



Holistic Remedies

to help with Mental Disorders
and Substance Abuse Cravings

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A person wearing a green jacket, a green beanie, and a green backpack is walking away from the camera on a dirt path in a forest. The path is covered with fallen leaves, and the trees are tall and green. The scene is captured from a low angle, looking down the path.

Intro: A New Life of Discovery

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A dual diagnosis can come as a surprise to you and may feel like a burden. Not only do you have to get help for a substance abuse, but now you've found out that you suffer from mental illness as well. Although this seems shocking, know that there is an overwhelming amount of help out there for you. What's more: Dual diagnosis is more common than you would think.

You can find comfort in the fact knowing that co-occurring conditions and substance abuse disorders affect nearly 8.9 million Americans each year. You are far from alone. However, only 7.4 percent of those individuals receive appropriate treatment.

You now have an opportunity to understand what you are suffering from and what you've been living with, as well as how to treat it and continue with a full and meaningful life. This eBook can help you on your journey.

Because mental health and substance abuse treatment has traditionally followed separate systems of care, it has been difficult for professionals to diagnose, and then treat, those living with addiction and a co-occurring mental illness. We now know that treating the two at the same time can help the patient. We refer to the two diseases as "co-occurring" because the disorders exist at the same time.

For example, a person addicted to heroin may also be suffering from post-traumatic stress. In fact, many anxiety disorders can fuel a drug addiction. Many times, drug users are essentially self-medicating in order to find respite from their anxiety.

These entwined conditions can be difficult to diagnose because the symptoms of substance abuse can mask the symptoms of mental illness. So, if you have been diagnosed this way, know that this is a success and now you and your medical confidants can begin treatment that will help you.

Integrated treatment refers to the method of treating both the substance abuse disorder and the mental illness together. One way of approaching this is through holistic therapies.

Holistic medicine focuses on treating the entire person, not just the disorder. You can see right away from the definition how a holistic viewpoint helps. Holistic treatment providers believe that an individual is made up of physical, emotional, environmental and spiritual aspects. All pieces must be addressed to solve any overt and underlying issues.


There are a wide variety of holistic treatment methods, and finding one (or a couple) that work for you may take some trial and error. However, holistic therapies are, for the most

part, complementary and work alongside traditional methods that are prescribed to you by a therapist or other professional.

You may find that holistic therapy is fun and may even present a new adventure for you. It can put you in the driver's seat of your own life as you discover a way to heal yourself. In addition, you may find that holistic treatment is a cost-effective and safe method for healing your issues.

Keep in mind that holistic therapy is not a quick fix. It can entail a lifestyle change in order to produce results. However, in order to live in a sober world, you must alter your life. So, now is the time to learn how holistic therapies can assist you.

Welcome to a new life of discovery and healing.

A photograph of a forest. In the background, tall, thin trees stand against a bright sky where the sun is shining, creating a lens flare effect. The foreground is filled with a dense, vibrant green undergrowth of ferns and other plants. A semi-transparent dark green rectangle is centered over the image, containing the chapter title in white text.

Chapter 1: Dealing with Anxiety and Trauma

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A commonly diagnosed mental disorder that appears alongside substance abuse is anxiety in one of its many forms. The various anxiety disorders range in severity. Anxiety is a common disorder, however that does not mean it is easy to find relief. It's normal to feel anxiety every once in a while! It's a part of being human, and it's natural.

In fact, anxiety is a survival technique and has been handed down to us from our early human ancestors. The flight-or-fight instinct that we get when we encounter something we perceive as potentially dangerous actually helps us. However, we are no longer running around hunting saber-toothed tigers and woolly mammoths and finding danger lurking around every single corner.

For the most part, modern man lives safely and finds ways of coping with danger and stress. However, your brain doesn't know that. It still has that primitive wiring hardcoded into it and cannot tell the difference between perceived fear (what you are thinking about) and real fear (what you are experiencing). All it knows is that your heart rate has increased and you are breathing rapidly. Enter anxiety and fear.

Sometimes anxiety and fear can become a part of a disorder, known as an anxiety disorder. And, as mentioned earlier, there are a number of these disorders. Some common anxiety disorders are:

- Generalized Anxiety Disorder
- Panic Disorder
- Social Anxiety Disorder
- Separation Anxiety
- Specific Phobias
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
- Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Trauma
- Depression

Anxiety disorders are the most common psychiatric illnesses affecting children and adults. In fact, medical researchers estimate that about 40 million American adults suffer from some type of anxiety disorder.

Many anxiety disorders do not have a root cause and are simply genetic. However, some anxiety disorders stem from a past experience that has not been properly addressed. PTSD and similar anxiety disorder are on the rise due to veterans returning home from war and those who have experienced events such domestic violence or abuse.

