



# **Dreaming UP or Dreaming OF: Re-engaging the Keys for Sound Personhood in the AOD Context.**

(Prepared for and presented at the ANZ  
Addiction Conference 2022)

# Prologue

Translating a Panel Discussion forum (Dalgarno Institutes original submission) with its rich nuanced philosophical abstract into a single page Poster in either text or graphic is very difficult, as both mediums don't lend themselves easily to this type of subject matter delivery.

Our subject matter has not only psychological and philosophical factors, but it also more importantly has an anthropological focus that informs the dialogue and adds weight to the lived experience and earned resiliency that the subject matter is imbued with and enriched by.

We trust the offering presented goes some way to help the resource engager to not only glean salient points, but more, enables them to reflectively 'insert themselves', as it were, into the context presented in a positive manner that helps them see a little more clearly how one may transition a proactive healthy future dream into a functioning reality without substance use.

# Abstract

Personhood is a profound and complex mix of Agency, Capacity, Personality, Knowledge and Experience. However, there are many factors and elements that mold and craft that personhood for better or the worse. We posit, as a rule, that every individual on the planet starts life as a 'Wheelbarrow'. Wheelbarrows are empty and powerless vessels, that are invariably filled by someone/something else and pushed by someone/something else<sup>1</sup> for the first stages of our developmental journey – essentially from birth to puberty. Even at the onset of puberty and the 'differentiating' process it enacts, what has gone before, may still assiduously inform agency and capacity either directly by surrender to, or, reacting against – the catalyst for these responses is still driving behaviour.<sup>2</sup>

The 'Dream' of the fully actualized human unit is more to do with process than projection. Substance use does not add anthropological sound value at any stage, rather it detracts and/or diminishes from that visualization of a better future, not a chemically induced and sensate manipulating visual noise with no destination that one may, or may not wish to replicate.

Determinants of this actualization must include an understanding of what may be best practice for, not only the biological unit, but the psyche within. Without a fundamental understanding of what a physically, mentally, psychologically, spiritually, and socially healthy human is, then arbitrary and subjective factors can

determine conduct and its subsequent outcomes.<sup>3</sup> In an era of hyper-stimulation of every sense and even expectation, when mixed with any sense of entitlement in the 'Dream Space', many other fundamentals for well-being are neglected or even jettisoned. Boundaries and the core elements that help us set and maintain them, are often sabotaged, and any ongoing disappointment that may be experienced in this now unrealistic arena, only fuel the 'felt need' of pleasure, fun, satisfaction, or simply respite.<sup>4</sup>

In equipping a community's resilience, they need to have all elements for sound well-being in the 'dream scape' of the human experience. Only then will this lead toward the actualization of the authentic psychotropic toxin free human-being.<sup>5</sup>

## References

1. "Adult-supervised alcohol use mediated the links between favorable parental attitudes to alcohol use and ninth-grade alcohol use for students in both states." (McMorris et al, 2011: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15288/jsad.2011.72.418>)
2. "investigating actual 'origins' as influencers of behaviour, toward almost solely focusing on the collective responsibility for them. Without an agreed upon socio-behavioural standard it has meant the default mode of the 'collective' is to manage outcomes of behavioural issues without ever referring to (let alone addressing) some of the core morality/ethics in and for behaviours and conduct." Varcoe, S. (2017). Dalgarno Institute, [Social Determinants and Substance Use. A perspective beyond the policy 'silo'](#)
3. "Demand Reduction space for resiliency building and keys to building strong 'drug resistant' people – sustainable values, accountable relational supports, meaningful social engagement and functional personal agency – are the very same resources and processes that are integral to the drug use exiting journey.' Ibid
4. "... on drivers for uptake you will see very similar motivations from the 'lucky country' on illicit drug use initiation and engagement. Not only is it about 'excitement' and 'curiosity', but it is also the result of trusting friends and trading off their 'good word and experience'. It is only a small minority of users who actually engage with illicit substances on the basis of what are commonly referred to as the key drivers for substance use – that is poverty, trauma and/or powerlessness." Ibid
5. "A person who uses drugs gives up his or her authentic self." The Dalai Lama

**Dalgarno Institute – Shane Varcoe (Executive Director)**

# ATTACHMENT AND ADDICTION

People are born with the 'need to connect' (by "keeping precious others close") as a survival technique (Johnson, 2008), just like eating, drinking and other core biological needs.

This wired-in mechanism, called Attachment, enables us to develop:

- *emotional resilience,*
  - *a healthy 'sense of self', and*
  - *a healthy interdependence with others (Johnson, 2008)*
- because a responsive primary care giver attunes to our physical and emotional needs.

