

The Biology OF ADDICTION



Addiction...

is a disease - not a moral choice. The opiate medication you have taken has physically changed your brain. Let's take a quick look at the biology of addiction.

BEGINNINGS



You begin to take opiates...*

In response your brain begins to decrease production of its own endorphins (natural pain relievers) and also begins to decrease its number of opiate receptors.

Due to these brain changes...

You now require more opiates just to feel normal (not sick). However, as you take more opiates, your brain continues to decrease natural endorphins and decrease the number of opiate receptors. Now the opiates needed to just feel normal are too expensive and hard to get. Behaviors associated with getting medication become dangerous and time consuming. It becomes increasingly hard to hide the time and money spent on opiates.

PROGRESSION



You want to stop...

But we are all born with these natural endorphins and opiate receptors that are tied into our primitive survival pathways - like hunger and thirst. Your brain responds to the loss of opiates just as if you had stopped eating or drinking. Your brain signals this is a life or death situation!

FEAR



DESPERATION



The result of attempts to stop...

Your brain sends signals to your body - anxiety, agitation, insomnia, cramping, diarrhea, nausea, sweating, muscle aches, and vomiting. These signals are your brain's attempt to get your body to move and get what it believes it must have to survive - more opiates (like food or water).

CHOICES



In the end...

The signals from your brain resulting in the sickness in your body will virtually always lead to relapse. Ultimately there are only three possible outcomes:

Death | Jail | Recovery

*opiates here refers to pain pills and heroin