

DRUG ADDICTIONS AND SEXUALITY

Fernando Pérez del Río y Manuel Mestre Guardiola
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"Adicciones y sexualidad" [Addictions and sexuality] is a book aimed at students, educators, health professionals, therapists of treatment centers for drug addicts and generally to all the people interested in both drug addiction and sexuality.

It is a pioneering book because it links these complex issues and systematizes the relationship between the two areas of knowledge.

This book is halfway between the theory and the practice, with interesting proposals for group work. In its pages the authors maintain a critical attitude with regards to the various approaches of current clinical practice.

Some chapters should be highlighted for their originality, such as the one related to sex addiction, as well as others that analyze sexual abuse

and subsequent drug dependence, the consequences of substances on sexuality, affective dependence and addictions, gender and addiction, etc., or the whole of the first part of the book in which the key concepts are presented, enjoyably and accurately, so that one can understand what we talk about when we talk about sexuality and drug addiction.

In all of its main chapters the book has a part dedicated to the treatment, where the function the addiction fulfills in people is deservedly relevant. It is worth noting how infrequent it is to find, in a psychology book such as this, so many winks and references to other areas of knowledge, whether philosophy or anthropology, or the social analysis that the authors address.

In conclusion, in this context of great evaluative furor and so much neuroscience, we are pleased to present a humanist book that integrates and favors the purpose of talking about the experience of sexuality in people with addictive problems, the reality of what happens to them, and how they can be helped with appropriate treatments in the search for their own solutions.

This work is an update on the current research along with a frame of reference for the challenges of the future.

ADDICTIONS: KNOWLEDGE, INTEGRATED CARE AND PREVENTIVE ACTION

Iñaki Markez (Coord.)
Madrid: Asociación Española de Neuropsiquiatría, 2015

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A century ago there was growing concern regarding mental illness on the part of the medical specialists, and thus for alcoholism and drug addictions. This motivated the foundation of the Spanish Association of Neuropsychiatry (AEN in Spanish) in 1924 and the Spanish League of Mental Hygiene in 1926, which included among its objectives the realization of preventive, care and debate activities in the field of excessive consumption of various substances. This lasted until the war of 1936-1939.

Several decades passed until at the VII National Congress of the Spanish Association of Neuropsychiatry, held in Pamplona in 1962, a paper was presented on "Alcoholism in Spain" that placed alcoholism as one of the most important psychiatric and social problems in Spain. A decade later, at the XI Congress of the AEN held in Malaga, a paper was presented on "Current addictions". Subsequently, in the congresses since 2000 (Santiago, Oviedo, Bilbao, Cadiz, and Tenerife), there have been chapters in different presentations, until this text was presented in the framework of the XXVI Congress of the AEN in Valencia.

This text was written by 33 professionals of recognized experience for their interventions in the field of addictions, and it was presented in 30 chapters, organized into six sections (Concepts and Context, Symptoms and Recognition, Therapies and Research, Interventions and Prevention, Policies and Institution, Conclusions). It highlights the changes that have occurred in the concepts and contexts, the emergence of new guidelines

for recognizing the symptoms, and the responses of care and prevention in the problems arising from the "epidemics" of one substance or another, and of one mode of consumption or another.

Vast resources have been invested, and numerous opportunities and treatments are being offered to those who consume, many of whom are in a situation of social exclusion. In this context, there is an increasing interest in the recovery and social reintegration of substance users. Furthermore, as the dependent population grows older, or due to the increasing consequences of the social and economic crisis, it is likely that the sectors most vulnerable to health problems will grow. A better understanding is needed of the policies, legislation and modes of participation involved.

This interesting book provides knowledge about the elements related to the consumption of psychoactive substances and to understand the complexity of addictions so that, both personally and professionally, one can acquire competences that facilitate the adoption of measures of protection and promotion of health. It also offers a broad-minded perspective on the phenomenon of addictions (anthropological, psychosocial, socio-educational and structural) that helps to demystify preconceived ideas about the patterns and motivations of substance use. This work gives us competence for professional intervention and for obtaining mental health resources that work in clinical practice in healthcare processes, research, prevention, and health promotion. Furthermore, it offers knowledge of the innovative programs and initiatives that are being implemented.

We need more clarity in the discourse and measures on drugs. And less prohibitionist darkness. The current discourse, as well as that of the past, has generated problems, and it involves huge limitations. Therefore it is necessary to have the will to change it and also to offer other interventions that are different from the treatments centered on the drug, or the policies and measures centered on prohibitionism, etc.

