Maia Szalavitz: Unbroken Brain: A Different Way of Understanding Addiction

Abstract: While medical and public health authorities argue that addiction is a disease, much of the public resists this framing and many find it either incorrect or incomplete. A more precise way to see addiction is as a disorder of learning and development. Like other neurodevelopmental disorders, addiction tends to start at a specific life stage, is influenced by genetics unfolding over the course of development in particular environments and it affects a specific set of circuits in the brain. This presentation will show how seeing addiction as a learning disorder can improve prevention, treatment and drug policy in general.

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