SPIRITUALITY’S ROLE IN ADDICTION RECOVERY
DEFINITION OF DISEASE

• AMERICAN SOCIETY ADDICTION MEDICINE-ADDICTION IS A PRIMARY, CHRONIC DISEASE OF THE BRAIN REWARD, MEMORY, MOTIVATION AND RELATED CIRCUITS. 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
hypersecretion of CRF
impaired negative feedback by cortisol
adrenal hypertrophy
excess cortisol released

Cortisol

ACTH

hypothalamus

hippocampus + amygdala

cortex

circulation

pituitary

neurotransmitters

neuropeptides

immune system

de-sensitisation of cortisol receptors leads to disturbances in noradrenaline and serotonin transmission

de-sensitisation of cortisol receptors, increased activity of macrophages and increased release of pro-inflammatory cytokines
WHAT IS SPIRITUALITY?

• OUR SENSE OF CONNECTEDNESS TO OURSELVES, OTHERS AND OUR WORLD

• THE SUBJECTIVE FEELINGS, THOUGHTS, EXPERIENCES AND BEHAVIORS THAT ARISE FROM THE SEARCH OR QUEST FOR THE SACRED. THE SACRED IS WHAT THE INDIVIDUAL PRECEIVES AS A DIVINE BEING, ULTIMATE REALITY OR ULTIMATE TRUTH.

• A COLLECTION OF POSITIVE EMOTIONS THAT BIND US TO OTHERS- LOVE, HOPE, JOY, FAITH, AWE, FOREGIVENESS, COMPASSION AND GRATITUDE. ALL INVOLVE HUMAN CONNECTION. NONE ARE “ALL ABOUT ME”

• RELIGIOUSNESS CAN BE DEFINED AS THE SEARCH FOR SCARED OR NON SACRED GOALS SUCH AS IDENTITY, BELONGING, MEANING OF LIFE OR HEALTH IN THE CONTEXT OF SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES.
BELIEF IN GOD AND
GOING TO CHURCH BY
THEMSELVES
DOES NOT MAKE YOU
SPIRITUAL
SPIRITUAL PRACTICES & PRINCIPLES

• SPIRITUAL BELIEFS EMBRACE CONCEPT OF POWER GREATER THAN OURSELVES BUT ALSO ENCOMPASS ATTITUDES RELATED TO DEVELOPING PEACE OF MIND, INTERACTING EMPATHETICALLY WITH OTHERS AND LIVING WITHIN A MORAL FRAMEWORK

• SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES INCLUDE HONESTY, LOVE, TOLERANCE, PATIENCE AND ACCEPTANCE TO NAME A FEW. BUILDING BLOCKS OF SPIRITUAL PURPOSE INCLUDE EMPATHY, BONDING & SELF TRANSCENDENCE

• SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE IS ON A CONTINUUM FROM SIMPLE BONDING TO A SENSE OF ONENESS

• SPIRITUAL PRACTICES BRING ONE A SENSE OF PEACE OF MIND AND WHoleness WITH SELF AND WORLD

• SPIRITUAL PRACTICES ARE COMFORTING, REDUCING STRESS, IMPROVING WELLBEING.

• SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES INCREASE DOPAMINE FIRING RATE

• ADDICTION AND OTHER MENTAL HEALTH ARE ESSENTIALLY FOCUSED ON SELF. SPIRITUALITY IS FOCUSED OUTSIDE SELF
NEUROBIOLOGICAL BENEFITS OF SPIRITUAL PRACTICES AND PRINCIPLES

• VERTICAL RE-INTEGRATION OF PREFRONTAL CORTEX, ANTERIOR CINGULATE AND LIMBIC SYSTEM PUTTING FRONTAL CORTEX BACK IN CONTROL RESULTING IN IMPROVED IMPULSE CONTROL, INCREASED EMPATHY/SOCIAL AWARENESS, LESS ANGER AND FEAR AS THERE ARE MORE OPPORTUNITIES TO ENRICH YOUR LIFE.

  FEELING OF WELL BEING REDUCES NEED FOR INSTANT GRATIFICATION

• MORE ACTIVE AC LOWERS ANXIETY & INCREASES SOCIAL AWARENESS, EMPATHY & LOVE. LESS SELF CENTEREDNESS , POSITIVE REWARD FROM SOCIAL CONTACT

• AMYGDALA ACTIVITY REDUCED- LESS ANXIETY/FEAR LOWER STRESS RESPONSE

• INCREASES DOPAMINE RELEASE AS THERE ARE WAYS TO ENRICH LIFE THIS REDUCES NEED FOR INSTANT GRATIFICATION INCREASED SEROTONIN AND GABA.

• REDUCED BP. HEART RATE AND BODY METABOLISM.

• REDUCES STRESS HORMONES –CRF AND CORTISOL = LOWERS STRESS RESPONSE

• GREATER BLOOD FLOW TO BRAIN WITH GREATER MUSCLE RELAXATION PERCEIVED AS INCREASED WELLBEING
BENEFITS OF SPIRITUAL PRACTICES RELATED TO SOCIAL SUPPORT & AA/NA

• EMPATHIC SOCIALIZATION - LIKE MINDED PEOPLE WITH COMMON GOAL. NON-JUDGMENTAL. INCREASES COMFORT LOWERS FEAR WHICH QUIETS AMYGDALA REDUCING STRESS LEVELS. INCREASES OXYTOCIN AND DOPAMINE AND ENRICHES OUR LIVES

• SOCIAL SUPPORT INCREASES RELEASE OF OXYTOCIN, COMFORT HORMONE, WHICH REDUCES CRF AND CORTISOL LOWERING STRESS. PLEASURABLE SOCIALIZATION INCREASES DOPAMINE WHICH ENRICHES OUR LIVES

• INCREASED COPING SKILLS TO MANAGE STRESS & FEELING OF WELLBEING WHICH HELPS RE ESTABLISH AN INTERNAL LOCUS OF CONTROL

• SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES OF ACCEPTANCE, GRATITUDE, FORGIVENESS, TOLERANCE, PATIENCE, HUMILITY AND HONESTY GET US CLOSER TO OTHERS INCREASING WELLBEING REDUCING STRESS

• 12 STEP WORK - HELPS US SEE WE ARE NOT ALONE, INCREASES CONTACT WITH HP & OTHERS, HELPS US MAKE PEACE WITH OURSELVES AND OTHERS, INCREASES ALTRUISM GIVING US PEACE OF MIND WHICH IS LIFE ENRICHING
BENEFITS OF PRAYER/MEDITATION/SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES, SUMMARY

- Meditation, prayer & spiritual experiences strengthen neural functions lowering anxiety/depression, increasing social awareness/empathy, better quality of life, increased cognitive/intellectual functioning & better emotional control all of which are affected negatively in addiction. CRF and cortisol reduced. Amygdala less active with lower input to HPA axis, reduced fear. Puts the prefrontal cortex back in control over limbic system.

- End result is a sense of calm, hope, serenity, inner peace, greater self esteem and a positive optimistic outlook on life. A significantly reduced need for instant gratification just the opposite of the addictive state or other mental health problems.