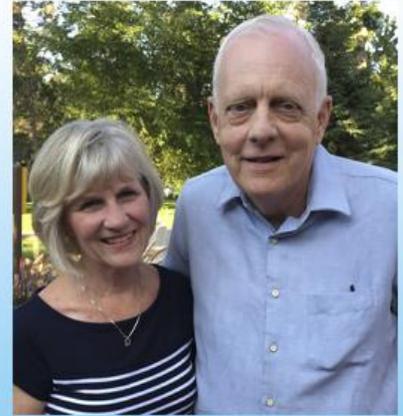


Faithful & True

The Recovery Report

November, 2016



Mark & Debbie Laaser, Directors of Faithful & True

Happy Thanksgiving!

Wishing you the gift of faith and the blessing of hope, good health & healing this holiday season.

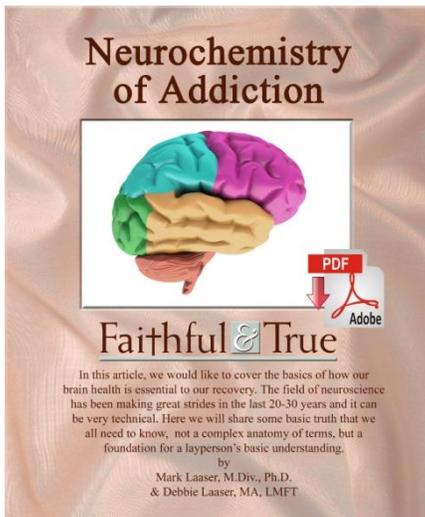
Welcome to the November issue of *The Recovery Report*, the official monthly newsletter of Mark & Debbie Laaser and Faithful & True. November has arrived and ready-or-not, the holidays will soon be here! To be honest, we really do enjoy the holidays and opportunities to spend quality time with family and friends, remembering to be thankful for all of God's many blessings.

2016 brought us many challenges and even more blessings. In February of this year, Mark was diagnosed with multiple myeloma cancer, a new challenge in our lives. Thanks to much prayer and excellent care of local doctors and the Mayo Clinic, this cancer is now in remission. Mark's prognosis or life expectancy is excellent. The doctors joke that he won't die of cancer, rather something else in old age. We have a lot of work yet to do!

We want to thank all of the many friends, associates and family members for their countless prayers and support during this time. Thanksgiving 2016 will indeed be a special occasion in our family.

This month, our Feature Article is taken from *The Toolkit for Individuals & Couples* and it explains in layperson terms, the **Neurochemistry of Addiction**. We hope that this excerpt will be informative and beneficial to you. We have both the individual chapters and the entire 10 chapter Toolkit available in our online bookstore at faithfulandtrue.com.

We hope that you and your family will have a safe and blessed Thanksgiving!



FEATURE ARTICLE: Neurochemistry of Addiction

Excerpts from our pdf: The Neurochemistry of Addiction
by Mark Laaser, Ph.D., & Debbie Laaser, MA, LMFT

In this article, we would like to cover the basics of how our brain health is essential to our recovery. The field of neuroscience has been making great strides in the last 20-30 years. It can be very technical and we have tried to distill from it some basic truth that we all need to know. We are not going to give you complex anatomy or terms. Rather, we will try to give you a lay person's basic understanding.

We want this explanation to be hopeful. We can change the very physical structures of our brains and mold them in such a way to be congruent with and constructive to our recovery. One of our favorite neuro-scientific terms is "neuroplasticity." That means that the brain is plastic, moldable, changeable, and such that we can shape it according to our purposes.

The truth is that there are more nerve cells in our brain than there are stars in our solar system. They do have the ability to regenerate and create new connections. How we do that is a product of our intentional thought life, patterns of meditation, fellowship in a community of other men or women, nutrition, exercise, and perhaps medication for mental health issues. Regenerating new connections can also be a matter of receiving counseling help for underlying wounds and trauma in our lives, experiences that caused us to form core beliefs about ourselves, others and the world that were just not healthy for our brains.

Men and women who have developed sexual addiction have developed neurochemical tolerance to the neurochemicals that sexual arousal and activity creates in the brain. Tolerance is a dynamic function of the brain that allows it to adjust to whatever chemicals we put into it. When you drank your first cup of coffee, you felt an immediate buzz and sense of agitation, but your brain worked to return you to normal and you "came down" from it. That would continue if your use of coffee were occasional. If you start drinking coffee every day, however, your brain would adjust to it and virtually create a new state of normal. After a while, one cup of coffee would no longer create the same effect. This is because the brain adjusts. This is called tolerance.

