

ENERGETICS AND DRUGS: ALCOHOL, OPIOIDS AND STIMULANTS

by Claudia Voyles

“Empty fire” -- that’s what the National Acupuncture Detoxification Association (NADA) considers to be the common underlying nature of addiction. Rather than seeing it as an excess condition that would be treated with control or reducing techniques, NADA views addiction as a condition of deficiency or loss of the inner resources that leads to the appearance of excess, and to excessive behaviors.

It makes sense that addictive patterns and lifestyle, burning the candle at both ends, depletes the body’s resources. It also makes sense that the substances that powerfully alter the body and the mood would have strong and ultimately damaging effects. In general, intense substances have intense effects on the body, which is part of their appeal.

Oriental medicine considers all substances in terms of their energetic properties, usually by descriptive terms that relate to the way they manifest when taken into the human body. For example, herbs and foods are said to have temperature -- hot, cold or neutral. Pepper is hot. Mint is cool. They also have other properties due to their action on the organ systems (“organs” as understood from an Oriental medicine perspective).

For most addiction treatment professionals cross-trained to do NADA-style ear acupuncture, this is new information. It does not change the NADA approach to treatment one iota. It may add depth or new perspective to the differences that clients experience and may provide useful clinical tools towards helping clients find a restorative recovery path.

Alcohol: Alcohol targets the middle, the Chinese digestive system: spleen, stomach and liver. It creates Damp Heat. Brigitte Mars, author of *Addiction-Free Naturally*, explains that the pungent nature moves qi temporarily relieving stagnation but its “high sugar content impairs digestion and causes damp heat, ultimately creating further stagnation”. Chinese medicine uses the term “damp” to describe internal or external disease states similar to the way dampness expresses in nature. Conditions that are damp are heavy and sodden. In some cases this damp manifests as a “beer belly”.

Stimulants: “Cocaine creates a heart-explosion,” says Roger Lore, LAc, in a paper based upon his experience working with addicts in a residential detoxification center. The spiritual aspect of the heart, the Shen (as in the NADA protocol ear point, “Shen Men”), is disturbed by the heat and movement leading to “restlessness, insomnia and excessive laughter.”

Zev Rosenberg, LAc, asserts that when using drugs, especially stimulants including cocaine, amphetamines, and coffee, the acupuncture point known as Ming Men sends qi to the brain, creating the pleasurable response but also consuming the yin qi of the body, burning up the cooling fluids. Ming Men lies in the small of the back and is often described as the body’s pilot light.

Coffee, adds Mars, frees “essential reserves of energy” in the long run depleting those reserves. Or as NADA trainer, Laura Cooley, LAc explains, “Coffee is like energy on a credit card.”

Opiates: Ancient Chinese practitioners, like their modern Western counterparts, used opium poppy husks to treat chronic coughs, chronic diarrhea, and pain. From the Oriental medicine perspective, opioids especially target the Kidneys, the Large Intestine and the Lungs explaining the suppressing effect seen on the bowels and respiratory system.

An on-line chapter by Li, Xi-Ru (on the Blue Poppy website) characterizes opiates as sour, astringent, aromatic, warm, drying and toxic. Lore adds that heroin, methadone and other opiates also seems to have a heavy damp property that settles into the lower body. This explains the lower body cramping often seen in withdrawal, says Lore. The damp settling effect may also explain the reported sensations of using.

NADA acu detox nourishes the yin organs, stimulating the body back to a state of balance. Given the long-term nature of addiction, providers need to recognize that the restoration of the inner resources, physical, emotional, mental and spiritual, takes time and multifaceted approaches.

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“Energy on a credit card”

Nourishing the yin



