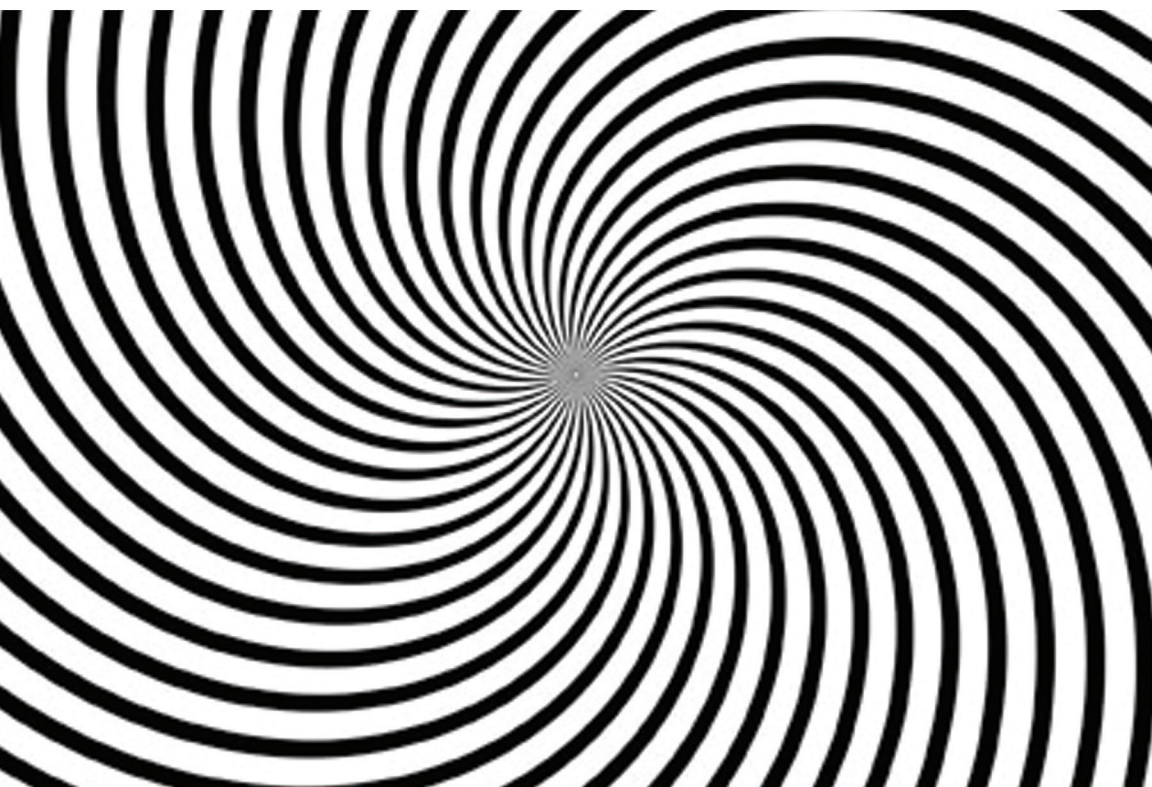


INCLUDES 7 STEP RECOVERY PROCESS

THRILLED TO DEATH

[how the endless pursuit *of* pleasure is leaving us numb]



Dr. Archibald D. Hart

AUTHOR OF *THE ANXIETY CURE*

A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

© 2007 by Archibald D. Hart

All rights reserved. No portion of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or any other—except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

Published in Nashville, Tennessee, by Thomas Nelson. Thomas Nelson is a registered trademark of Thomas Nelson, Inc.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version®. © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations noted MSG are taken from The Message by Eugene H. Peterson. © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002. Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations noted TLB are taken from The Living Bible. © 1971 by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Hart, Archibald D.

Thrilled to death : how the endless pursuit of pleasure is leaving us numb / Archibald Hart.
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-0-8499-1852-0 (pbk.)

1. Pleasure. I. Title.

BF515.H37 2007

152.4'2—dc22

2007013507

Printed in the United States of America

09 10 11 12 EPAC 10 9 8 7 6 5

1

WHERE HAS ALL OUR PLEASURE GONE?

