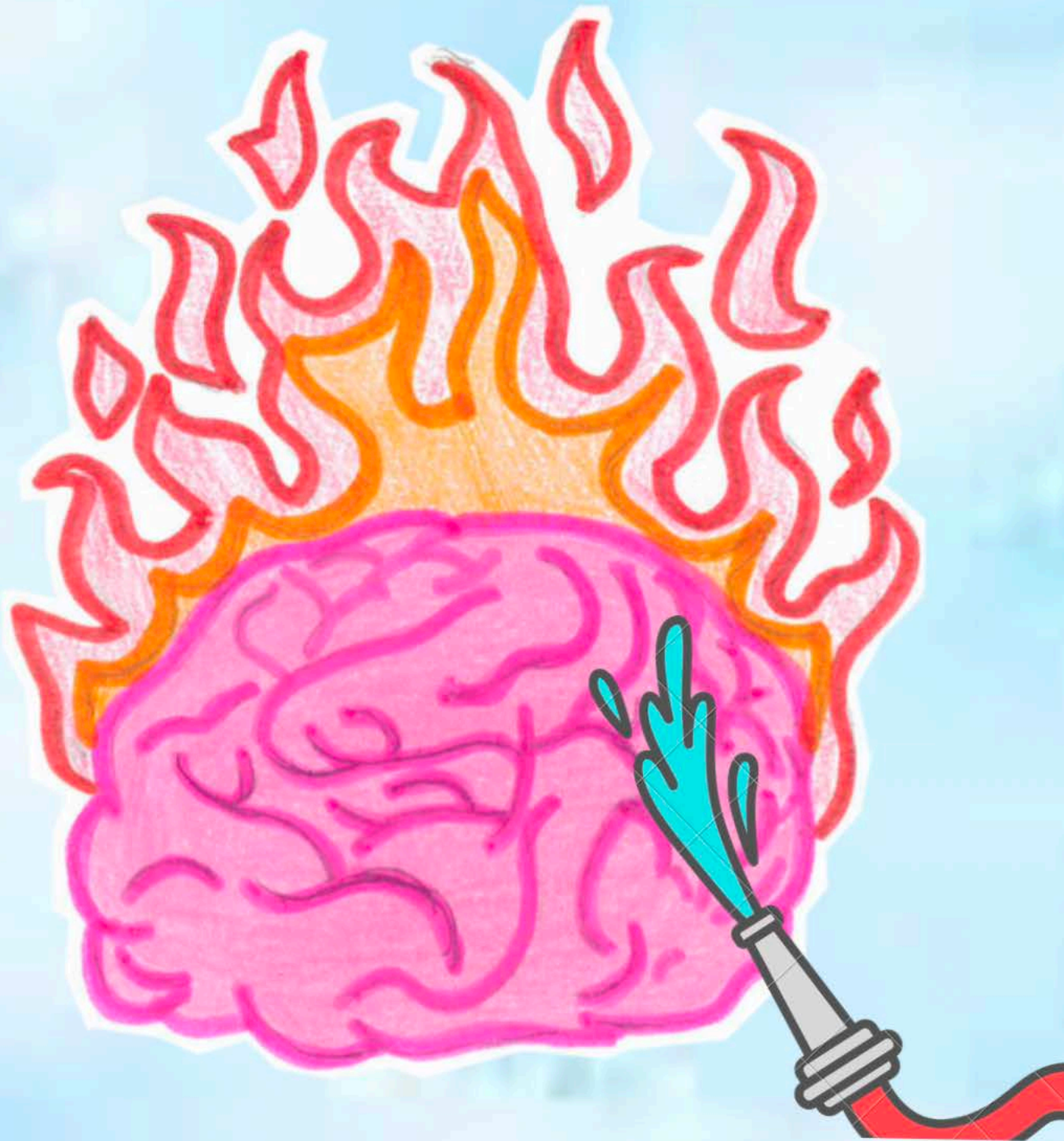


ROAD **2** **RECOVERY**



Risk Factors

There are several reasons a person may start using drugs. A few common examples are:

- **Grieving after loss**
- **Self medication**
- **Reducing stress**
- **Thrill seeking**
- **Social glorification**
- **Peer pressure**
- **Boredom**

- Most drugs affect the reward circuit causing euphoria as well as flooding it with chemical messenger dopamine

- Surges of dopamine in the reward circuit causes the reinforcement of pleasurable but unhealthy behaviors like taking drugs, leading people to repeat the behavior (NIDA ,2018).