Trauma and PTSD

A subset of anxiety is trauma. Trauma is debilitating and similar to PTSD. If you are suffering from PTSD or trauma, there is something in your past that has caused such pain and made you deal with your current life in an inappropriate way. This can include “medicating” yourself with drugs or alcohol. Both trauma and PTSD sufferers engage in these self-destructing behaviors and may not even be aware that they are suffering from a mental health disorder.

Flashbacks or repetitive, upsetting memories may plague the sufferer of both Trauma and PTSD. Examples of traumatic events could be:

- Being involved in, or witnessing, a car accident
- Undergoing major surgeries
- Experiencing or witnessing a natural disaster
- Violent crimes
- Community violence
- Chronic physical or sexual abuse

The emotions and physical sensations that accompany those affected by PTSD or trauma include sadness, anger, shame, anxiety and guilt – along with stomachaches, headaches, muscle tension and irritability.

Therefore, it is not surprising that someone affected by trauma or PTSD is in danger of turning to drugs or alcohol in order to assuage the pain caused by these mental illnesses.

Underlying mental health disorders, including trauma and PTSD, must be treated alongside substance abuse in order for long-term success to be actualized. Research and experience has shown that one successful way to treat all co-occurring disorders is through holistic therapy.

A person is seen from behind, standing on a rocky mountain peak. They are wearing a red backpack and have their arms raised in a 'V' shape towards a bright, hazy sunset sky. The landscape below is a vast, green, forested valley. A semi-transparent green rectangle is overlaid on the center of the image, containing the chapter title.

Chapter 2: “I Am My Body”

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Holistic therapy takes into consideration the fact the body is not separate from the mind and emotions. The holistic approach entails that a body is a reflection of the whole person. There is no separation between the body and the mind. For example, the thought goes from “me and my body” to “I am my body.”

The holistic approach helps us understand that there are physical, as well as non-physical factors that contribute to our overall health. This is why holistic treatment works well with the treatment of co-occurring disorders: It accepts the viewpoint that those feelings of anxiety or trauma do affect the physical body and vice-versa.

Holistic therapies offer the opportunity to get one’s physical, emotional, mental and even spiritual levels in alignment. When all are in alignment, the way we respond to day-to-day challenges can go from unhealthy (drinking or using drugs) to healthy (discussing our issues with others or taking things in stride).

Holistic treatment holds a wide variety of benefits. Because holistic treatment focuses on the use of natural resources (most without the use of substances), it is well-suited for those who are suffering from substance abuse. Many rehabilitation facilities will not introduce a clinical approach that involves drugs, as the goal is to get clean and well without the use of mind-altering medication. For most, the main goal of these facilities is to clear the body of toxins. Holistic therapy can help reach this goal.

The benefits of holistic treatment is:


- Quick relief from pain without the use of substances
- Improvement of overall health
- Education and understanding the need for a well-balanced lifestyle
- Awareness of keeping one’s environment safe and healthy
- Application of natural methods – such as healthy eating, exercises and relaxation techniques – to alleviate or cure illnesses

Holistic therapy dates back to the time of Hippocrates – more than 1,500 years ago. Hippocrates believed it was insufficient to focus on one aspect of a person, so he emphasized the importance of establishing equilibrium within individuals.

However, as medicine and treatment evolved along with technology, health care became more clinically and medically focused on the care of specific symptoms. Therefore, issues with the mind and body were treated separately. It was not until the 1970s that professionals in the medical and health care fields began to see that this type of treatment didn't always help the patient.

The first national conference on holistic health was held in 1975, and began a movement for alternative forms of care. Holistic therapy does rely on multiple forms of therapy, including psychoanalysis, cognitive behavioral therapy and guided imagery. Because some holistic therapies are intensive and combine substantial cognitive and traditional “talk therapy,” a great place to begin a holistic treatment regimen is to stay inside a rehabilitation facility.

Many rehab centers feature holistic therapy and some even offer the opportunity to learn new skills (such as with drumming therapy), or pursue artistic ventures (art and dance therapy).



Chapter 3: Types of Holistic Therapy

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There are a wide variety of holistic treatment methods and therapies simply because treating the whole person can involve their mental, emotional and physical health, including any type of ailment that can affect them. Many times, a specific type of holistic therapy can be prescribed to treat the body – such as yoga – that will end up also treating the mind.

This chapter will review some traditional holistic therapies that have roots in conventional cognitive therapy, as well as some newer types that have been popping up around the world in recent years.

Behavioral Therapy

Behavioral therapy is the umbrella term for types of therapy that address mental health disorders. The main concept behind behavioral therapy is that all behaviors are learned, and unhealthy ones can be changed by identifying negative or self-destructing habits and altering them.

