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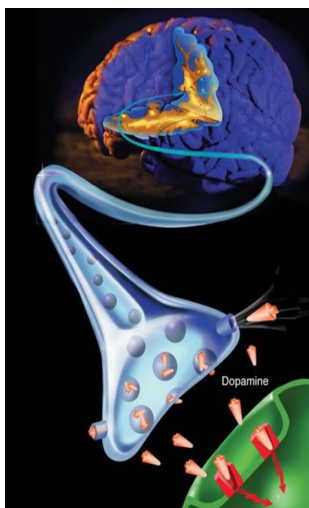


My passion behind helping addicts and alcoholics stems from my brother's death. He passed in 2001 to a drug overdose.

I am now helping people before they hit the same bottom he did.

Alcohol Addiction and the Neural System

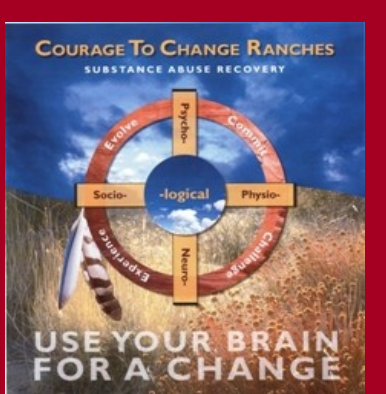
The human brain is comprised of neurons, the cells that are capable of orchestrating the body functions, such as perceiving the stimuli from the environment and responding to them while helping the body to survive. The brain is responsible for initiating behavioral patterns and reactions, which form the way the person responds to learning, emotions, attention and cognition. The coordination between the brain and the extremities comes with the efficient synaptic communication of the neurons, through neurotransmitters. These neurotransmitters form the complex within the brain working to pass on the information while also being an important contributor to the variation in a person's moods and behavioral patterns.



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Sacred Sweat Lodge (Inipi) Ceremony



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It is a native tradition to sit in a circle and talk-to-share what is in your heart.

John Peters (Slow Turtle)



The Sacred Sweat Lodge Ceremony is a powerful ritual for prayer and renewal, practiced by Native Americans for centuries. Courage to Change offers sweat lodge ceremonies bi-monthly. These ceremonies are attended by current and past clients as well as friends and family.

We are thankful to have Sam, a Lakota Native from Longmont as our water pourer and teacher. Sam begins each ceremony with a "Talking Circle" which is based on a Native tradition stemming from the 1800's as initiated by a Seneca Native named Handsome Lake to support alcoholism recovery.

"The talking circle is also a listening circle. The talking circle allows one person to talk at a time for as long as they need to talk. So much can be gained by listening. Is it a coincidence that the Creator gave us one mouth and two ears? The power of the circle allows the heart to be shared with each other. What we share with each other also heals each other. When we talk about our pain in the circle, it is distributed to the circle, and we are free of the pain. The talking circle works because when the people form a circle the Great Mystery is in the center. My creator, give me the courage to share, and the courage to listen."

Elder's Meditation of the Day

The Talking Circles are mysteriously blessed by the four-leggeds and the wingeds. Without fail a Golden Eagle flies around the group soon after the sacred fire is started. Rabbits come as close as they dare and often Red tail Hawks and Night Hawks sign to us and King Birds and Chickadees sing as we sit in our circle. Talking Circles are closed with the following prayer:

Prayer to the Great Spirit

**Keep us oh Great Spirit from pettiness. Let us be large in thought, in word, and de and small in fault-finding and self-seeking.
May we put away all pre-conceived notions and meet each other face-to-face with self pity and without prejudice.
Help us take time for all that is good.
Help us grow calm, serene, gentle, and kind. Teach us to put into action or better impulses, straightforward and unafraid.
Grant that we may realize it is the little things that create differences, that in the bi-circle of life we are all one.
And may we strive to touch and know the great common human heart of all of us.**