This document from the AEN will be a work of reference in an area of intervention of such high social impact in which many professionals participate. Although it is not about answering all of the questions and inadequacies, since often the answers or the solutions are not unique, this is a good resource to approach and reflect upon the phenomena associated with addictions.

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MEDICATIONS THAT KILL AND ORGANIZED CRIME

Peter C. Gøtzsche
Barcelona: Los libros del lince, 2014

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Every now and again you come across a book that makes you interrupt your reading frequently to assimilate the emotional impact that you receive as a consequence of the information offered. In over four hundred pages, Peter C. Gøtzsche offers an avalanche of proof against the pharmaceutical industry, which is under the spotlight the whole way through.

The author narrates how, from a young age, he held various positions in the pharmaceutical industry: he was a biology teacher, a salesman, a marketing consultant, a clinical trials supervisor, a student of medicine, and a professor of design and analysis of clinical research. Without a doubt, this broad vision "from the inside" has made it easier to draft this solid work and add a final chapter with different solutions.

The book has three prologues and it contains an explanatory subtitle (in case it was not yet clear): *How the big pharmaceuticals have corrupted the health system*. These initial details, the explanatory subtitle and the three prologues put us on the track of the ways of its author, Gøtzsche, a punctilious, meticulous and insistent methodologist from Denmark, the least corrupt country in the world. It is a work that ultimately explains why, in rich countries, diseases caused by drugs are the third leading cause of death, after heart attacks and cancer. For the reader linked to psychology, from page 285 onwards will be of special

interest, which is where the chapter entitled "Psychiatry, the paradise of the pharmaceutical industry" begins.

The benefits of the medicines pale into insignificance with the countless investigations carried out, and we find out that this is not a one-off malpractice carried out by a handful of misguided and acquiescent sheep that we could find in any profession. Rather it is a system that cares little about people and a lot about the financial results. The answer from the pharmaceuticals is always the same: one rotten apple does not spoil the rest. After reading this book, however, you come to think that it is actually the basket that is rotten. In my view we are facing another kind of bubble that has not yet burst.

"Our health system (in relation to Spain) does not select medicines according to their efficacy, unwanted effects, comfort and price. It is a foolish buyer of smoke at the price of gold in the global technology market. Surveys indicate that both the physicians and their university colleagues, researchers, managers and directors are mostly unaware of the suffering they cause and the resources they squander" (Laporte, 2014). We all think that with the crisis we no longer spend so much on medicines, but the reality is that, currently, spending continues to grow wildly. Spain is one of the countries of the European Union with the highest percentage of pharmaceutical spending, despite the dramatic poverty we are experiencing. In a word, another accolade.

Recently, I gave a workshop to psychologists from different universities and, to my surprise, they maintained with unusual vehemence that the origin of most mental illnesses is biological. For my part, I argued that chemical imbalance does not explain these illnesses sufficiently, nor are there clear biological markers for any of them. So, among other things, I recommended them to read this book that delves into the question by elucidating it in a clear and forceful way.

FULL CATASTROPHE LIVING:

**Using the wisdom of your body and mind to
face stress, pain, and illness**

Lon Kabat-Zinn
Barcelona: Kairós, 2016 (*revised and updated edition; 2013*)

**The foundational program of Mindfulness-Based
Stress Reduction (MBSR) used worldwide**

Agustín Moñivas
(UCM)

In the modern theory of mind, formulated based on the research carried out in the fields of cognitive psychology and the cognitive sciences, one of the most important and complex cognitive processes is "attention". Attention is the gateway to our experience, both internal and external, and a basic quality of our "consciousness". How we operate with it –the way it is present in our activities– determines the degree and quality of our being, and our being in the world, including our relationships with ourselves, as well as with others, and the quality of our lives. The role of "attention" is crucial for the self-regulation of thoughts, emotions and behavior.

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The relationship between the ability to regulate the attention and personal well-being is profoundly exemplified in the "mindfulness" construct. The aforementioned construct gave rise to the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program 'MBSR' (University of Massachusetts, UMASS, 1978), while it has been used in different contexts and may denote different realities: a quality of consciousness or attention, a mental mode or process, a psychological trait, a specific technique of meditation, a group of techniques, or a result of the practice itself. The APA, in 2012, recognized mindfulness within the third generation therapies.

