

THE DOCTOR'S OPINION

An explanation of addictive illness found in the
"Big Book" of Alcoholics Anonymous

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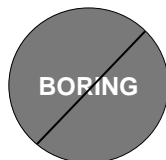
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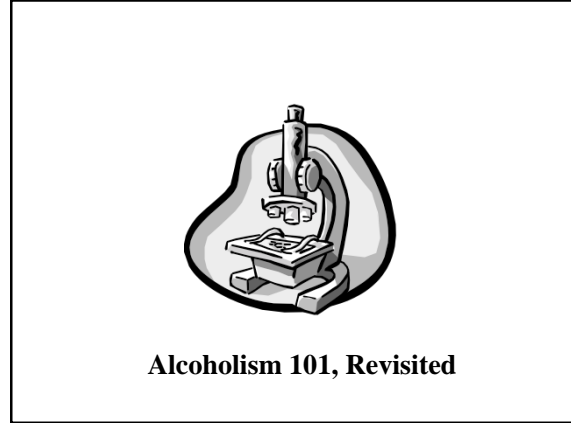
Declarations of Potential Conflicts of Interest

- The content of this presentation is non-commercial and does not represent any conflict of interest

Objectives

- Discuss Dr. Silkworth's explanation of alcoholism as a twofold disease, affecting mind and body
- Relate Silkworth to the modern neurobiology of addictive illness
- Identify therapy for alcoholism as promoted by Alcoholics Anonymous and its relationship to Dr. Silkworth's opinion
- Still have time for questions





Alcohol Prevalence

- ✓ 90% Ever drank
- ✓ 60% Current drinkers
- ✓ >40% Temporary problems
- ✓ 10-20% Abuse
- ✓ 3-10% Dependence

JAMA, 2003;290, 1299

Addiction Poorly Understood by Clinicians
Experts Say ABUSERS Lack of Knowledge Hinder Treatment

They are poorly understood by clinicians, and experts say that this lack of knowledge hinders treatment. A new study published in JAMA shows that only 1% of medical school curricula cover addiction, and that most clinicians believe that addiction is a moral problem rather than a medical one. The study also found that most clinicians fail to adequately screen for addiction and believe that interventions are ineffective.

- >Regard Addiction as a moral problem
- >1% of medical school curriculum
- >Fail to adequately screen
- >Believe interventions are ineffective

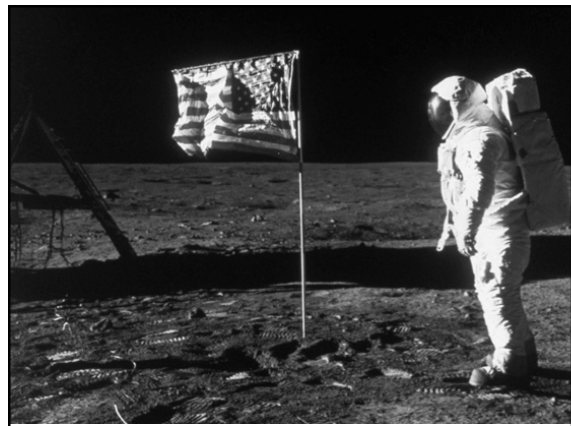
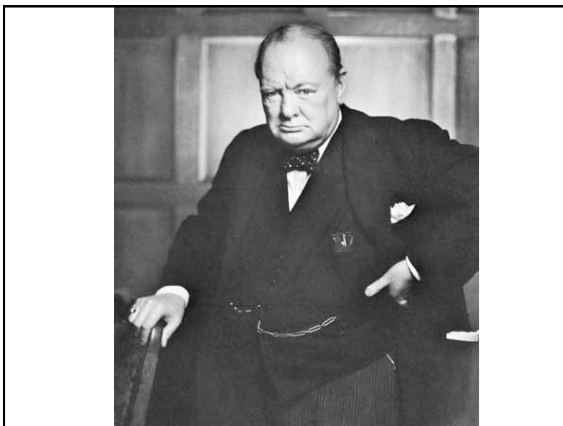
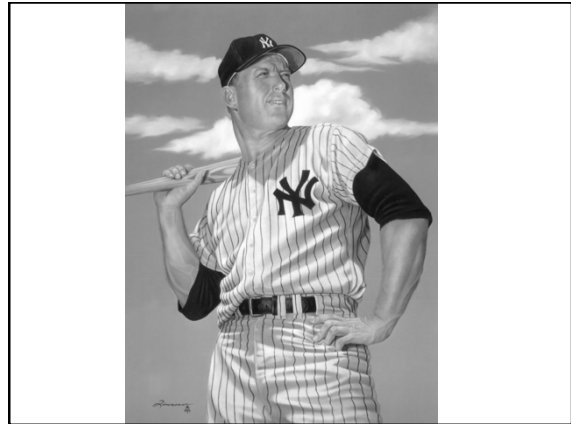


William Silkworth, M.D.