THE BRAIN IN RECOVERY

Dopamine:

A neurotransmitter that allows us to feel pleasure and happiness

Serotonin:

A neurotransmitter that is responsible for your mood and satisfaction

When dopamine is released, it makes you want more. When an action that releases the dopamine is repeated, the serotonin neurotransmitters are less likely to be satisfied (Shao,2022).

For the brain to recover it has to unlearn habits that took place during active addiction (Stone Ridge Centers, 2022).

When a certain drug is used repetitively, dopamine neurotransmitters will allow this to become a habit because it makes you feel good. When a drug recreates the feelings of dopamine it can cause you to "Drug-seek." This is what causes the addiction in the reward system.

(American Addiction Centers,2021)

Healthy Control

In these brain scan images you can see the effects of meth on a person's brain (right), when compared to someone who doesn't use meth (left).

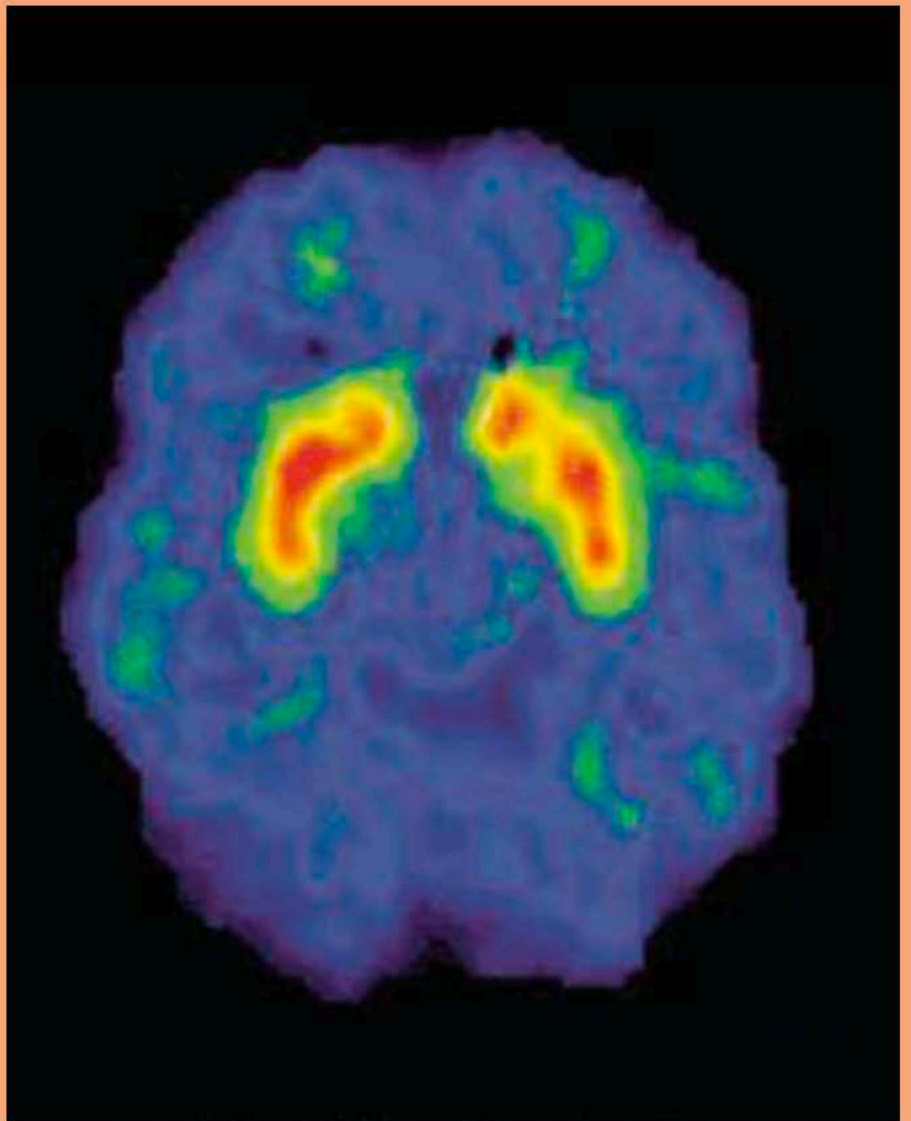


Image Source: National Institute of Drug Abuse

**The lighted areas show brain activity, which is diminished in the meth user's brain.
(National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2021)**

METHAMPHETAMINE USER

The use of methamphetamine is associated with decreases in the number of neurons in the central nervous system (CNS). The ability of the CNS to regenerate these neurons is limited, and in many cases, the loss of neurons cannot be recovered.

