

# Body, Mind & Spirit

## The Naturopathic Treatment of Addictions

BY JENNIFER MEANS, ND, L.AC

Treatment of addiction is as complex as the disease. Many factors can play a part: Genetics, metabolic disturbances, hormonal imbalances, nutritional deficiencies and emotions.

In naturopathic medicine, we look at the whole person and treat all the aspects of his or her health. One of our fundamental principles is to look for the underlying cause of illness.

Naturopaths have tools that help people detox. Nutritious, non-addictive herbs ease cravings and soothe withdrawal symptoms. Nutrition assists the organs to function and nur-

tures the body toward health. Massage and hydrotherapies encourage relaxation and help the body shed toxins. Therapies such as guided imagery and hypnotherapy can help address the psychological and spiritual aspects of addiction. Homeopathy can be used to alter the energetics of the whole person.

Recovery from addiction usually occurs in three overlapping phases - withdrawal, initial recovery, and re-establishment of health.

During withdrawal, treatment is aimed at alleviating symptoms in a safe, non-toxic way while supporting the body and helping it to shed some of the accumulated toxins.

During initial recovery phase, the intense symptoms of acute withdrawal are mostly gone and it becomes important to nurture the body, to heal the damage caused by the addiction. Treatment must also focus on psycho-spiritual issues, as the person's life has taken a dramatic shift. No longer centered around addiction, the person must change relationships, unhealthy social circuits must be replaced. Support groups such as AA, Alanon, NA, and OA are vital to the recovery stage.

During the final stage of recovery, the treatment again shifts to maintaining and supporting optimal health, according to the needs of the indi-

vidual.

Diet is an important aspect of a successful recovery program. Diet should focus on complex carbohydrates (such as whole grains, and legumes) and good sources of protein. This helps minimize hypoglycemic reactions, when the blood sugar drops too low, which can increase a person's cravings for alcohol and certain drugs. It is best to limit or abstain from simple sugars and processed foods.

Herbs such as *Avena sativa* (wild oats), *Scutellaria* (Skullcap), *Matricaria* (chamomile) can soothe the nervous system, help a person sleep and make acute withdrawal more

manageable. They are also important in the later stages of withdrawal when a person feels that they need something to support them through difficult times.

Nutrients, such as a high quality multivitamin and mineral supplements, give the body resources to heal itself. Addictions are often associated with poor eating habits and malnourishment, and withdrawal from a substance requires a great deal of energy from the body.

Hydrotherapy, the application of various temperatures of water, enhances circulation, promotes the elimination of toxins, and increases relaxation. Steam baths can be ex-

cellent aids to detoxification. Other helpful hydrotherapies include Epsom salt baths, cold water packs, and alternating hot and cold towels over the abdomen or back.

There are many other naturopathic therapies that can help in the treatment of addictions.

Naturopathic medicine looks to the healing power of nature for a cure. This requires the patient take responsibility for his or her own well-being and work toward it. This task is not an easy one. It is not quick-fix medicine. But the reward is tremendous and empowering. The reward is health.

## Jack Trimpey: Founder of Rational Recovery

INTERVIEW BY JOY RAMOS

Rational Recovery was founded in 1986 by Jack and Lois Trimpey in response to the lack of choice in the field of addictions. At the time, there was no choice other than the 12-step, spiritual healing program of Alcoholics Anonymous. Lack of choice in recovery styles is still a serious national problem, but RR (Rational Recovery) has become well-known as a viable and widely available alternative.

Q: How is Rational Recovery different from other forms of Addictions Therapy?

Jack Trimpey: Rational Recovery is planned, permanent abstinence that is conservative and cost-effective. You learn what is going on inside your head and taking independent action on your substance addiction. The skill taught is called Addictive Voice Recognition Technique (AVRT). AVRT is a brief, educational format which teaches the skill of planned abstinence. It costs less than any form of addiction treatment. Complete recovery is

secure abstinence, usually achieved in one month. Over 70% of those who actually recover from substance addictions do so independently - without meetings, counseling, or enrolling in treatment centers.

