

A Natural Approach to Eating Disorders

Addictions and compulsions are for many, an extremely touchy subject, and one that is too often misunderstood by those who have never experienced it themselves. The term "addiction" is classified as a behavior or activity that can bring a sense of pleasure or peace to the user, but the continuation of that behavior causes seen or unseen negative consequences, and the person continues these behaviors despite these negative consequences interfering with a person's everyday responsibilities, including their ability to maintain relationships, jobs, schoolwork, and finances and health.

While addiction is often associated with specific substances - alcohol, drugs - oftentimes and with many conditions, no substance is present at all. Sometimes these are referred to as "process disorders." In the case of eating disorders, such as anorexia, bulimia, or binge eating, the person instead becomes addicted to an ideal - an ideal weight, an ideal image, a fantasy about what could be or would be "if only" things were different, if only they saw a smaller number on the scale. Usually weight, in fact, is not the real issue. A person may become addicted or obsessed with control or possessing power over an area of their life when they feel they are out of control, seeking simply to make sense of it all when no other route can be found.

Because eating disorders are intimately related to other problems, such as depression and anxiety, they are often treated in very similar ways by traditional doctors and psychiatrists. Many traditional medical doctors will then prescribe a variety of anti-depressants or anti-anxiety medications seeking the perfect designer prescription cocktail. While medication certainly has a place, there are many who may be helped with more conservative approaches. Some believe that if more people who are on medications had a more serious look at their overall health and brain-body chemistry, they may find issues that when approached from a more natural medicine perspective, would obviate the need for those prescription medications.

And then what happens when medications are ineffective, and a patient relapses? While the goal of any treatment program is to ensure that no relapse occurs, relapse and addiction simply go hand in hand. It's a reality of the disease. Prescription medications are the easy solution - traditional doctors pass them out and send patients on their ways, rarely addressing the deeper issues at hand. The question doctors should be asking is not "How do I cure my patient's eating disorder?" but instead "What led my patient to develop an eating disorder in the first place, and then, how do we, step by step, begin to turn this life around?" Only when the underlying causes are examined and addressed can the behaviors associated with addiction and compulsion be controlled and prevented.

Battling addiction can be a lengthy and lonely road, and patients tend to be much better off and much less likely to relapse when they seek the help of a physician who not only takes the time to educate them about their condition, but one who truly cares about helping them and wants them to succeed. There are now a limited number of natural healthcare professionals who are Board Certified in Addictions and Compulsive Disorders bringing a fresh new truly health-centered approach to the world of addictions and compulsions treatment. Innovative new treatments emphasize natural approaches to balancing brain chemistry through amino acid treatments to correct neurotransmitter deficiencies, auriculotherapy to help correct imbalances in the dopamine-pleasure centers of the brain, and manual treatments that help balance emotions and body function that interrelate to the limbic system of the brain. Additionally, a health-centered approach, rather than a medical-disease centered approach, can be a superior way of regaining true health by building from principles of normal physiological health and building and supporting those functions that are faltering, as opposed to conquering the symptom that

has been visited upon the person, like some horrible infection. Whereas, traditional medical doctors might be more inclined to offer prescription drugs as the main solution, functional and natural medicine doctors provide specific testing techniques targeting the underlying imbalances and work forward from there to rebuild the person. Neurotransmitter urinary panels, organic acids testing, blood testing for thyroid disorders, hormone imbalances, glucose and insulin dysregulation, blood tests for hidden sensitivities, Cyrex testing, and more are examples of some of the tests that may be needed for a given individual to have had a thorough exam aimed at their best recovery.

Addiction and Compulsive Disorders, including Eating Disorders, are characterized by defects in developing the normal self-soothing and pleasure producing behaviors that others achieve naturally. A segment of the population suffers a genetic susceptibility to the so-called Reward Deficiency Syndrome, a condition in which the body is incapable of producing an adequate supply of neurotransmitters, specifically neurotransmitters like dopamine which play a large role in a person's ability to experience pleasure and happiness. With the help of innovative lifestyle and nutritional advice, as well as with the aid of an individually-targeted amino acid therapy regimen, and other neuroscience and functional medicine based methods, many eating disorder patients are able to make great strides, while not necessarily experiencing a complete "cure", they may find the best breakthrough they didn't know was possible.

If you're in the Southwest Florida area, please consider contacting Dr. Daniel P. Hillis, D.C., DACACD, to discuss eating disorder treatment options. He is a Board Certified Specialist in Addictions and Compulsive Disorders, recognized by the Florida Board of Chiropractic Medicine. Dr. Hillis provides innovative counseling and treatment for individuals with eating disorders and prides himself on educating each individual about their specific role in their condition, helping them to better understand themselves and understand what they need to develop a strategy that works for them. To ask questions or schedule an appointment, please contact Dr. Hillis at (239) 597-3929 today!