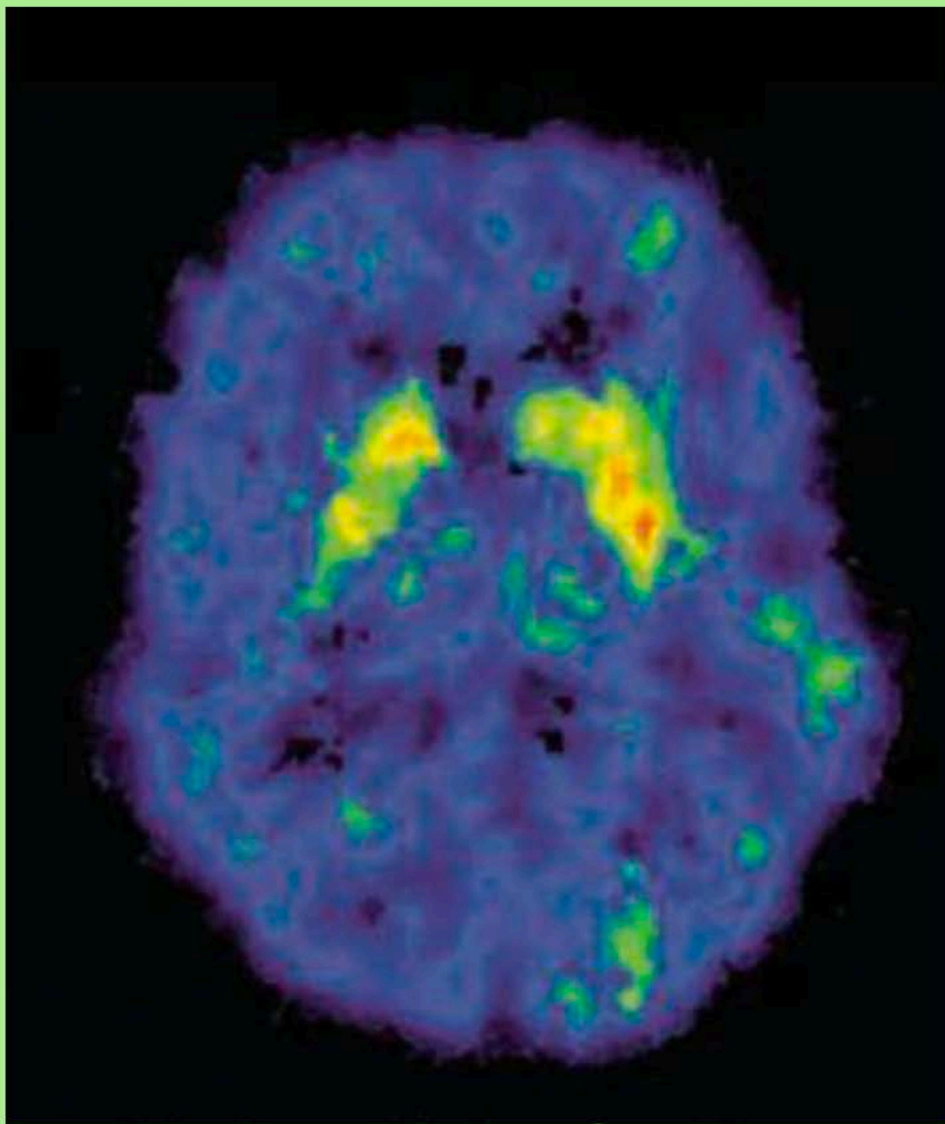


Image Source: National Institute of Drug Abuse

Chronic use of methamphetamine can result in diffuse brain damage that occurs via neuronal death. Neuronal death occurs in a number of areas of the brain as a result of meth abuse that include but are not limited to the hippocampus, the striatum, the parietal cortex, the frontal and prefrontal cortex, a number of subcortical structures, and the cerebellum (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2021).

MYTH VS FACTS

Myth: Teenagers are too young to get addicted.



Fact: Addiction can happen at any age. Even unborn children can get addicted because of their mother's drug use.

Myth: If someone has a stable job, family, and life, they can't be suffering from addiction.



Fact: Many people live in denial because they're successful in their professional lives, or because they come from a "good" home. The reality is that anyone can be vulnerable to addiction.

Myth: Addiction mostly affects certain types of people.



Fact: This disease does not discriminate. Addiction can affect anyone. No matter your age, income, ethnicity, religion, family, profession etc.

Myth: Prescription drugs are not addictive like street drugs because they come from a doctor.



Fact: Addiction to prescription medications is a serious and growing problem among all age groups. These drugs can be highly addictive and have serious harmful effects.

Interview 1

***This interview was edited for clarity ***

Interview by Regan Gonsalves-Allen

Q: When did you start recovery and why?

I started recovery about 15 years ago. I wanted to recover so I could raise my children.

Q: What were the first steps you took?

The first steps I took toward recovery were to find a facility and communicate my needs to my partner.

Q: What were some misconceptions you had about recovery?

The biggest misconception I had was that it was going to be easy.

Q: Did you face any setbacks? If so, how did you get back on track?

I had a few mental setbacks. To get back on track I used the resources and tools I learned in recovery.