Jon Kabat-Zinn, creator of the program, current Prof. Emeritus of UMass Medical School, in the introduction to the book, states that "My intention in revising the book for the first time in twenty-five years has been to update it. The more I entered into the actual process of revising the text, the more it felt to me that the basic message and content of the book needed to remain essentially the same, simply amplified and deepened where appropriate. In spite of its seductiveness, I didn't want the tail of the exploding scientific evidence for the efficacy of mindfulness and how it might exert its effects to wag the dog of the interior adventure and potential value that mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) offers. In the end, the book remains what it was intended to be from the start –a practical guide to commonsensical ways in which to cultivate mindfulness and its deeply optimistic and transformative view of human nature" (p.15). This second edition, therefore, does not focus so much on the understanding of the psychological and neural mechanisms, as on the ability to treat ourselves with kindness to serve our life and our



vital circumstances in order to contemplate all of the possibilities for cultivating a healthy, full and meaningful life.

The book is divided into five parts, with a total of thirty-six chapters. Part I, "The Practice of Mindfulness: Attention" contains ten chapters which outline attention, the seven fundamentals or pillars of the practice, various practices and bringing mindfulness into daily life. Part II, "The paradigm: a new way of thinking about health and disease" has six chapters that address the emergence of the program in the scientific context of the 1970s. Part III, in four chapters, deals with stress in its automatic reaction and the conscious response to it. Part IV, in twelve chapters, covers topics such as listening to our body; working with physical and emotional pain; working with fear, panic and anxiety; stress generated by time; sleep; and different roles and contexts. Part V "The Road to Awakening", in four chapters, develops the maintenance of both the formal and informal practice –in any scenario of everyday life, after the MBSR program has been completed. After the epilogue, an appendix contains record sheets, recommended readings, practice CDs, and information on materials and programs in Spanish. Additionally, throughout the book we find tables, graphs and summary sheets on the sequence of the different practices.

"Full Catastrophe Living" describes the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Clinic (MBSR) program at the UMASS Medical Center. The author warns that the recommendations made in this work are generic and should not replace medical or psychotherapeutic treatments. People who suffer problems of any kind should consult with their specialists on whether it may be appropriate for them to follow this program and about the modifications that must be made in order to adapt it to their personal cases and conditions.

In the words of the author, this book has the direct aim of acquiring a greater awareness of what occupies our mind from moment to moment and the way in which our experience is transformed when we do this. And, above all, it has to do with "cultivating mindfulness through practice". Both the book and the program were instrumental in launching a new field within medicine, health care and psychology and at the same time encouraging scientific research on the science of mindfulness and its biological, psychological and social effects on health and well-being. And the influence of mindfulness is growing in areas as diverse as education, law, business, technology, leadership, sports, economics, politics and government, which is a very promising development, beneficial for the whole world (p. 19). In fact it is included as a public health program; Mindfulness Nation UK, 2015, with a foreword by Kabat-Zinn himself, and which involves the application of mindfulness to education, justice, health, and work (www.themindfulnessinitiative.org.uk).

Jon Kabat-Zinn presents MBSR as a program of development, discovery, learning and healing, based on 37 years of clinical experience with more than 22,000 people who have undergone it at the UMASS Stress Reduction Clinic. Currently there are about 720 "MBI" Mindfulness Based Intervention programs modeled on the MBSR, which was the first MBI, operating in hospitals, medical centers in the USA and many other countries (worth a mention is the MBCT of the University of Oxford). MBSR has contributed very positively to a new and growing movement within medicine, psychiatry and psychology that we usually call participatory medicine (Jon Kabat-Zinn, 2016, p. 35). The book also presents the scientific evidence highlighting the importance of MBSR programs, the regulation of symptoms and emotional balance, and its effects on the brain and immune system. In 2013, the number of articles on mindfulness and its clinical applications compiled by the scientific literature exceeded 1500 –the edition that we are reviewing was

published in the original English in 2014– to say nothing of the increasing number of books that have been published on the subject (p. 19). For other basic books, alluded to by the author himself, see the bibliography, below. The neurobiological evidence of the benefits of the program has given rise, at some of the world's leading universities, to the creation of research institutes and masters in mindfulness.

MBSR is based on a rigorous and systematic training in mindfulness, a form of meditation originally developed in the Eastern Buddhist traditions that consists in being conscious without judging. Meditation can be understood as the perfection of our innate abilities, above all the ability to concentrate the attention and the ability to investigate, explore and contemplate the nature of experience. These two abilities are, respectively, the purpose and nature of meditation. The cultivation of mindfulness involves paying deliberate attention to things we usually do not even think about. It is a structured approach to developing, in our lives, new forms of control and wisdom based on the ability to pay attention and on the consciousness, intuition and compassion naturally derived from paying attention in a particular way (Kabat-Zinn, 2016, p. 36).