Our Inipi was constructed by friends and clients with Sam's direction. Willow trees are bent in circular fashion and tied together with red, white, yellow, black, green, blue and purple strips of fabric to make a colorful inner womb-like interior. Hanging over the Grandfather (Stone) Pit are flags of each of the 7 colors. In Lakota tradition the colors represent the 7 directions – Black for West, Red for North, Yellow for East, White for South, Blue for Grandfather Sky, Green for Mother Earth and Purple for Yourself. Outside the Inipi is a circular alter bordered by rocks (used Grandfathers) and topped with forked deer antlers to hold the Talking Circle Feather and a buffalo skull. The alter is used for burning sage for the purification ceremony and for Sam to fill his Pipe in prayer.

Just a few feet from the alter is the fire pit used to heat the rocks (Grandfathers) for the ceremony. The fire is always built in a sacred order with prayer to the 7 directions about 3 hours prior to the ceremony. When the grandfathers are red hot it is time to begin the sweat lodge ceremony.

Sam enters the lodge, followed by women and then men who move in a clockwise direction to form a seated circle around the pit. We sit in silence as the first 7 grandfathers are brought in by the carriers and are sprinkled with cedar. When the grandfathers have entered, the door is closed and we sit in darkness except for the glow of the red-hot grandfathers and listen to Sam's instructions regarding the ceremony and the phrase: "All My Relations" if someone needs to leave the lodge. The ceremony is performed in 4 separate prayer sets with the final set including all the red-hot grandfathers. The lodge becomes very dark and very hot and is filled with singing, drumming, and praying. Our ceremonies are safe in that:

- We do not fast prior to the ceremony
- We allow anyone to leave the lodge at anytime
- We pass water in a buffalo horn between sessions
- Sam checks with everyone at the end of each session
- No one is forced to participate nor to stay in the lodge if they wish to leave

A feast and fellowship follows the Inipi Ceremony

References:

White Bison, Inc. (2002). *The Red Road to Wellbriety: In the Native American Way*, White Bison Inc, Colorado Springs, Colorado.

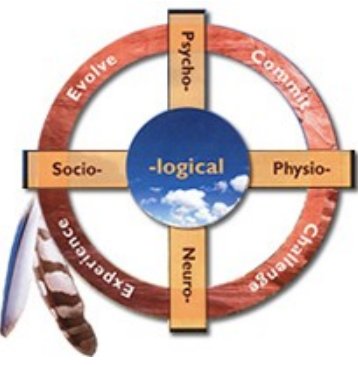
Elder's Meditation of the Day, White Bison Inc, Colorado Springs, Colorado.

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Meet Leslie Carol Botha — Assistant Administrative and Marketing Director



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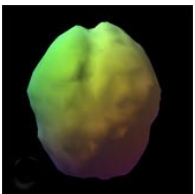
Matt Brindisi

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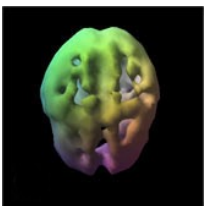
Alcohol is among one of the most commonly abused psychoactive substances affecting the coordination at three different levels. At the synaptic level, alcohol addiction creates an imbalance in the transmission of inter-neural information while at a system level, it is capable of unbalancing the coordination between the regions in the brain. At the intra-neural level, alcohol affects the functions of the neurons themselves.

Alcohol, when consumed, alters the normal bio-chemistry of the body, starting with the brain. At the neural level, alcohol changes the properties of the neurotransmitter receptors, debilitating the effective release of the neurotransmitters.

Alcohol addiction hinders the functionality of the neural system by stepping up the release of dopamine, a neurotransmitter that plays an important role in the recognition of motor activities and responses to stimuli forming the person's motivational behavior.



Healthy Brain



Alcoholic Brain

Courtesy [Dr. Daniel Amen](#)

The other neurotransmitters that take the brunt of alcohol addiction are GABA, serotonin and opioid peptides. This last class of peptides have integrated functions with the neurotransmitters playing a role in blocking out the sensation of pain. Alcohol is known to increase the release of endorphins giving the person a state of euphoria, while it inhibits the receptors specific to that of glutamate. Affecting the receptor functions leads to a collapse in coordination, memory and muscular functions.