Q: Did you experience any lasting effects due to addiction?

Memory loss, but I'm not sure if that's from addiction or age.

Q: What advice would you give to someone who wants to recover?

Get into any program, getting help is the first step but you have to want to help yourself.

***The person interviewed wishes to remain anonymous ***

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RECOVERY

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Interview 2

***This interview was edited for clarity ***

Interview by Zoe Baron

Q: When did you decide to start recovery and why?

I actually started a few months before I got incarcerated, but I wasn't able to do it alone. I didn't have the will power being in the environment I was in. I hit rock bottom and wanted to be there for my family.

Q: What were the first steps you took?

The first steps were involuntary, I got locked up. After getting a clear train of thought, I made the decision to keep going. I also had help from my loved ones that didn't give up on me.

Q: What were some misconceptions you had about recovery?

A misconception I had about recovery was that I was going to have to live a plain boring ordinary life but that's not true. I live everyday to the fullest.

Q: Did you face any setbacks? If so, how did you get back on track?

Luckily I didn't face many setbacks other than having charges pending. But with the help of God, a good public defender, a supportive family, and an awesome partner I was able to get past that.

Q: What advice would you give to someone who wants to recover?

The first step is wanting it really bad. Then removing yourself from the scene, friends, places, etc. Find yourself a really good support system, God worked for me, but you have to take the steps.

***The person interviewed wishes to remain anonymous ***

NEED HELP?

American Addiction Centers Call
(888) 676-0247 or get a text for information
on various treatment options.

SAMHSA's National Helpline call
1-800-662-HELP (4357)

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