In MBSR with the word "practice", Kabat-Zinn points out, we do not mean to practice or perfect an ability in order to be able to use it at another time. The practice, in the context of meditation, is to "remain deliberately in the present" (p. 68). "Knowing what we are doing while we are doing it is the essence of the practice of mindfulness" (p. 67). This is a non-conceptual knowledge or, rather, a knowledge that is more than conceptual; it is consciousness itself. It is a capacity we all have. The program is beyond beliefs, in the sense that it does not enter into them, whether conceptual or ideological.

Mindfulness does not consist of forcing our mind not to wander, because that way we would only end up with a huge headache. Mindfulness, on the contrary, has to do with realizing that our mind is distracted –"monkey mind" or erratic, it responds on "autopilot" and is often "multi-tasking"– and then directing our attention to what, at that precise moment, in the "here and now", in the unfolding of our life, is most salient and important. The cultivation of mindfulness requires paying attention, dwelling in the present moment and, in the process, making good use, of what we perceive, feel, know and learn, using as a resource the concentration on the breath. Kabat-Zinn's operational definition of mindfulness is "the consciousness that arises by paying deliberate attention, in the present moment and without judging" (p.23). This definition implies the distinction between being conscious and thinking. Being conscious is a complementary form of intelligence, a form of knowledge at least as extraordinary and powerful as thought. And, what is more, we can be aware of our thoughts, which gives us a whole new perspective on them and their content. And, just as we can perfect and develop our thinking, we can do the same with our access to consciousness.

Mindfulness is a skill that, like any other, develops with practice. The stage or field of operations of these practices is the body itself. The main practices, exercises or meditations that are proposed for developing this ability are: body exploration, sitting meditation with attention to breathing and progressive stretching of muscle sequences, both lying down and standing up.

The program has three defining characteristics: a) it is organic and dynamic, when carried out in the body; b) it is psychoeducational, and group-based; and, c) it has a structure that is carried out over 9 sessions, for 8 weeks, plus an informative session, with a total of thirty hours – each session, lasting an average of two and a half hours, is composed of a theoretical theme, practices and dialogues, both in small groups



and the whole group together. It also includes a daily practice at home of forty-five minutes.

Below we describe five investigations (pp. 29-33) of the many that are given in the book, and which provide data on the goodness of the program:

Using magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), researchers at Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard University have shown that the 8-week MBSR program is accompanied by a thickening of various regions of the brain associated with learning and memory, regulation of emotion, identity assumption, perspective assumption and that the magnitude of thickening of the amygdala was proportional to the degree of improvement on a scale of perceived stress. These preliminary findings show that certain regions of the brain respond to training in mindfulness by reorganizing their structure, an example of the phenomenon known as "neuroplasticity".

Also using MRI techniques, researchers at the University of Toronto found that people who had done the MBSR had increased neuronal activity in a brain network associated with the experience embodied in the present moment and a reduction of another network known as the narrative network or "default network"; the network involved in "monkey mind" or the wandering mind.

Researchers at the University of Wisconsin have shown that MBSR training in a group of healthy volunteers reduced psychological stress (caused by having to give a talk to a group of emotionally neutral strangers) with regards to an inflammatory process that caused blisters on the skin.

This same team from the University of Wisconsin –who sought to identify the effects of MBSR administered during working hours in the working environment in healthy but stressed workers– showed a change in the electrical activity of certain brain regions involved in the expression of emotions (prefrontal cortex).

Another study conducted at UCLA and Carnegie Mellon University showed that participation in the MBSR program significantly reduced: the feeling of loneliness, an important risk factor for health, especially in the elderly; a decrease in the expression of genes related to inflammation (measured by the number of immune cells present in a certain amount of blood); and a clear reduction of an indicator of inflammation known as C-reactive protein. These discoveries are important, as there is increasing evidence of the role that inflammation plays in cancer, cardiovascular diseases, and Alzheimer's.

Finally, we should thank the Kairós publishing house for their efforts carried out since 2004 –with the first translation of the book into Spanish, which has had fourteen editions– until the publishing of this new revised and updated edition of 2016, as well as for being the sponsor of the presence of Jon Kabat-Zinn in various places in Spain, in the spring of 2015, for the presentation of the book and several academic events in Spanish universities.

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