Tolerance is a factor in all addictions. Alcoholics and drug addicts know about it. Their use of alcohol or drugs of any kind will increase over time. Behaviors can also create or stimulate neurochemicals in the brain. Gambling can be an addiction because the risks and excitement of gambling stimulates adrenalin in the brain. Gradually more adrenalin will be needed to achieve the same high and before he or she knows it, the gambling addict has lost a great deal of money and spent large amounts of time at the casino or online.

Sexual arousal, just thinking about sex, produces and is dependent on adrenaline. Adrenaline is the chemical that sends signals throughout the body to get ready to be sexual. Sexual arousal also produces the neurochemical dopamine that is called the "pleasure chemical" in the

brain. It stimulates the *pleasure center* in the brain and brings with it powerful and very pleasurable feelings. The combination of dopamine and adrenaline has been compared to the effect of cocaine on the *pleasure center*. When we experience human touch, our brain produces the neurochemical oxytocin. This gives us a feeling of well-being and connectedness. At the end of the sexual arousal cycle the act of orgasm also produces a collection of neurochemicals, a part of the family of neurochemicals called catecholamine's, that give that powerful feeling of pleasure in the *pleasure center*. This combination of neurochemicals has been compared to heroin in its effect.

The brain can become neurochemically tolerant to all of these neurochemicals: adrenaline, dopamine, oxytocin, and the catecholamine. In effect, the sexual arousal cycle from thought to orgasm can be like a rush of cocaine and heroin. This dynamic explains why sex addicts can experience a growing tolerance and, therefore, an escalation of sexual activity over time. This factor of tolerance means that there is never enough sex. Sex addicts may believe that there is. They will often think to themselves that if they could only get more sex or different kinds of sex, they would be satisfied. The truth is that while the brain will experience that temporary high of sex and new forms of sex will bring more adrenalin with it, the effect soon wears off. Eventually even new forms of sex will get "old" or boring.

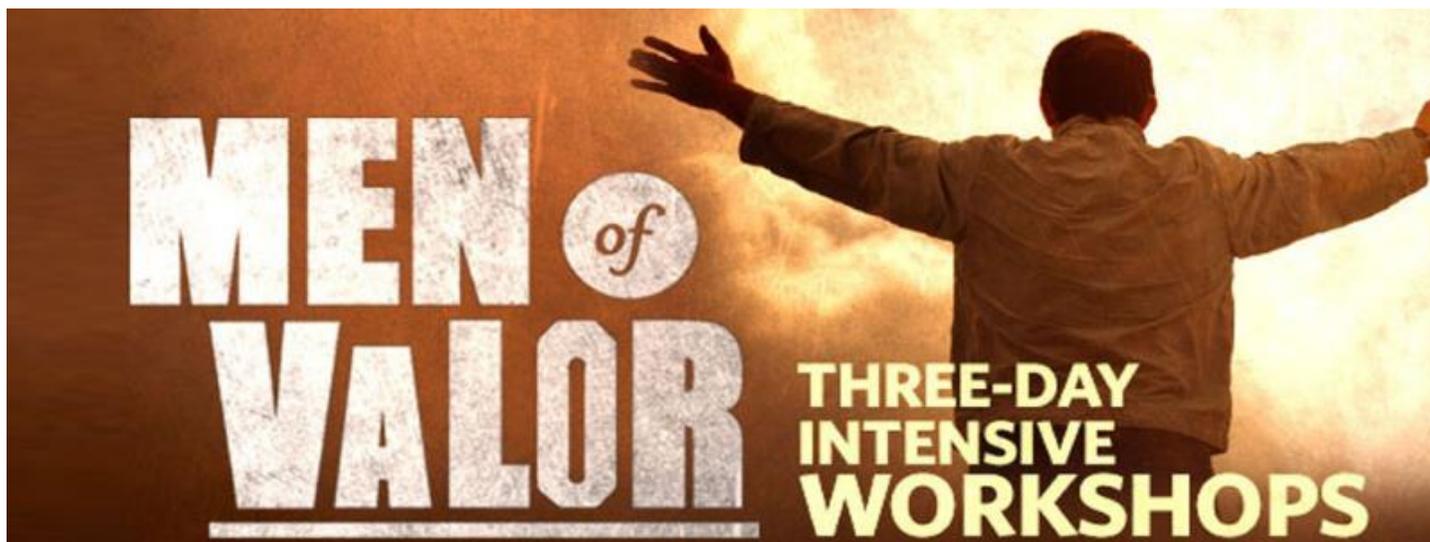
The very good news is that just as the brain will adjust "up" in terms of its expectations it will also adjust "down." Simply, this is called detoxification. The length of time it takes the brain to fully detox from the tolerance of the neurochemistry of sexual arousal is roughly 7-14 days. If an addict can get past that, the tolerance effect will wear off gradually, but he or she will experience a heightened sexual demand for a time. That can be experienced as agitation, anxiety, and restlessness. After this period, however, demand will decrease and it will become easier to maintain the addict's definition of sobriety.

