**Drugs and Consciousness**

**Psychoactive drugs**are chemicals that change perception and mood and usually produces a**tolerance**thus one must use larger and larger doses to experience the same effect. If this happens, quitting will be very difficult because of unpleasant **withdrawal**effects that indicate a**physical dependence**and a **psychological dependence**on the drug. Using drugs medically more often does not cause addiction; addiction is *not*like a disease and can be overcome voluntarily and without therapy). There are three categories of psychoactive drugs discussed in this course:

1. ***Depressants***(drugs that slow and calm neural activity):

* ***Alcohol*** Impairs judgment and inhibitions and prevents recent events from going into long-term memory. Also, people who are made to believe they are drinking alcohol exhibited less sexual restraints.
* ***Barbiturates***(tranquilizers)- this drug is similar to alcohol because it lowers activity in the sympathetic nervous system. Large doses of barbiturates can cause death.
* ***Opiates*** (Morphine and Heroin) Opium and its derivatives depress brain activity and bring pleasure with addiction and may ultimately lead to death. The pain of withdrawal accompanies these drugs because the brain stops producing its own natural endorphins.

2. ***Stimulants***(drugs that speed up and excite neural activity):

* ***Caffeine, nicotine, cocaine*,** and **amphetamines**Increase heart and breathing rates. After the drug wears off, the user will experience a "crash" that involves moodiness, and even depression. Cocaine is the most powerful stimulant in that it blocks re-uptake of dopamine neurotransmitters. Thus, dopamine remains in the synapse to intensify moods.
* **Ecstasy-** this drug excites serotonin-releasing neurons but also prevents the reuptake of the neurotransmitter. Increased serotonin enhances mood. Long term effects appear to include the blocking and destruction of the serotonin-releasing receptors thereby causing depression that is untreatable. There may be other permanent effects on mood and chemical imbalances.

3. ***Hallucinogens***(Drugs that create distorted perceptions and thoughts without real stimuli):

* **LSD**(PCP) "acid" that makes you see shapes, colors, and have out-of-body experiences accompanied by various emotions.
* **Marijuana** Drug containing an organic compound called **THC**that can cause relaxation, a euphoric high, and increases sensitivity to colors, tastes, and sounds. Adverse effects, however, include impaired judgment, lung damage, disrupted memory, decreasing reaction time, and lowered sex hormone levels.

Other concepts covered in this chapter:

* **Near-death experience**is a state of consciousness reported after being close to death. These same experiences, such as seeing bright tunnels, are often experienced from LSD (drug hallucination) or oxygen deprivation.
* **Dualism**presumes that the mind and body are two distinct parts that usually separate after death. **Monism**, however, presumes that the mind and body are just different aspects of the same thing and that we cannot exist without our bodies.