When a healthy Secure Attachment does not occur with our primary care giver then we develop an Insecure/anxious relationship, or an Avoidant/dismissive relationship.

This becomes an Attachment Injury, or Attachment Trauma, if we do not experience a Secure Attachment.

If we experience an Insecure or Avoidant primary Attachment, then we're more likely to have more difficulties with:

- *self-calming/soothing, and sitting with pain,*
- *physical and emotional well-being,*
- *learning and other development aspects, and*
- *connecting emotionally to others.*

Our primary Attachment Style becomes the pattern for our ongoing development, including how we relate to ourselves and others.

Our brain development is impacted by the Attachment Style we develop. For instance,

- *we register more trust, and less fear in our amygdala ('emotional centre') if we've experienced Secure Attachment.*
- *in our cingulate cortex we have a 'switch turned on' that tells us we're not securely connected if we've had Insecure or Avoidant Attachment.*

**Addictions** enable us to reduce the pain of not experiencing a Secure Attachment.

An addiction enables us to ignore the cingulate cortex message that we're not securely connected.

The most effective way to heal an addiction is to treat the Attachment Injury or Trauma through the experience of a Secure Attachment.

The experience of a Secure connection by a caring, consistent significant other, providing ongoing safety, enables the appropriate conditions for the Attachment 'wound' to be healed. This means there is no longer a need for an addiction.

Other interventions do not get to the source of the addiction (i.e. the core need) and, while many have helpful aspects, a person will not be truly healed unless their Attachment experiences -or Detachment- are addressed at an emotional, physical and spiritual level.

**What is your Attachment Style?** For a quick & easy online quiz to confirm your Attachment Style see <https://www.attachmentproject.com/attachment-style-quiz/>

## References

*Askew, Christine (2016), Addiction as an Attachment Disorder- How attachment styles make you vulnerable to addiction. Counselling & Therapy Online, <https://www.recoveryfromaddictiononline.com/addiction-as-an-attachment-disorder/#more-2111>*

*Cox, Robert, Addictions and Attachment: Connection as a Path to Healing. 4.5-hour training by TATRA Training.*

*Doidge, Norman (2010 Revised Edition), The Brain That Changes Itself: Stories of Personal Triumph from the Frontiers of Brain Science. Scribe*

*Johnson, Sue, (2008), Hold Me Tight: Seven Conversations for a Lifetime of Love. Little, Brown.*

*Roosma, Andre H, (2011), Layers and the role of Attachment in mental and social-emotional processing Part III: Accede!, Zoetermeer, NL, Nov [http://www.12accede.org/layers\\_and\\_attachment-3.pdf](http://www.12accede.org/layers_and_attachment-3.pdf)*

*Wilder, E James, (2007), Banana Baseball Addictions: 3 Strikes - An Introduction to Brain Science and Spiritual Community. Video series, available on Amazon.com*

*Note: Sue Johnson refers to the pioneering and formative work of John Barlow and Harry Harlow in identifying and demonstrating the critical role of Attachment. For more information 'google' their names.*

*Andre H Roosma and E James Wilder refer to the cornerstone neuroscience work of Allan Shore in the areas of Attachment and Addiction. For more information see <https://www.allanshore.com/curriculum-vitae/publications/>*

**Helen Johns – Psychologist and Dalgarno Institute Team Member**

# Addiction Drivers and Dream Derailers

Four key drivers for substance engagement

- I. Relentless Pain – Unabating/unaddressed trauma*
- II. Relational Poverty – Isolation/disconnection or unhealthy attachments*
- III. Recalcitrant Hedonism – The trap of counterfeit joy and its insatiable nature, along with the accompany dysregulation of agency.*
- IV. Residing Absurdity – The lack/absence of sustainable meaning that goes beyond one dimensional sociological dynamics of activity, distraction or even purpose, to anthropological spaces of worldview and meta-narratives. “Boredom in our western culture has very little to do with the lack of entertainment, but everything to do with the lack of meaning.” Dr K. J. Smith – Cultural Anthropologist*

*Shane Varcoe – Dalgarno Institute*

# Psycho-Anthropological Protective Factors

## CAPACITY

- The 'Attachment' Issue
- Vision
- Purpose (Credo & Conduct align)
- Goal
- Enabling Objectives

### *Underpinned by*

## AGENCY

- The 'Attachment' Issue
- Education – What is 'best practice' and why?
- Skills
- Knowledge
- Wisdom
- Experience that informs positive change