Behavioral therapy is helpful for those who are suffering from:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Panic disorders
- Anger issues

In addition, it can help treat conditions such as:

- Eating disorders
- ADHD
- Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD)
- Substance abuse

There are a wide variety of types of behavioral therapy, ranging from cognitive behavioral therapy to aversion therapy. Aversion therapy is used to specifically treat issues such as substance abuse and alcoholism by teaching people to associate a stimulus that is desirable, but unhealthy, with an extremely unpleasant stimulus.

For example, a therapist may teach you to associate alcohol with an unpleasant memory or situation.

Mindfulness and Meditation

Mindfulness-based interventions are designed to deliberately focus a person's attention to the present experience in a non-judgmental way. Although the attempt to define mindfulness has proven difficult by many clinicians and therapists, there are several general ideas that are associated with the concept of mindfulness.

Mindfulness is simply the state in which one becomes more aware of his or her own physical, mental and emotional condition in the present moment. When being mindful, one can pay attention to all sensations and accept them without being influenced by them. Mindfulness can teach people to control their thoughts, rather than be controlled by them.

Mindfulness-based approaches are commonly delivered through meditation. However, mindfulness can be achieved in a variety of ways. For example, one can practice mindfulness while doing a monotonous chore such as washing dishes, cleaning or cooking. By paying attention to specific details, one can start to develop mindfulness and appreciation in the day-to-day.

Mindfulness meditation occurs when participants are trained to drift away from the present and find a deep state of relaxation. During a state of meditation, patients can find relief from stress and even physical pain.

Yoga

Yoga is a type of therapy that uses postures, breathing exercises, meditation and guided imagery to improve mental and physical health. The goal is to encourage the integration of the mind, body and spirit, which is why it is perfect as a holistic therapy. Yoga is also very helpful as a self-care strategy for relapse prevention and maintenance.

Mental health professionals have recently confirmed that yoga positively impacts parts of the mind and body that are susceptible to addiction. Yoga boosts GABA, a

neurotransmitter that is markedly low in people who experience substance abuse, anxiety and depression.

Yoga therapy is actually an ancient practice that originated thousands of years ago in India and made its way to the United States in the late 1800s. However, it did not emerge as formal therapy until the 1980s.

Yoga treatment begins with a health assessment and discussion about goals. Sessions can include the following:

- Breathing exercises
- Physical postures
- Meditation
- Guided imagery
- Homework (a way to incorporate it into daily life)

Acupuncture

Acupuncture was developed in ancient China, and only recently have studies proven that it is at least moderately effective in treating pain. Traditional acupuncture involves stimulating certain points on the body with a needle.

Acupuncture is said to work because needles stimulate specific points, releasing a flow of energy called qi, or chi. If the body is experiencing a disruption to the flow of this energy, the body will fall ill. Western medicine has hypothesized that acupuncture works through neuro-hormonal pathways. So, when a pathway is stimulated, the nerve sends signals to the brain, releasing endorphins. This explanation is not too far off from the idea of releasing something ancient doctors referred to as chi.

Adventure Therapy

As the name suggests, adventure therapy is an experiential therapy that involves going on an adventure, typically in the outdoors. Activities include camping, hiking, navigating ropes courses, rock climbing and sailing. This type of therapy allows participants to take calculated risks and explore personal issues in a safe, supportive environment under the guidance and support of mental health professionals.

One of the most well-known acts of adventure therapy was completed without a professional and recorded by writer Cheryl Strayed in a book that was later adapted for the big screen in the movie *Wild*. After a divorce and finding herself at a crossroads, Strayed hiked the Pacific Crest Trail and logged about 1,000 miles alone. At the time, though, she was only a self-professed novice hiker.

Although Strayed's experience helped her grow and overcome significant suffering, going out to the wild on your own is not advised – especially if you aren't sure you know what you're doing. Strayed holds onto the idea that her experience ultimately healed her.

If you want to try something like this, safely, adventure therapy is something to look into. For those recovering from deep emotional wounds or unresolved trauma and who are in the depths of destructive addiction, adventure therapy can open doors to a greater sense of self-awareness.

Fine Arts Therapy

The creative arts can be a great place to turn for holistic therapy. Even if you don't consider yourself artistic, know that inside everyone lies a passion and appreciation for beauty. The ability to express that beauty exists alongside it. In fact, the creative arts (dance, drama, multimedia art, and writing) is an ancient process that exists simply because the state of being human is difficult for everyone. It was the need to express that struggle that lead to the creative arts.

For some, even the act of viewing art is therapy: You don't have to create it in order to partake in the creative process. This is part of that simple beauty of creation. By viewing it – whether that means going to a play, touring a museum or reading poetry and prose – you are participating in the creative arts. After all, what is a piece of art without a viewer? The artist had a message he or she needed to get delivered. If it gets to you and makes you consider your struggles, your achievements or your very existence, that's part of therapy.

