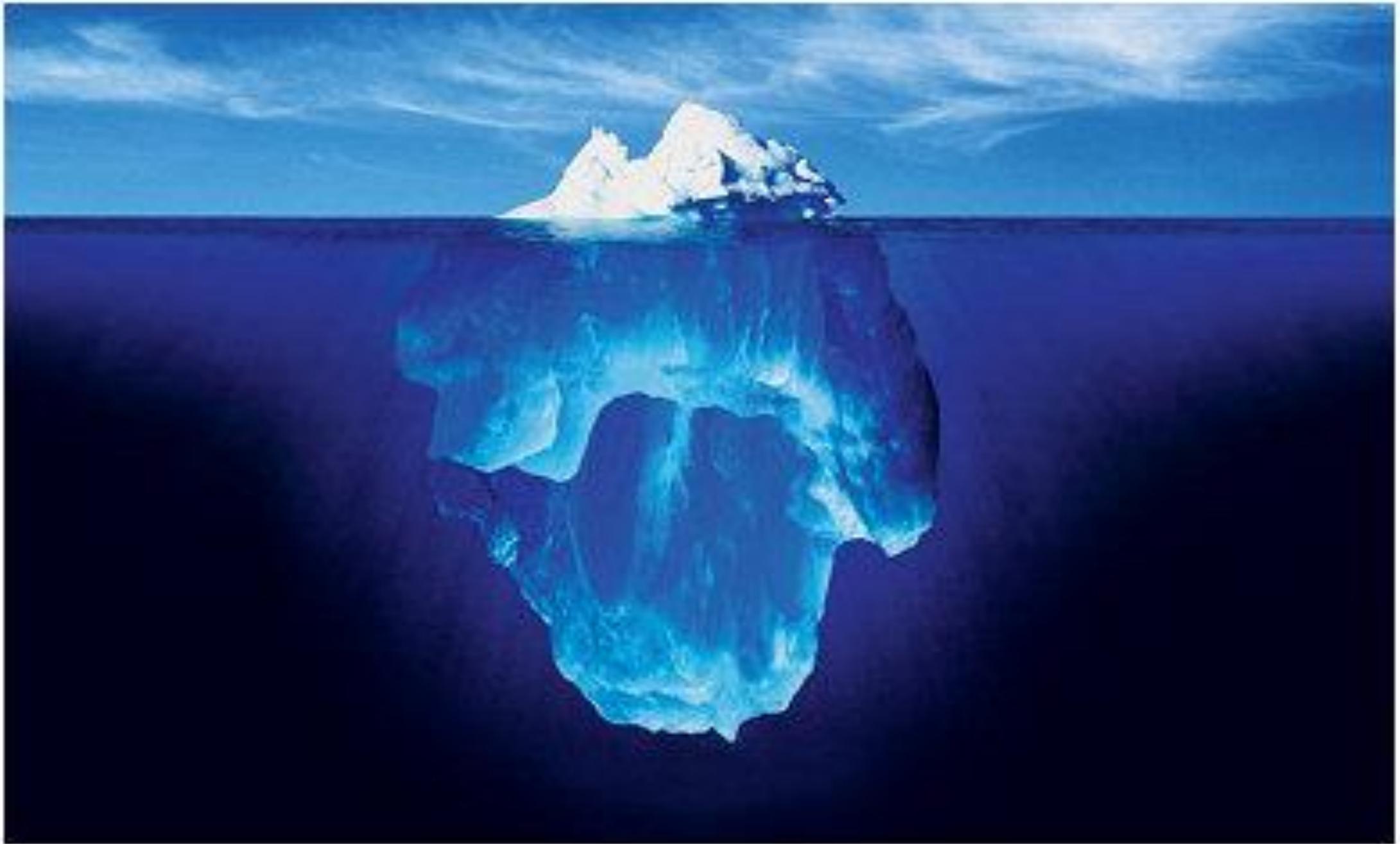
- If you don't feed an emotion , it often lasts between 6-12 minutes.
- If you feed them they will persist and dominate your consciousness as long as you allow related thoughts to free flow . For many people it can last days , weeks , months.
- We actually have the power to decide whether or not we want to allow these thoughts to free flow.
- But to do so requires “Mindfulness”
- Those who have cultivated strong “mindfulness” ability , are much more likely to successfully manage their emotions rather than be swept away by them.



WHAT IS MINDFULNESS

- The ability to observe things without judgement, prejudice, or preconceived notions .
- Seeing things , experiences ,occurrences as they are rather than how I imagine them to be.
- Being aware of not just what is going on around me but also what is happening in my body and emotions.
- Being open to wonderment and surprises.
- Being aware of the self chatter that is constantly going on in my mind and choosing not to engage with it.
- Being aware of the stillness within and the inner wisdom that may be speaking to me.





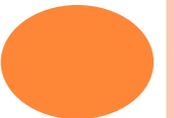
CULTIVATING EUDAIMONIC WELLBEING

- The pursuit of wisdom
- Cultivating mindfulness
- Cultivating mental discipline
- Having an enquiring mind on the things that matter most in life
- Meditation and contemplation



A PSYCHO-SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVE TO SUBSTANCE ADDICTION.

- Starts with a psycho spiritual understanding of the self.
- Gnothi seauton “ Know thyself”. If I do not know who I am , I can never know how I ought to live and ultimately what my purpose of life is.
- What is the human person?
- Body, soul , spirit. Lower self, higher self, highest self
- If this is who we are , then there will necessarily be 3 qualities to the consciousness that we have.
- Body consciousness or Ego Consciousness
- Soul Consciousness
- Spirit consciousness



CONT.

- Each of these consciousness has a particular quality of chatter.
- **Ego consciousness** often has 2 types. Normal Ego Chatter and Dysfunctional Ego chatter. When dysfunctional Ego chatter dominates we become susceptible to negative emotional states and eventually regress to having mental illness or the seeking of escapes that results in addictions.
- **Soul consciousness**, preoccupies itself with the following
 - Seeking relational harmony and fulfilment.
 - Desire to grow and expand in our consciousness.
 - Trying to understand what brings life, health and true happiness.
 - The quest for purpose and meaning.
 - Seeking to know how one ought to behave (ethics) and making the highest choices
 - Seeking to know self and being true to the highest understanding of self.
 - Integrity and congruence.



CONT...

Spirit Consciousness:

- Profound wisdom and insight
- Aha experiences
- Compelling sense of oneness with something much larger than me.
- Answers that you never thought you were capable of coming up with but which sound so profound and right.
- Eudaimonia



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