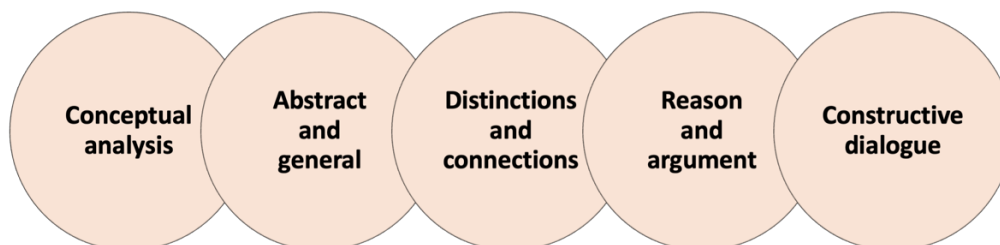

LET'S TALK ABOUT... ILLNESS AND SUFFERING

THIS SESSION:

Recap: The philosophy toolkit
 Philosophical debate about freedom
 Philosophical debate about addiction
 Break (10 Minutes)
 Open discussion on freedom and addiction

THE PHILOSOPHY TOOLKIT



PHILOSOPHICAL DEBATE ABOUT FREEDOM

- Philosophers ask questions like: what is freedom (or free will), and do we ever have free will?

A PUZZLE ABOUT FREEDOM

Joshua makes a cup of tea. This action felt like a free choice – he considered whether to have tea or coffee, and opted for tea. However, such actions are caused by activity in the brain, sending signals through our body activating our movements. Such brain activity was itself caused by past events. So, was Joshua free after all? More generally, there seems to be a tension between **determinism** – the idea that our actions are determined by prior events and laws of nature – and **free will** – the idea that many of our actions are freely performed. We can't change the past or the laws of nature, so are we ever really free in what we do?

Discussion Questions: How should we respond to this puzzle?

- What is freedom anyway?
- Is freedom an illusion?
- Is determinism true?
- Can we reconcile freedom and determinism?

PHILOSOPHICAL DEBATE ABOUT ADDICTION

- A common **understanding** of addiction:

Addiction is a strong, habitual desire for something (e.g., drugs) that involves considerable reduction of control, and considerable harm.

- Does this way of thinking about addiction accord with your understanding or experience?
- Philosophers debate addiction by debating this definition, and by tackling what Hanna Pickard (someone who is a philosopher but also an addiction mental health support worker) calls the puzzle of addiction:

THE PUZZLE OF ADDICTION

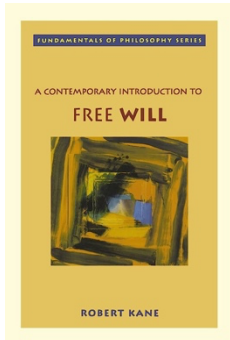
Since people with addiction often know that it is harmful why do they still engage in the addictive behaviour?

- A common way to answer this puzzle is with a **brain disease model of addiction**:
 - On this model, addiction is a brain disease, characterised by compulsion. People with addiction engage in addictive behaviour, despite knowing the harms, because they have a brain disease or disorder which compels them to – their brains *hijack* their actions, and they can't help but do them

DISCUSSION: LINKING FREEDOM AND ADDICTION

1. The brain disease model links addiction to a **lack of freedom**: addiction involves **compulsion**.
 - a. What is compulsion?
 - b. Is this the right way to think about addiction?
2. When we act in line with an addiction are such actions our own, free choices?
3. Even if the brains of people with addiction are different to those without addiction, are their brains 'diseased' or 'disordered'? Is addiction a disease or disorder at all?

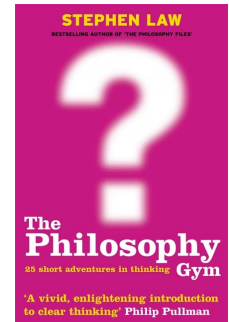
RESOURCES



The Philosophy Gym by Stephen Law is a great book introducing philosophy

An accessible resource to learn about philosophy is the **philosophy bites** podcast: <https://philosophybites.com/>

A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will by Robert Kane is an excellent book introducing the philosophy of freedom



For Hanna Pickard's philosophical work on addiction see her website: <https://www.hannapickard.com/> and this Radio 4 programme: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b08xbjib>

MAILING LIST (OPTIONAL)

Do you want to be part of the Philosophy of Mental Health @ Middle Street electronic mailing list? If so, email Craig.French@nottingham.ac.uk to join (with "Mailing List" in the subject header), or scan this QR code to join:

If you join the mailing list, we will only contact you to advertise events related to Philosophy of Mental Health @ Middle Street, and to distribute materials from these events (e.g., handouts, and videos that we make after each event).



FEEDBACK (OPTIONAL)

We value your views. With your feedback we can (1) improve the ways we discuss the ideas in the philosophy of mental health here at Middle Street Resource Centre, and in society, and (2) use your ideas to inform our thinking for future research and events on the philosophy of mental health. If you would like to provide feedback, please complete the feedback form overleaf.

Please note: the University of Nottingham processes your personal data for the purposes of showcasing the use and impact of UoN research. This can take place through various mechanisms, including statutory assessments such as the Research Excellence Framework ([REF](#)), and internal and external research awards and competitions. Please visit <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/utilities/privacy/privacy-information-for-visitors-correspondents-and-prospective-applicants.aspx> for our Privacy Notice which provides further information on the purposes for which we may process your data and the legal basis for this.

FEEDBACK QUESTIONNAIRE
ADDICTION AND FREEDOM

NAME:

CONTACT DETAILS (i.e., email or telephone):

Before this session, to what extent did you agree with the following? For each question, please place an X in the box that most closely represents how you feel.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Before this session, I knew how philosophy could be used to discuss addiction and freedom.					
I was comfortable with discussing the philosophy of mental health before this event.					

After having participated in this session, to what extent do you agree with the following? For each question, please place an X in the box that most closely represents how you feel.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
This session has increased my understanding of philosophical ideas about addiction and freedom					
Philosophy is a useful discipline for thinking about and discussing addiction and freedom					
This event provided me with tools to think about my experiences of addiction and freedom					
I am more comfortable with discussing the philosophy of mental health after this event					
The session has shown me where to find resources for using philosophical approaches when talking about mental health					

1. Which ideas covered interested you most, and which do you think you will find most helpful, and why?

2. Was there anything about the event that we could have done better?

3. Is there anything else you would like to share?