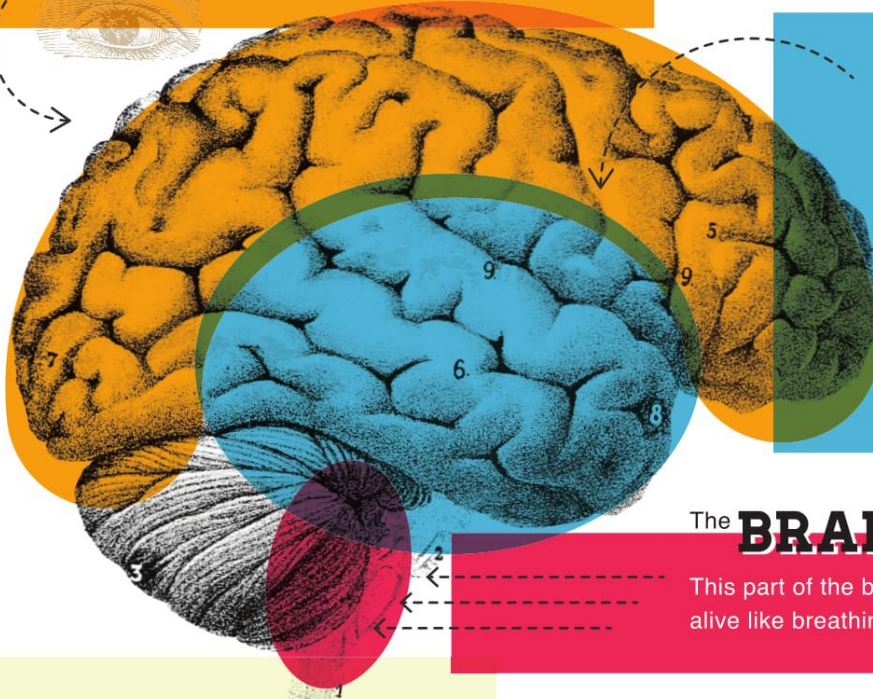




ALL IN THE MIND

The **CEREBRAL CORTEX**

This is the command centre of the brain. It enables us to think, plan, and form decisions. It also processes information from our senses, enabling us to see, feel, hear, and taste.



The human brain is the most important organ in our body. It weighs only about 1.3kg - a tiny fraction of our body weight - but what would we do without it? It is a complex organ that is made up of many parts that work together as a team. Different parts of the brain are responsible for doing different jobs, such as rational thinking and processing feelings. The abuse of drugs can damage or alter crucial areas of the brain that are necessary for life-sustaining functions.

The **LIMBIC SYSTEM**

This part of the brain contains what is known as the brain's 'reward circuit'. Dopamine is a 'reward' chemical present here that regulates our ability to feel pleasure. Dopamine is released naturally to reward us when we do healthy, positive activities such as eating, exercise and making friends. These pleasurable feelings motivate us to repeat behaviours that are good for our survival.

The **BRAIN STEM**

This part of the brain controls everything you need to stay alive like breathing, heart rate and sleeping.



When we abuse drugs, we mess with our own brain's reward system by flooding our brain with unnatural amounts of dopamine. Certain chemicals in those drugs 'trick' our reward circuit into activating and 'fool' our brains into making us want to repeat this behaviour. This leads to the evil cycle of drug addiction.

A drug abuser will soon feel lifeless and depressed because he or she is now unable to enjoy things that were once pleasurable. This person needs to keep taking drugs

repeatedly (often in larger and larger amounts) just to try and bring his or her dopamine levels back up to normal - as the brain develops what is known as 'tolerance**' to the drug.

Now that you have known how drugs can affect your brain, do not even think about putting those toxic chemicals into your system - because when you mess with your mind, you mess with your life. Find healthy ways to feel great such as eating well, keeping fit and making new friends - you will not regret it!