PATHWAYS TO THE PLEASURE CENTER

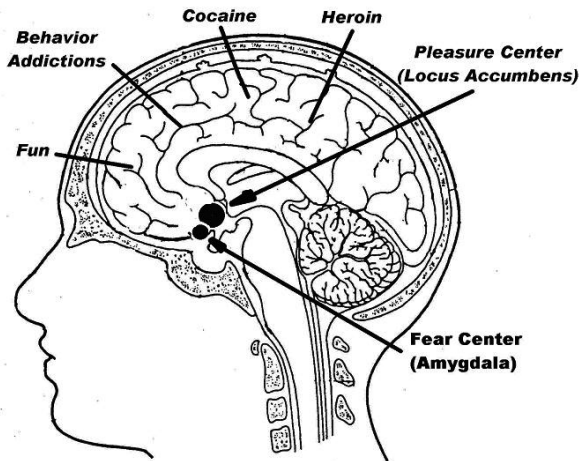


FIGURE 1

THE ANHEDONIA PROCESS

At the start, enjoyment has free access
to the pleasure center

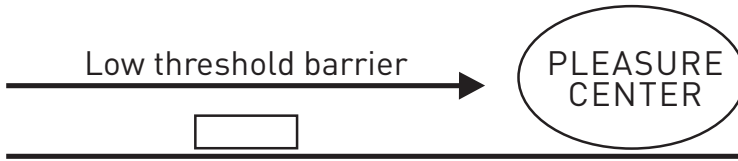


Figure 2: A Healthy Pleasure Response

Overstimulation starts to raise
the barrier to the pleasure center
due to dopamine **flooding**

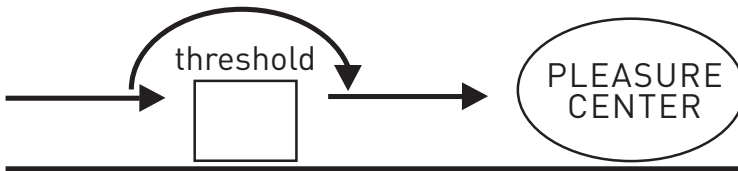


Figure 3: Starting to Block the Pleasure Center

THE ANHEDONIA PROCESS

Full-blown Anhedonia

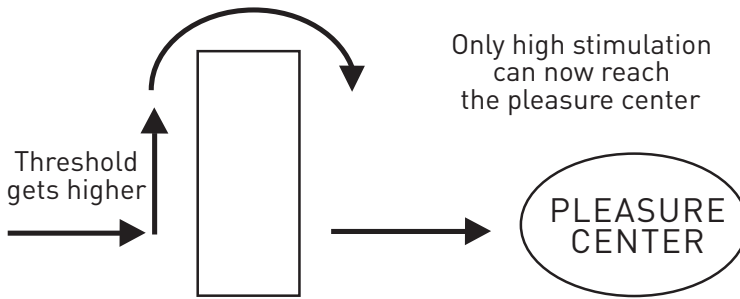


Figure 4: Fully Developed, Severe Anhedonia

[recovering your pleasure]

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL OR GROUP STUDY

Chapter 1: Where Has All Our Pleasure Gone?

1. What does anhedonia feel like to you?
2. What areas of your life, and the lives of your loved ones, are most affected by anhedonia?
3. Can you identify any activity in your life that may be contributing to your loss of ability to experience pleasure?

Chapter 2: The Many Pathways to Pleasure

1. There are several causes of modern anhedonia, each using its unique pathway to the pleasure center in the brain. What do they all have in common? Which of these causes or pathways puts you at risk for losing all your pleasure ability?
2. Feelings of apathy will overcome all of us at some time or other. This is normal and to be expected. But when does a state of apathy become unhealthy?
3. After you have taken the test for anhedonia in this chapter, reflect back on your life and try to identify a time when your pleasure system was healthier.

Chapter 3: Pleasure or Happiness?

1. How do pleasure and happiness differ in your experience?
2. What in your present life is robbing you of happiness? What from your past life may be robbing you of pleasure?
3. The idea that happiness has an immovable set point is quite popular even though it is a myth. True, many people don't seem able to improve their happiness, but what happiness boosters should you consider exploring?

