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Healing the brain, body and spirit in co-occurring addictions and eating disorders

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Eating disorders (ED) and substance use disorders (SUD) co-occur in many individuals. This workshop emphasizes the importance of treating ED and SUD simultaneously as well as treating the underlying neurobiological, physical and traumatic causes of both. The presenter will offer a specific integrative approach to heal the brain, body, and spirit. Studies on the co-morbidity of ED and SUD show that thirty percent of females in the treatment of alcoholism have eating disorders. Individuals with anorexia may have co-occurring rates of SUD as high as twenty-five percent. The rates for bulimia and binge eating disorder may reach seventy percent. Underlying root causes that occur in both SUD and ED such as genetic factors, trauma, neglect, and abuse have been shown to have an effect on the brain's ability to produce neurotransmitters that affect mood, eating behavior, impulsivity and reactivity to stress. Chronic depletion of specific vitamins and amino acids which are the precursors to neurotransmitters such as serotonin, epinephrine, and dopamine have been implicated in this process. By addressing brain reward deficiencies, enhancing the function of the gastrointestinal tract (the gut-brain) and improving an individual's ability to manage stress in this integrative approach, the individual's overall functioning in treatment may be enhanced and relapse risk may be reduced.

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