[Read Full Article.....](#)

I have been a women's health educator for over 30 years. I have also had an innate skill for marketing and promotions with the media and have found a way to combine both skills for the Courage to Change Addiction Recovery Ranch.

My journey began thirty years ago – at my annual visit to Planned Parenthood. I was so inspired by the education provided on women's reproductive health - I became a volunteer at the Fort Collins, CO clinic and then a staff member for 5 years. Three things made a great impact on me – 1) the library of books by and for women the director invited me to read; 2) the cyclical repetitive pattern of returning clients with the same medical problems; 3) the realization that medical gynecological text books were mostly about the manipulation and intervention of a natural cycle.

The books that I read literally turned my life around.....I was in a prestigious college back east where my classmates were bound for politics or Wall Street – and I left because it did not make sense to me.

And then I read books by women about women's perception of history, politics, religion, archaeology, and mythology and suddenly my life, values, perceptions and beliefs were validated. Women make up 50% of the population – yet we have no clue about our history; failures, accomplishments and struggles for basic human rights. No wonder women have such a hard time finding validity in their lives. No wonder women are more prone to substance abuse – and have become prey for a medical/pharmaceutical system that uses our ignorance for monetary gain.

In the 1980's I published an award-winning woman's networking magazine in Fort Collins – and started teaching workshops on women's hormonal health. At that time I had the honor of meeting Dr. Judith Miller who agreed to sit on the board of directors for *Changing Woman Magazine* and graciously hosted many workshops where I was the presenter.

Times change – families get in the way – and Dr. Miller and I lost touch with each other – until last summer – 27 years later. I received her email out of the blue asking if I would consider becoming the marketing director for the Courage to Change Ranch.

The rest is history. Judith and I resumed our professional working relationship like it was yesterday – and in a year's time have accomplished many of her goals and aspirations for marketing the Courage to Change Addiction Recovery Ranches program to the world.

Leslie Carol Botha, Women's Health Educator, author, publisher, and broadcast journalist is an internationally recognized expert on women's hormonal health. Her work emphasizes the significance of the hormone cycle and its profound relationship to women's psyche. Botha's 30 years of research demonstrates how hormone changes/fluctuations in the menstrual cycle affect women's physical, mental and emotional well being. She is a member of the [Society for Menstrual Cycle Research](#), and an advisory board member for the [Cycles Research Institute](#).

In 2006, Botha received the Edward R. Dewey Award for her pioneering research on how women's hormonal fluctuations affect their behaviors. The award was bequeathed by the [Foundation for the Study of Cycles](#).

Her research is also featured in a new book titled: [The World According to Cycles- How Recurring Forces Can Predict the Future and Change Your Life](#) by Samuel A. Schreiner, Jr., published by [Skyhorse Publishing](#), New York City. Schreiner has noted that Botha is "....one of the most prominent twenty-first century cycle thinkers."

Botha currently hosts a radio show titled: [Holy Hormones Honey. The Greatest Story Never Told](#), on [KRFCFM.org](#) in Fort Collins. She has never given up her dream and her passion to help women understand their truth and their value, and their history.



On the Light Side... The Whale Said "Thank You"

If you read a recent front page story of the SF Chronicle, you would have heard about a female humpback whale that had become entangled in a spider web of crab traps and lines.

She was weighted down by hundreds of pounds of traps that caused her to struggle to stay afloat.



They worked for hours with curved knives and eventually freed her.

When she was free, the divers say she swam in what seemed like joyous circles.

She then came back to each and every diver, one at a time, and nudged them, pushed them gently around...

She was thanking them.

May you, and all those you love, be so blessed and fortunate to be surrounded by people who will help you get untangled from the things that are binding you.

And, may you always know the joy of giving and receiving gratitude.

I pass this on to you, my friends.

Judith Miller & Staff