

INTRODUCTION

WELCOME TO AYURVEDIC YOGA THERAPY FOR ADDICTION

A system of radical self-care.

Addiction is a dirty word. It conjures up images that many of us would rather avoid, and that most of us feel we could never relate to: the “junkie” who would sell his kidney for another hit; the “drunk” puking into the gutter outside the local dive-bar; the woman who would sell her body to the lowest bidder to shoot up in the alley and pay off her pimp. Our repulsion has been exacerbated by society’s stigmatization of the addicted human, rooted in the broader vision of a world that exists to pit us against one another and to keep us tethered to the false promise of finding joy, acceptance and happiness in the next purchase or “hit”. We are inundated with both subtle and not-so-subtle messages that we are “never enough”.

Simply “being” is not enough. This relentless assault on our psyches to achieve more, do more, have more, is effectively chipping away at our essential self and creating a great chasm of self-loathing and an “us” versus “them” mentality, where compassion, understanding, love and connection once existed. The reality is that we all have addictive tendencies, and while some may appear more extreme than others, this is simply beside the point:

As a society, we have become separated from our essence as spiritual beings. We have lost sight of the idea that we are spiritual beings having a human experience. As spiritual beings, we cannot survive

wholly without human connection, love, compassion and understanding, and when this need is not met, when there is a lack, or a hole, or an emptiness, we strive to fill that hole, sometimes at the great cost of our own lives and the lives of others. We fill the emptiness with drugs, alcohol, toxic relationships, video games, the internet, television, food, and consumerism. We must begin to ask a new question, posed by modern addictions-recovery specialist, Dr. Gabor Mate: Not why the addiction, but why the pain?

Re-framing our understanding of addiction in this way can begin to shed light on how we view and treat the addicted human, and most importantly, in how we can begin to move forward with providing a compassionate and dignified space for healing. In short, we can understand addictions as a coping mechanism for an over-taxed stress-response. When we are constantly striving to keep up and get ahead, we are in a hyper-active state of “fight or flight”, an activation of the sympathetic nervous system which produces chemicals including cortisol and adrenalin. These chemicals are useful when we are actually under severe, life-threatening conditions, but when we are not, and our bodies are still continuing to produce these chemicals in high doses, it creates an imbalance in our systems, altering the natural homeostasis that exists to keep our body-mind connection