Detox requires that there is no sexual activity with self or others. Bottom line, there can be no orgasm. If the addict is married, of course, achieving this will need the consent and cooperation of his spouse. We believe that a husband and wife should agree not to be sexual for at least the 1-2 weeks necessary for detox.

We believe that there is a very vital second benefit of this "abstinence" contract. During the time of not being sexual, we ask the couple to commit to doing some form of spiritual activity so as to increase the spiritual connection. We base this biblically on Paul's teaching in I Cor 7:5 in which he says that a couple should not deprive each other except for a time and by mutual consent so that they can devote themselves to fasting and prayer. Our definition of healthy sexuality says that sex is the expression of emotional and spiritual intimacy between the couple. The abstinence period is a time for them to really pursue that.

We find that to change patterns of spiritually connecting takes a longer time than the detox phase. We, therefore, encourage couples to think about being sexually abstinent for 30-90 days. Sex addicts will find the obvious benefit of detox in that making healthy choices about sexuality will become easier. The brain's demands will have gone down and the addict can now choose to engage in sexuality with his spouse for healthy reasons of connection.

*The complete Neurochemistry of Addiction pdf is available in our online bookstore at faithfulandtrue.com and it is also one of 10 chapters in **The Toolkit for Individuals & Couples**, also available in our bookstore.



WORKSHOPS UPDATE

The Men of Valor 3-Day Intensive Workshop will be held at Faithful & True on **November 17 - 19, 2016** and we still have a limited number of spots.

Visit our website at faithfulandtrue.com to register or call us at **952-746-3880**. This is a life changing event for men who are struggling with pornography and other sexual purity issues.

Here are other upcoming dates for the **Men of Valor Workshops**:

December 8-10, 2016

January 12-14, 2017

February 16-18, 2017

March 16-18, 2017

April 20-22, 2017

May 18-20, 2017

The remaining 2017 workshop dates are available on our website.

The **WOMEN'S JOURNEY 3-Day Intensive Workshops** will return in 2017 on the following dates:

February 2-4, 2017

June 1-3, 2017

October 5-7, 2017

Our 2017 **COUPLES' 3-Day Intensive Workshops** are scheduled for the following dates:

March 2-4, 2017

August 3-5, 2017

November 2-4, 2017

*For more information about any of our 3-Day Intensive Workshops, or to register, visit our website faithfulandtrue.com or call **952-746-3880**.



**THE MEN OF VALOR PROGRAM IS NOW
ON [SOUNDCLOUD.COM](https://www.soundcloud.com)**

Dr. Mark Laaser and co-host, Randy Evert have been recording the Men of Valor podcasts since 2013 and we invite you to join our ever-expanding list of loyal listeners.

We recently experienced a technical problem with our podcast site which has been corrected. We are now offering our 2016 collection of Men of Valor podcasts hosted on [soundcloud.com](https://www.soundcloud.com) at [faithfulandtrue.com](https://www.faithfulandtrue.com) and on iTunes.

We invite you to visit our new site at [faithfulandtrue.com](https://www.faithfulandtrue.com) and become one of our FOLLOWERS, even if you were a previous follower of our podcasts on Podomatic.

Please clear your browser of the MOV link on Podomatic.

Thank you!

[Visit faithfulandtrue.com](https://www.faithfulandtrue.com)

NOW AVAILABLE!

The Toolkit for Individuals & Couples

Mark and Debbie Laaser have created this new collection of 10 effective and transformative articles for both couples and individuals to use on their healing journey from sexual addiction and relational betrayal. Visit our online bookstore to order today at [faithfulandtrue.com](https://www.faithfulandtrue.com).