- Psychiatrist at Towns Hospital 1930's
- Thought alcoholism a twofold illness (mind & body)
- Gave Bill W. Step 1 (the problem)
- Published in *Journal-Lancet*, 1939

The Solution: "Just Do It"

- Avoid bars
 - Avoid drinking buddies
 - Avoid liquor stores
 - Think of baseball



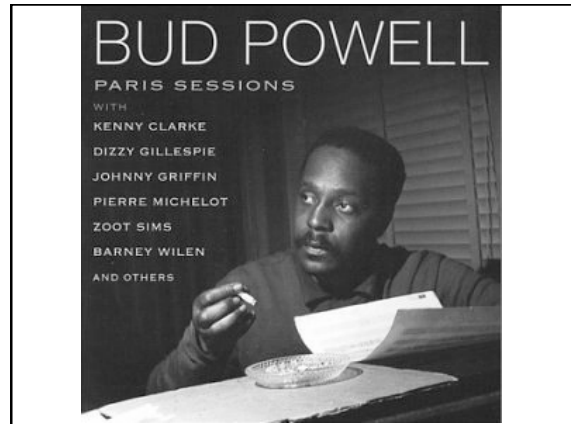
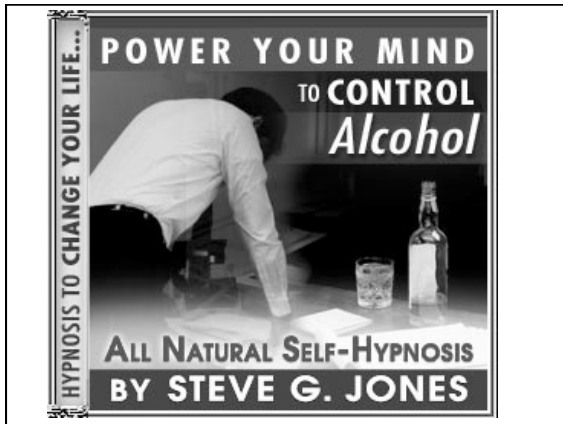
The Problem:

Lack of Knowledge

(dumb)

The Solution:

- Lectures
- Books
 - Tapes & Videos
 - Self-Knowledge

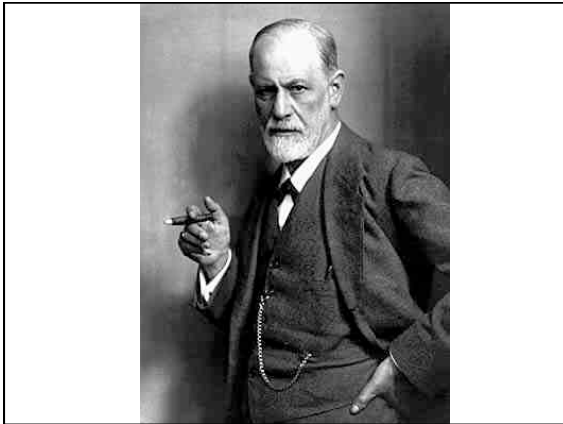


The Problem:

Deep Psychological Problems
(crazy)

The Solution:

- Counseling
- Psychotherapy
- Medication (tranquilizers)



**10,000 Pounds of Insight
Isn't Worth 1 Ounce of
Behavior Change**

The Problem:

Lack of Character

(bad)

The Solution:

- A solemn oath
- A better code of morals
 - A better philosophy of life
 - Organized religion



The Problem:

Alcohol & Drugs

- I have a "drug problem"
- I have a "drinking problem"

The Solution: Abstinence (Dry)

- Restless
- Irritable
- Discontent
- Resentment
- Fear
- Shame & Guilt



Alcohol Problem vs. *Alcoholism*

Then What IS the Problem?