### *Underpinned by*

## HUMANITY

- The 'Attachment' Issue
- Health & Well-being (Mental & Physical)
- Safety
- Community
- Identity
- Personality
- Equipped Rationality

### *Underpinned by*

## META-ISSUES

- The 'Attachment' Issue
- Values and informing elements including,
  - Belief System
  - Meaning
  - Worldview or World & Life View: Sustainable Narratives – A framework for values and meaning, helping make sense of why and how we are. Proactive and protective narratives that one not only is exposed to, but imbibed in, and lived out.
- Truth/Fact – Epistemologically sound presuppositions that reduce (does not add to) the duress that is cognitive dissonance and other contributors to Existential Depression.<sup>A</sup> “Anything must be true before it can significantly claim any other merits. Without truth all else is worthless.”  
Ernest Gellner – Social Anthropologist.

<sup>A</sup>[Existential depression: What it is, symptoms, and how to cope \(medicalnewstoday.com\)](https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/existential-depression)

# Dreaming UP or Dreaming OF:

## Re-engaging the Keys for Sound Personhood in the AOD Context.

Attachment & Addiction

- People are born with the 'need to connect' (by "keeping precious others close") as a survival technique (Johnson, 2008), just like eating, drinking and other core biological needs.
- This wired-in mechanism, called **Attachment**, enables us to develop:
  - emotional resilience,
  - a healthy 'sense of self', and
  - a healthy interdependence with others (Johnson, 2008)
- because a responsive primary care giver attunes to our physical and emotional needs.
- When a healthy Secure Attachment does not occur with our primary care giver then we develop an Insecure/anxious relationship, or an Avoidant/dismissive relationship.
- This becomes an Attachment Injury, or Attachment Trauma, if we do not experience a Secure Attachment.
- If we experience an Insecure or Avoidant primary Attachment then we're more likely to have more difficulties with:
  - Self-calming/soothing, and sitting with pain,
  - physical and emotional well-being,
  - learning and other development aspects, and
  - connecting emotionally to others.
- Our primary Attachment Style becomes the pattern for our ongoing development, including how we relate to ourselves and others.
- Our brain development is impacted by the Attachment Style we develop. For instance,
  - we register more trust, and less fear in our amygdala ('emotional centre') if we've experienced Secure Attachment.
  - in our cingulate cortex we have a 'switch turned on' that tells us we're not securely connected if we've had Insecure or Avoidant Attachment.
- **Addictions** enable us to reduce the pain of not experiencing a Secure Attachment.
- An addiction enables us to ignore the cingulate cortex message that we're not securely connected.
- The most effective way to heal an addiction is to treat the Attachment Injury or Trauma through the experience of a Secure Attachment.
- The experience of a Secure connection by a caring, consistent significant other, providing ongoing safety, enables the appropriate conditions for the Attachment 'wound' to be healed. This means there is no longer a need for an addiction.
- Other interventions do not get to the source of the addiction (ie the core need) and, while many have helpful aspects, a person will not be truly healed unless their Attachment experiences - or Detachment- are addressed at an emotional, physical and spiritual level.

**WHAT IS YOUR ATTACHMENT STYLE?**

Take this quick & easy online quiz to confirm your Attachment Style.

[attachmentproject.com/attachmentstylequiz](http://attachmentproject.com/attachmentstylequiz)



- AGENCY**
- The 'Attachment' Issue
  - Education - What is 'best practice' and why?
  - Skills
  - Knowledge
  - Wisdom
  - Experience that informs positive change
- CAPACITY**
- The 'Attachment' Issue
  - Vision
  - Purpose (Credo & Conduct align)
  - Goal
  - Enabling Objectives
- HUMANITY**
- The 'Attachment' Issue
  - Health & Well-being (Mental & Physical)
  - Safety
  - Community
  - Identity
  - Personality
  - Equipped Rationality
- META-ISSUES**
- The 'Attachment' Issue
  - Values and informing elements including:
    - Belief System
    - Meaning
    - Worldview: Sustainable Narratives - proactive and protective ones that are not only exposed too, but imbibed in, and lived out.
    - Truth/Fact - Epistemologically sound presuppositions that reduce (does not add to) the distress that is cognitive dissonance and other contributors to Existential Depression.<sup>1</sup> "Anything must be true before it can significantly claim any other merits. Without truth all else is worthless."<sup>2</sup>
  - Ernest Gellner - Social Anthropologist