It has been well documented that creative therapies can be extremely helpful in the process of recovery from addiction. The creative process gives people the opportunity to get connected to who they really are and what they are experiencing. In addition, it offers an opportunity to connect with a higher power by expressing emotions that may be otherwise impossible to put into mere everyday words.

Therefore, creating art is just as fulfilling – perhaps even more so – than viewing it. There are a number of organizations that exist just to increase awareness, and many offer opportunities to those who want to take part in art as therapy. However, art therapy goes far beyond a paint brush or a sketch book. There is a whole world of art therapy out there waiting for you to explore and take part in if traditional painting and drawing aren't cutting it for you.

Dance Therapy

Dance/movement therapy is the psychotherapeutic use of movement to promote the emotional, social, cognitive and physical integration of the individual. Plainly speaking, this means it feels good to move and express your feelings, so do it!

This type of therapy focuses on movement and is expressive. It communicates feelings and emotions through focused body movements. During a dance therapy session, participants follow an instructor as they are led through movements that range from subtle and ordinary to expressive and improvisational.

Drama Therapy

Drama therapy is an active, experiential approach to facilitating change in yourself, your thoughts and your behaviors. With storytelling, play and purposeful improvisation, participants share desired behaviors, practice being in relationships and find flexibility within life roles.

Performers are able to step into another world and start to explore who they want to be, heal who they were and be the change they wish to see. Unlike talk therapy, drama therapy can move a participant to a place of self-discovery quickly.

Many times, role playing and acting out issues can be more effective than talking. By either pretending to be someone else or replaying specific events in a safe place, participants can learn that they can be liberated from the emotions and feelings that have been plaguing them.

Music Therapy

Music therapy is the clinical and evidence-based use of music to accomplish individualized goals within a therapeutic relationship. Music is used in sessions to address the needs of individuals with a licensed therapist. During a session, participants can create, sing, move to or simply listen to music.

With music therapy, patients can be strengthened and given avenues of communication that may have seemed difficult or even impossible through simple conversation. Music therapy has helped people regain speech after physical and emotional trauma, and it has lessened pain and improved communication capabilities.

Drumming

Drumming therapy is an ancient approach to healing that uses rhythm to promote self-expression and a connectedness to one's authentic self. Drumming has been used for thousands of years by shamans and healers throughout the globe. Current research is only now beginning to verify the therapeutic effects of drumming techniques that have been in practice since the beginning of the human experience.

Drumming accelerates physical health, boosts the immune system, produces feelings of well-being and releases emotional trauma. While drumming, patients experience deep relaxation and lowered blood pressure. Drumming also promotes the production of endorphins, assisting with chronic pain.

During drumming therapy, participants experience deeper self-awareness by inducing synchronous brain activity. This means that the physical transmission of rhythmic energy (the act of drumming) synchronizes the two cerebral hemispheres. Therefore, your brain is actually working together and is in sync with each of its separate parts: The logical left hemisphere and the intuitive right hemisphere are in unity.

Aside from putting the two separate sides in harmony, drumming also permeates the entire brain. For example, the sound of drumming generates dynamic connections within neurons and can reach parts of the part where disorder impairment exists. The more connections that can be made within the brain, the more integrated our experiences become.

Drumming creates a sense of connection to the self and others. When engaged in the act of drumming, the participant can experience the “flow” – defined as simply getting lost in the moment and being at one with an act. This is also known as being “in the zone.” When in this state, a feeling of wholeness is experienced.

During a drumming therapy session, participants learn a variety of drumming methods and are taught how to feel comfortable with the drums. Those involved in drumming therapy do not get inundated with the technical side of drumming or creating a sound, but instead they learn about rhythm and how it makes them feel. Through visualization, participants are taught to let go and learn how to embark on a visual journey within their minds.



Conclusion: A Journey

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Clearly, there are a wide variety of holistic therapies to choose from. By trying out new techniques that you may not have considered, you may get closer to experiencing peace and living a meaningful sober life.

Life is a journey. It is not a straight line that is drawn perfectly from birth to death. There are twists and turns and struggles along the way. Although filled with pain and challenges, your experiences make up your story. They are tough, but you have found that you are tougher. You are human and flawed, but we all are. You are complex and finding your own way to cope.

This process of turning your experiences into a beautiful and full life is what makes the wonderment of living beautiful. With holistic therapy, you can deepen your life. You can experience being whole. You can be comfortable being you.

Works Consulted

<http://www.dualdiagnosis.org>
http://www.bhevolution.org/public/cooccurring_overview.page
<http://www.dualdiagnosis.org/treatment-therapies-for-dual-diagnosis-patients/holistic-treatment/>
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/tamara-mcclintock-greenberg/psychology-and-patient-care_b_984330.html
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