An allergy of the body and an
obsession of the mind

Allergy to Alcohol



Definition of Allergy

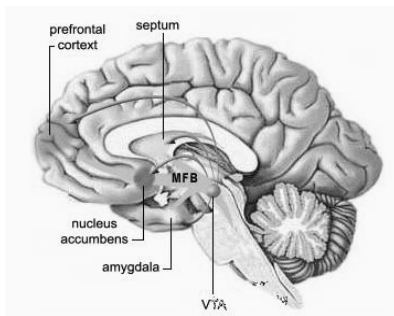
“An abnormal reaction to any beverage, food, or other substance”

The Brain's Design

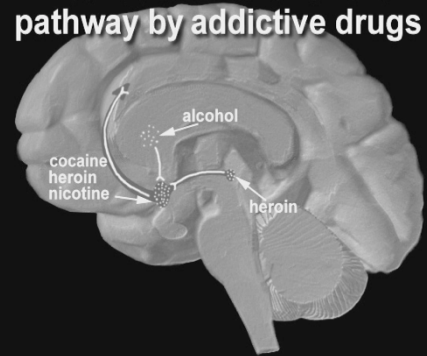
- Because the brain is so wondrous that most of us assume it has an elegant design.
- In fact, the brain is a kludge (A kludge in the words of Jackson Grandholm is “an ill assorted collection of poorly matched parts, forming a distressing whole”).

From the work of David Linden, Ph.D., described in *The Accidental Mind*

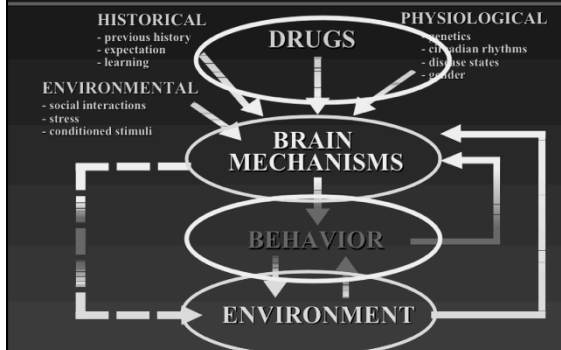
The Reward Circuit



Activation of the reward pathway by addictive drugs



Drug Addiction: A Complex Behavioral and Neurobiological Disorder



What is the “Abnormal Reaction?”

- getting drunk repeatedly
- getting sick repeatedly
- getting into all kinds of trouble repeatedly

This does not happen to “social drinkers”

“The only relief we have to suggest is entire abstinence”

**“The Doctor’s Opinion”,
Alcoholics Anonymous p. xxx**

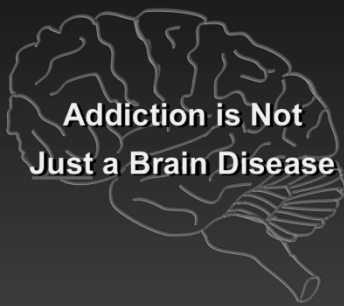
Can’t start drinking

Rx: “entire abstinence”

Alcohol vs. Carrots



**Addiction is Not
Just a Brain Disease**



Obsession

“Compulsive preoccupation
with a fixed idea”

“They are restless, irritable
and discontented, unless
they can again experience
the sense of ease and
comfort.....”

The Doctor’s Opinion,
Alcoholics Anonymous pp.
xxviii-xxix

How do we manage primitive drives?

- The primitive parts of our brain control the less primitive (basic drives change our thoughts, we are not rational beings)
- Thus, as long as they are in control our thoughts will not change
 - “Live your way into sober thinking rather than trying to think your way into sober living”

Insanity:

“Being unable to judge or
comprehend the
consequences of ones
actions.”