Chapter 4: Stress and Anhedonia

1. In what ways does your lifestyle contribute to the difficulties you are having in getting pleasure out of the simple things of life?
2. Can you identify activities in your life that are stimulating to the point of recruiting high levels of adrenaline? Can you reduce these activities?
3. How much has your pleasure system been affected by the advent of the Internet? What is it about the Internet that has robbed you of deep contentment? Are there any changes you need to make in your life in order to lower your stress level?

Chapter 5: Saving Our Children from Anhedonia

1. Without a doubt, childhood today is very threatening to both happiness and the brain's pleasure system. What areas in a child's life should parents be particularly wary of?
2. Teenage multitasking is being both applauded (by industry and business) and condemned (by brain researchers). How does excessive multitasking impact the learning ability, the social development, and anhedonia in a developing child?

3. Identify three do's and three don'ts that parents should consider in guiding their children's multitasking activities.

Chapter 6: When Pleasure Becomes a Hidden Addiction

1. How do hidden addictions differ from substance addictions?
Can some hidden addictions be as hazardous as substance addictions?
2. Why are all addictions capable of robbing us of pleasure in the little things of life? Try and identify at least three hidden addictions in your life.
3. Obsessions with work and the Internet are now considered to be the most pervasive hidden addictions that can create anhedonia. To what extent are you vulnerable in both these areas?

Chapter 7: Sexual Anhedonia

1. Sexual anhedonia and low sexual drive are often indistinguishable. What are the important symptoms that can tell the one from the other?
2. What are the more common causes of sexual anhedonia, as opposed to low sexual drive—in men versus women?
3. What are some of the ways that men can repair and build a healthier sexual pleasure response? What challenges do women face in the area of sexual anhedonia?

Chapter 8: Step 1—Seek the Right Form of Pleasure

1. How do type A pleasures differ from type B pleasures? How can the one help to repair the damage done by the other?
2. Try to identify several of your vulnerable pleasure points—where you look for pleasure in the wrong places.

3. Of the several pleasure boosters identified in this chapter, which is most important for your life? In what ways can you enhance the pleasure boosters you have been neglecting?

Chapter 9: Step 2—Recapture the Joy of Little Things

1. What are the *best pleasures of all* in your life?
2. Discovering your past is a very helpful tool for enhancing present day happiness. Recall some of the happiest moments of your childhood and then write a brief story or poem to capture these moments so you can continue to remind yourself of them.
3. What games did you play as a child that were pleasurable? When you have an opportunity, teach your children (or someone else's children) some of these games and take some time to play them together.

Chapter 10: Step 3—Control Your Adrenaline

1. Since the brain cannot tolerate constant pleasure or stimulation, it is important that the pleasure system have time for recovery. What three critical areas of your life can provide this rest time for the brain's pleasure center?
2. Why is it that you have difficulty slowing down? What new habits can you develop that can help you to take it easy?
3. Look at the list of baby steps for lowering your stress, and reorder them in their level of importance for your life. Use this list as your prescription for stress control.

Chapter 11: Step 4—Use Humor to Enhance Your Happiness

1. Why is laughter so beneficial to the human body?

2. In what areas do you need to focus on building your laughter quotient?
3. Take a moment and try to recall at least three incidents from the last week that were funny enough to make you laugh.

Chapter 12: Step 5—Develop Appreciation and Gratitude

1. Examine again the differences between appreciation and gratitude, and recall an example of each out of your recent life.
2. In what ways can you strengthen your appreciation ability?
3. What are the main ingredients in the Glad Game, the Gratitude Game, and the Contentment Game?

Chapter 13: Step 6—Master Relaxation and Meditation

1. What scientific evidence is there for the value of relaxation to both the body and mind?
2. How does meditation work?
3. What different forms of mediation do you find appealing?

Chapter 14: Step 7—Make Space for the Things That Matter

1. What things in life really matter to you? Make a list and display it where you can see it often.
2. What bad things tend to get in the way of the things that matter to you, and what can you do to remove them?
3. If you cannot remove the bad things that cause you pain, what redeeming features can help you tolerate or bypass their negative consequences?