Q: Many schools of thought refer to addiction as a disease. Please explain how Rational Recovery understands it differently.

Jack Trimpey: Whether or not alcohol or drug dependence is a disease (most unlikely!), addiction may be understood as a natural function of a healthy human brain. In effect, you have two separate "brains" within your head which compete with each other. One is primitive, similar to the brain of a dog or a horse. This we call the mid brain. It is basically the brain of a beast, and its only purpose is to survive. The beast brain generates survival appetites that drive the rest of the body toward what it demands, such as oxygen, food, sex and fluids. The Beast of Booze, or the Beast of Buzz, is ruthless in getting what it wants.

But there is another brain that sits on top of the beast brain, the cerebral cortex. This "new brain", or neocortex, allows human beings be conscious, to think, to have language, and to solve problems. Your neocortex is "you", and you can override any appetite, even for oxygen or food. In Rational Recovery, we use the neocortex, our human brains, our selves, to override the appetite for alcohol and other drugs.

Q: How do you encourage total abstinence?

Jack Trimpey: Instead of struggling one-day-at-a-time, you may make a Big Plan to quit for good. A Big Plan has only five words, "I will never drink/use again" Saying "never" is much different from saying "no". To the Beast, "no" means "later". Lifetime abstinence is a difficult commitment because your Beast is terrified of its own death. It is most afraid of you, for it knows you are capable of "killing" it. It views alcohol or drugs as necessary to survival.

Q: Does Rational Recovery go against any spiritual be-



Jack Trimpey

liefs?

Jack Trimpey: Our method, AVRT, dovetails with any religion except Alcoholics Anonymous and does not alter one's religious or spiritual beliefs. The structural model of AVRT can be supported by Old and New Testament scriptures, as well as other holy books. We deplore suggestions that any of the world's great religions are insufficient to address the common human problem of habitual self-intoxication.

## Acupuncture: An Effective Approach to Addictions Treatment

Call him Jimmy. He's in his early twenties, homeless, broke, a survivor of abuse. He's chemically dependent, has mental health problems and chronic physical ailments.

Jimmy is a fairly typical patient at the Portland Addictions Acupuncture Clinic (PAAC), an uncommon facility in today's world of HMO's, high tech medicine and expensive hospital care. Uncommon because it accepts indigent patients like Jimmy, and uncommon because it uses acupuncture and other alternative health care options, along with counseling and self-help groups, to treat people with addictions - be it to alcohol, heroin, cocaine or other substances.

"We don't treat the drug, we treat the person," explains David Eisen, director of PAAC.

It's a busy place. The Clinic sees 125 patients a day. Some walk in off the street. Many are referred by hospitals, doctors and social service agencies.

"Research shows that when you do acupuncture with addiction treatment, there is a two-fold increase in the likelihood a person will stay clean and sober over a nine-month period of time," he states.

At PAAC, acupuncture is used once or twice daily to alleviate withdrawal symptoms, reduce stress and manage blood

pressure for the three to ten days it takes to go through detox. It's used daily for the next two to three weeks of the early recovery stage.

Acupuncture treatment continues two or three times a week for the final six months or so in the treatment process. Eisen emphasizes that other treatment modalities including psychotherapy, self-help groups,

Chinese herbs, naturopathic medicine, massage, chiropractic care and nutritional counseling are used as well.

"While acupuncture is never a stand alone treatment for addiction, it is very effective in reducing cravings, promoting relaxation and helping patients achieve mental clarity, so they can be more responsive to the other elements in the recovery

process," she explains. "The strength of the PAAC program is that it offers those other elements, including counseling, therapy, medical care, education and group support."

The real test of the program, however, is what the patients think. Over and over you hear patients like Jimmy say, "Here, I am treated with respect and care."

**Rational Recovery Systems, Inc.**  
Box 800, Lotus CA 95651

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Recover online at <http://www.rational.org/recovery>

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**ANNOUNCEMENT:**  
The recovery group is **CANCELLED**, effective December 31, 1998, due to health risks to participants.  
<<http://rational.org/recovery/recovery.groups.cancelled.html>>

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