- Alcohol vs. a hot stove

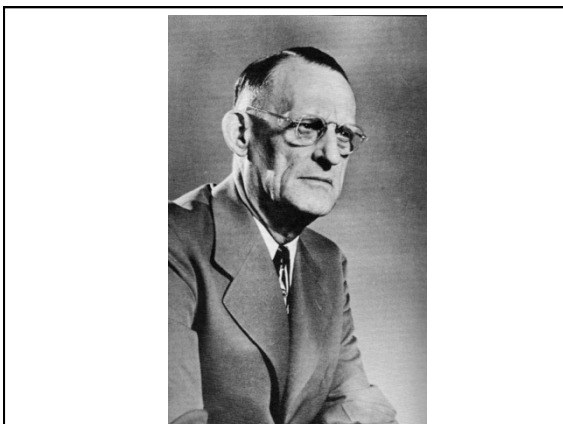
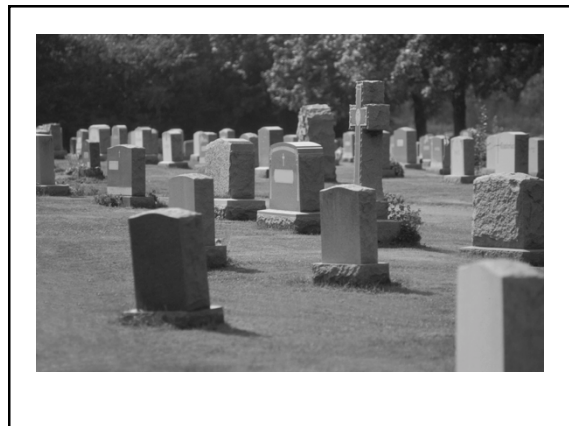
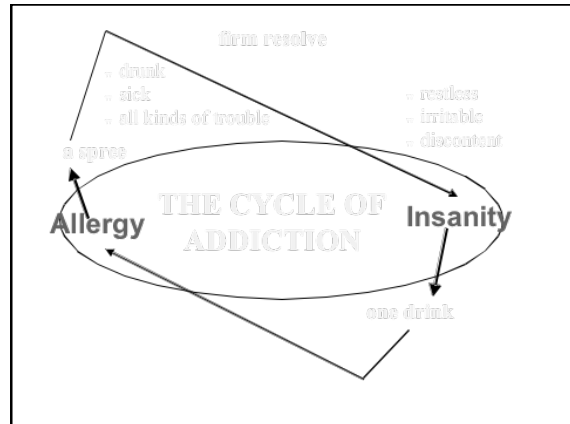


Can't stop starting

Rx: “Personality change
sufficient to recover...”

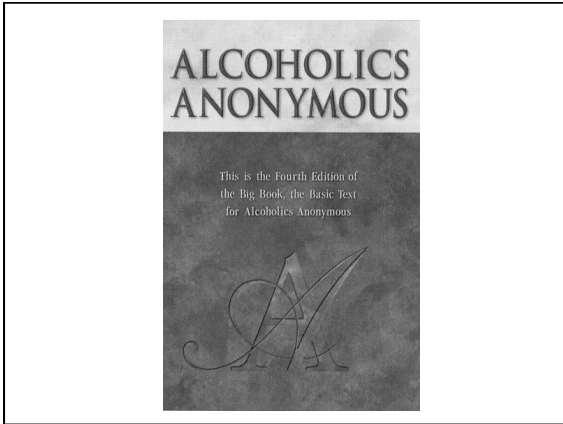
Allergy + Insanity = Powerless

- Can't start drinking (allergy)
- Can't stop starting (insanity)



Robert Holbrook Smith, MD "Dr. Bob" UM Med (1908-10)

- Akron Surgeon
- Co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous
- Treated over 5,000 Alcoholics
- Current AA membership 2.8 million
- 24+ million copies of *Alcoholics Anonymous* sold since 1939



Step 1: THE PROBLEM

“We admitted we were powerless...

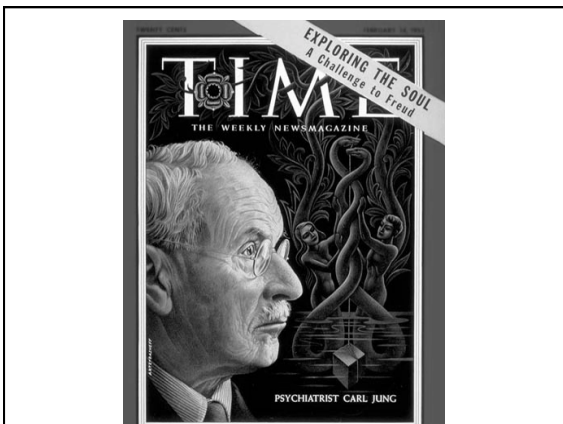
- Hopeless
- Helpless
- Incurable



Step 2: THE SOLUTION

“Came to believe”

- No human power could relieve our alcoholism
- God could and would if he were sought



The Actions Which Bring About the Solution

- Don't Drink
- Go to meetings
- Get a sponsor
- Work steps 4-9
- Prayer
- One day at a time

