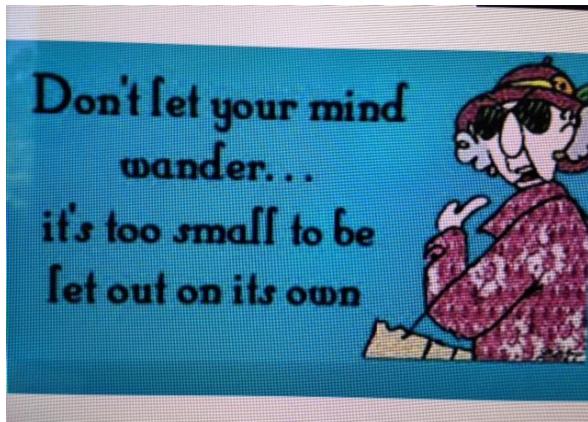


Spiritual Health

Mind: Part 1



In my work with substance abuse, I've read articles on how the brain is impacted, by mind changing chemicals, such as alcohol, drugs, and nicotine, which is the most addictive of all. The scientist, Victor DeNoble, in a lecture, described how nicotine will stretch your memory of your pleasure button beyond normal parameters. Once you have peaked and reach a low this will trigger your receptors in your limbic system to become agitated screaming to the brain I need

more. This lack of nicotine causes anxiety and leads to a negative change in emotions for the smoker. This is an example of addiction and how reasoning capabilities diminish. To the non-addicted mind solutions to problems are processed through the frontal lobe where the brain's reasoning is done and to an addict, their decision making, which is irrational, is listening to these receptors in the limbic system.

In working with these symptoms, addiction counselors assist their clients with identifying the triggers that cause them to relapse. We all are subject to triggers such as eating for comfort or buying for a quick fix. But these are all temporary fixes and usually followed by guilt, causing the cycle to repeat itself. We must find healthy practices or habits to replace this.

So what is a healthy approach to spiritual health? How does prayer affect our mind? One socially acceptable practice is yoga, which uses both mental and physical exercise to help the mind become centered. Eastern influences often use meditation, chanting, and aroma as a universal method to contemplative prayer. Although the Western influence preaches prayer is important, we find ourselves doing prayer on the run. We lack the discipline of stopping to engage in contemplative prayer practices.

In our western civilization, we are on the go with high expectations to be goal oriented. Our calendars are stuffed with meetings and activities leaving us little time to use prayer or meditation in our schedules. But I believe that Christ demonstrated to us the importance of putting on the armor of God. In his most stressful moment he walks away and prays to the Father, "if thou art willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." If Jesus thought it important to prepare his mind how much more should we? Paul reminds us to be strong in the Lord and in strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God. Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.

Prayer centers us. It reboots the brain by stopping the negative emotions to be released into our system causing us stress, fear or sickness. James reminds us that we don't have because we don't ask. We ask and do not receive because we ask wrongly to spend on our passions. The power of prayer is real and Jesus tells us, "Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it and it will be yours."

In recovery, we know scientifically that it takes 18 months to three years to reprogram the mind. In other words, to reprogram the mind toward prayer, we must start the habit and commit to it as a new lifestyle. Scientifically you reboot your thought process creating healthier decisions, which leads to peace of mind. Spiritually the more you seek God through prayer you will find him.

If you need help thinking of how to pray or where to start, you can use common prayers like the Lord's Prayer or the Serenity Prayer. You can pray for the three most basic things: help, thanks, or wow. This is great for the times we ask for God's help, the times we give thanks to God, and the times that something happens that just makes you say wow at the awesomeness of God. Or just start with "hey God" and let him know what's going on.