THE FUTURE DREAM

- Helen Johns - Psychologist and Dalgarno Institute Team Member
- Four key drivers for substance engagement
- I. **Relentless Pain** - Unabating/unaddressed trauma
  - II. **Relational Poverty** - Isolation/disconnection or unhealthy attachments
  - III. **Recalcitrant Hedonism** - The trap of counterfeit joy and its insatiable nature, along with the accompany dysregulation of agency.
  - IV. **Residing Absurdity** - The lack/absence of sustainable meaning that goes beyond one dimensional sociological dynamics of activity, distraction or even purpose, to anthropological spaces of worldview and meta-narratives. "Boredom in our western culture has very little to do with the lack of entertainment, but everything to do with the lack of meaning." Dr K. J. Smith - Cultural Anthropologist
- Shane Varcoe - Dalgarno Institute

Addiction Drivers & Dream Derailers



Prologue

Translating a Panel Discussion forum (Dalgarno Institutes original submission) with its rich nuanced philosophical abstract into a single page Poster in either text or graphic is very difficult, as both mediums don't lend themselves easily to this platform. Our subject matter has not only psychological and philosophical factors, it more importantly has an anthropological focus that informs the dialogue and adds weight to the lived experience and earned resiliency that the subject matter is imbued with and

enriched by. We trust the offering presented goes some way to help the resource engager to not only glean salient points, but more, enables them to reflectively 'insert themselves', as it were, into the context presented in a positive manner that helps them see a little clearly how one may transition a proactive healthy future dream into a functioning reality without substance use.

Abstract

Personhood is a profound and complex mix of Agency, Capacity, Personality, Knowledge and Experience. However, there are many factors and elements that mold and craft that personhood for better or the worse. We posit, as a rule, that every individual on the planet starts life as a "Wheelbarrow". Wheelbarrows are empty and powerless vessels, that are invariably filled by someone/something else and pushed by someone/something else<sup>1</sup> for the first stages of our developmental journey - essentially from birth to puberty. Even at the onset of puberty and the 'differentiating' process it enacts, what has gone before, may still assiduously inform agency and capacity either directly by surrender to, or, reacting against - the catalyst for these responses is still driving behaviour.<sup>2</sup>

The 'Dream' of the fully actualized human being has more to do with process than projection, and substance use does not add anthropologically sound value at any stage, instead it detracts and/or diminishes.

Determinants of this actualization must include an understanding of what may be best practice for, not only the biological unit, but the psyche within. Without a fundamental understanding of what a physically, mentally, psychologically, spiritually, and socially healthy human is, then arbitrary and subjective factors can determine conduct and its subsequent outcomes.<sup>3</sup> In an era of hyper-stimulation of every sense and even expectation, when mixed with any sense of entitlement in the 'Dream Space', many other fundamentals for well-being are neglected or even jettisoned. Boundaries and the core elements that help us set and maintain

them, are often sabotaged, and any ongoing disappointment that may be experienced in this now unrealistic arena, only fuel the 'felt need' of pleasure, fun, satisfaction, or simply respite.<sup>4</sup>

In equipping a community's resilience, the need to have all elements for sound well-being in the 'dream scape' of the human experience. Only then will this lead toward the actualizing of the authentic psychotropic toxin free human-being.<sup>5</sup>

The panel will look at some of these key elements over three presentations, that will clearly not 'answer all', but it is envisaged, lead to a more measured discussion about what the pursuit of long-lost keys and the rebuilding of the significance and influence that is the key to every human 'dream' looks like, all without substance use.

Dalgarno Institute - Shane Varcoe [Executive Director]

<sup>1</sup> "Well expressed alcohol use mediated the links between (insecure parental attachment to alcohol use and (high grade alcohol use for students in both states." (McMullen et al., 2011) <https://doi.org/10.1089/psyc.2011.0122>

<sup>2</sup> "Theoretical and empirical research on the effects of attachment on the development of the self." (Bowlby, 1982) Dalgarno Institute, Social Determinants and Substance Use: A Perspective Beyond the Policy (2013)

<sup>3</sup> "Theoretical and empirical research on the effects of attachment on the development of the self." (Bowlby, 1982) Dalgarno Institute, Social Determinants and Substance Use: A Perspective Beyond the Policy (2013)

<sup>4</sup> "The effects of substance use on the development of the self." (Bowlby, 1982) Dalgarno Institute, Social Determinants and Substance Use: A Perspective Beyond the Policy (2013)

<sup>5</sup> "The effects of substance use on the development of the self." (Bowlby, 1982) Dalgarno Institute, Social Determinants and Substance Use: A Perspective Beyond the Policy (2013)