

Pleasure and Reality

Post by “Elayne” of April 12, 2019 at 3:14 PM

Hiram, right, I do not mean an external object but a molecule that mimics our endogenous pleasure pathways-- which could give us pleasure despite actual danger. This is more similar to someone's brain being directly stimulated with electric current to create pleasure-- it does not give us the usual information about whether the action is likely safe. I would limit unnatural to synthetically produced mimics, such as fentanyl, but the word unnatural is tricky and I rarely use it. But I think it is safe to say that since fentanyl has not been around long, we can't have adjusted to it through evolution. There is a generation right now being exposed to massive use of synthetic opiates by their parents, and a dramatic increase in overdose deaths in the past few years in the US, often by young adults. The grandparents are raising these children-- I have many in my practice. I'm expecting a cultural aversion to synthetic mimics of the opiate pathway in that generation, which is being left orphaned-- once they are of age.

I am contrasting something like fentanyl's mimicking action with, for instance, a sweet pleasurable taste tending to indicate that a fruit is less likely poisonous-- in which case the brain is producing the evolved pleasure response. There is a definite difference between those two events in the brain, as well as in outcomes for the person.

As far as addiction goes, of course I have assisted in the treatment of teens, since that is part of pediatric practice, and for that reason I have done a fair amount of research. I think the evidence is most supportive of a process like the one Stanton Peele outlines. I have had several conversations with Stanton on the subject, and I had the pleasure of reviewing an advance copy of his book on developmental aspects of addiction, which is coming out in May. The general gist is that people do not become addicted when they are enjoying pleasure through their innate pleasure pathways-- they tend to have no interest in the mimics, or if they do use them, they do so without becoming addicted. <https://peele.net/>