

# NOVA Notes

Volume 3, Issue 3

Early Spring 2009

## Spirituality The Essence Of Recovery

### Spirituality and Recovery

*As most people in our field know, one of the essential ingredients to a lasting recovery from drug and alcohol addiction is the development of a spiritual approach to life. Actually for any addictive issue spirituality is ever important in the process of attaining health and well-being.*

We hear a great deal about spirituality these days. The success of the “Chicken Soup” series and the release of the “Secret” all have made the issue of spirituality a central one. It appears on “Oprah” and “Good Morning America.” Actually any media outlet at one time or another is studying and reporting on the concept. So what is this thing called “spirituality” and why are so many fascinated by it?

Spirituality is often confused with religion or religiosity. This is probably because many people derive their spirituality from

a religion, but also due to religions often making claim that this is their realm and sphere of influence. The confusion comes when most of the mainstream or major religions suggest they are the “true” religion to follow especially if you want to get to “heaven” (a concept most major religions describe as the ultimate goal). Many wonderful things have come from religion and over the centuries, many horrible things as well. Persecutions, wars, violence, have been a part of religious history and are evident in much of the Mid-East conflicts of today.

Spirituality is NOT religion. While spiritual individuals hold a variety of beliefs, spirituality is primarily a way of life. It is a way of interacting with others and with the planet that facilitates growth, contentment, and peace (or well-being). In its most basic form it is the relationships we share. The way we are with one another. It is the faith that we are part of a larger whole, a greater universe, an energy beyond our physical presence.

If we think of what addictive illness does to individuals we can see why developing a spiritual self could be very healing. One area that is so often damaged by addiction

In this issue...

Spirituality and Recovery

Office Space in Princeton Jct.

is our closest relationships. The shame and guilt that comes with addiction poisons any loving relationship we have. Trust is violated by the secrecy and “lies” the addict uses to maintain the addiction. With the basics of spirituality being an interactive exercise it targets the very damage done in re-integrating the formerly isolated addict.

Addiction as a brain disorder effecting the most primitive parts of the brain can create an instinctual reaction to the object of the addiction leaving the addict impulsively responding literally as though his “life depended on it.” Spirituality on the other hand appears to be centered in the higher functioning portions of our brain. Through the development of a spiritual self we get a “higher self” (dare I say a “higher power”) involved in the decision making improving the chances of reduced impulsivity.

One of the easiest ways for addicts and alcoholics to move in this direction is with the 12-Step programs of AA and/or NA. While the Steps may be expressed in outdated language they do provide a ready and proven format for spiritual development. It helps to prepare newcomers to the format and quirky rituals of their local meetings so they are not completely surprised when attending. It may also be helpful to remind people that the only requirement in AA or NA is the desire to stop drinking and drugging. Everything else is but a suggestion and even though the suggestions have helped many people they are not requirements.

Let people know as well that they will need to “shop around” to find the meeting(s) that suit their needs and preferences.

It has become quite clear that addiction damages brain structure and neuro-transmission. It may just be that a “mind, body, and *spiritual*” approach is ultimately the way to heal this disease.

## Office Space Available

*We currently have an office available in the Princeton Junction suite for either Mondays or Tuesdays. If you or someone you know is interested, please give us a call so we can arrange a visit to see the space and make ourselves available to discuss terms. The space is available immediately.*

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