

The Knee-bone's Connected to the Thigh-bone:

The Benefits of Healing Holistically from Addictive Behaviours

Recovering from an “addictive behaviour” requires a lot from us – we need to make sure that a number of life pieces are in place before we can be successful. Whether we are dealing with mind-altering substances like drugs and alcohol, or other mood-altering behaviours such as disordered eating, smoking, excessive internet use, gambling, over-spending or codependency in our relationships, until we can think in holistic terms about our recovery we will most likely be doomed to repeat our dysfunctional ways.

Some of the pieces of your life that you will need to explore include the work you do to earn your living, your relationships with family and close friends, your spirituality, how you treat your body in terms of proper nutrition, exercise and adequate sleep, and the things you enjoy doing such as hobbies and interests.

Let's look more closely at each one...

Are you enjoying your work?

The concept of “work” can encompass many things. For some of you, it may be a “j-o-b” that you do in order to earn a pay cheque. Or you may be in a career that you have chosen for yourself because you thought the work would be interesting and rewarding. Perhaps you own a business or spend time volunteering at an agency where your help is needed. Or you may currently be a student, where your “job” is to study and write papers.

Regardless of how you are spending your time, what is important is whether you are enjoying what you are doing. Is the work in alignment with your view of what is important in life? Do you feel as if you are “giving back” in ways that nourish you? Do you believe in what you are doing and that it is best for you at this time?

If you answered no to any of the above questions, it would be beneficial for you to explore what might be a better way for you to be spending your “work” time.

How are you treating your body?

A huge part of our job as adults is to learn the best ways to take good care of our bodies.

Bodies need a lot of looking after if they are going to look after us. Treating your body well includes the following:

- Nourishing your body by eating well
- Maintaining a healthy and appropriate body weight
- Getting adequate rest and sleep
- Exercising your bones and muscles on a regular basis
- Enjoying great sex, if you choose to be sexually active
- Seeking medical attention (Western or alternative) when necessary

If we overlook any of the above, we will be letting our bodies down – and we run the risk of our bodies letting US down over time. As most of us know, it is difficult to get on with our lives if we are struggling with physical difficulties.

How is your emotional life?

Are you enjoying your life? Do your relationships bring you contentment and happiness? Do you take life too seriously or are you able to laugh at yourself?

Relationships with family members, partners and friends take up another major part of a person's life. It is important to surround yourself with positive-minded people who are supportive of your dreams and goals, and for whom you can act as a support as well. Be sure to have at least one person in your life that you can have deep belly-laugh with on a regular basis. This will help to keep your amusement with yourself and life in general fresh and juicy.

Giving time to your hobbies and interests is another way to keep your emotional life healthy. We must continue to exercise our brains as well, especially as we get older, so you might want to consider doing something like joining a book club, becoming part of a choir, or learning a new language. Engaging in activities like these will also give you an opportunity to meet other people with interests that are similar to yours.

Are you meeting your spiritual needs?

It has been said that we are not human beings having a spiritual experience, but rather that we are spiritual beings having a human experience.

A big part of developing into a healthy human being is finding that spiritual core inside of yourself. It means taking the time to know yourself and what you believe in – what you are in alignment with. This can mean becoming part of organized religious communities such as Christianity, Judaism or Buddhism. It can also involve attending meditation groups or finding time to quietly reflect by yourself.

Perhaps you believe strongly in a political cause such as going green, saving the whales or wanting to ease the tensions in Tibet. Becoming involved in positive and healthy ways of giving back to the world can be a spiritual experience as well for many people.

It is vital to take some time to assess what is important to you, and then to act on it in some way that speaks to you. Remember that it is your responsibility (and your pleasure!) to develop the spiritual side of your life.

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To quote an old children's song, the knee-bone really is connected to the thigh-bone – everything in our bodies and in our lives is connected to everything else. To neglect any part of yourself can cause you to feel empty, lonely and unfulfilled.

I hope you will take the time to reflect on what is important to you and to act on it, so that you can bring yourself the greatest joy possible and live your best life!