Cocaine is less popular than methamphetamine, but is still a significant problem in our community. It is a stimulant like meth, it is snorted or injected like meth, it causes a high similar to methamphetamine, but it does not last as long as the methamphetamine high. It is highly addictive and it damages some of the same brain structures that methamphetamine damages.

Cocaine works the same way methamphetamine does. It floods the brain with the neurotransmitter dopamine and that causes an intense high. It makes you feel euphoric, energetic, intensely perceptive, and wide awake. When the drug wears off, the crash is severe. You feel achy all over, anxious, grouchy, irritable and mean. You are tired and depressed, restless and confused, shaky and hungry.

Fasciculus retroflexus is a slender little tract of 200 to 300 cells in the midbrain, and it is your center for self control. It helps you get up in the morning and go to work, take pride in your job, pay the rent and feed your kids. It allows you to control your behavior when you experience a craving, an urge, or a drive. It is part of what makes you human, and not just an animal. It is closely associated with the pleasure center in your brain.

Cocaine is neurotoxic to cells in this area of the brain. Under a microscope you can see that after exposure to cocaine the cells are coiled up, the axons degenerate, and the synaptic terminals disintegrate. The cells are dead.

Damage to this tract results in addiction and personality changes. When 50 % to 80% of the cells in this tract are dead, you experience overwhelming cravings and you are addicted. It is not a matter of willpower anymore. Willpower has been destroyed. You don't care about feeding your kids or paying the rent; you don't care about the law. All you can think about is getting another hit, and you want it right now.

Fasciculus Retroflexus traced through the midbrain

Each time you use cocaine, it takes more and more drug to get high. Your brain adapts to the drug by destroying receptors. Your brain is trying to protect itself from the effects of this drug. Eventually you don't get high anymore, but you can't quit using because the crash is so miserable and the craving is so intense.

The mesocorticlimbic tract connects the midbrain centers of personality together and mediates how you perceive the outside world. It has connections to the front of the brain, the seat of emotion, and so it gives emotional meaning to events occurring in the outside world. Damage to it causes paranoia.

Your wife comes home from the grocery store. If you are paranoid, you think she's having an affair, or poisoning your food. The UPS man is delivering a package to your neighbor. If you are paranoid, you think he is an undercover narc spying on you, and the package is a bomb intended to kill you.

Long term use of cocaine causes personality changes because of damage to the midbrain personality centers. You are anxious and irritable now, when you used to be a fairly happy person.

You feel depressed a lot. The things that used to give you joy don't feel good anymore. Sex doesn't feel good. Talking to your friends doesn't feel good. Playing your guitar doesn't feel good. The joy in life is gone.

These cells will recover with time. The damage to your pleasure centers is long lasting, but usually not permanent. Recovery of your ability to feel happiness comes slowly and gradually if you stay off drugs.

Cocaine, like methamphetamine, damages the tract in your brain responsible for willpower and self control. Recovery from addiction to these drugs is extremely difficult. You have to develop other parts of your personality to compensate for the loss of this very important tract.
We build a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. He suffered and died to put you in a right relationship with God. He took upon Himself the wrath of God, the punishment for our rebellion so we could come to God as our Father and be accepted as His child. Invite Him into your life with a simple prayer.

Say, “Lord Jesus, I believe You died for me, and I believe You live again. I believe You have forgiven me and I believe You can help me defeat my addiction. Come into my life and fill me with Your Spirit, help me organize my life around You.”

Drug addiction is not a hopeless condition. It takes a lot of courage to quit a drug habit. I have tremendous respect for anyone who can do it. Facing yourself takes courage. Changing your life takes courage. No one has more courage than the Man that carried the cross to Calvary, and He is willing to share it with anyone who asks.

For help with your recovery. Please contact

MAMa
Mothers Against Methamphetamine
1-866-293-8901

A study done by Columbia University in 2001 proved a statistical relationship between spirituality and success in recovery from drug addiction. Addicts that developed a strong relationship with God were more than twice as likely to be successful in recovery.

You have to break off relationships that tempt you back into drugs. Even if that means you never see your brother again. You have to establish new relationships that help you stay clean. You have to resist intense cravings. That takes courage.

Recovery from addiction requires discipline, honesty, courage, humility, strength of character, integrity, and maturity. We build these personality characteristics by building a relationship with God. You learn discipline from Him; He’s a master at making you face the consequences of your bad decisions. You learn honesty from Him. You can’t play games with God; He’s not stupid.

The more you hang around with Jesus, the more you become like Him. He gives you courage, strength of character, and integrity. Your personality is strengthened so that you can have self control even though you have permanent damage to your fasciculus retroflexus, the self control tract in your brain.

The blind men and lepers called out to Jesus “Son Of David, Have mercy on us; we are blind, we are sick, we are dying” Jesus touched them. They were “unclean” but Jesus touched them and healed them. He can touch you and heal you too.