

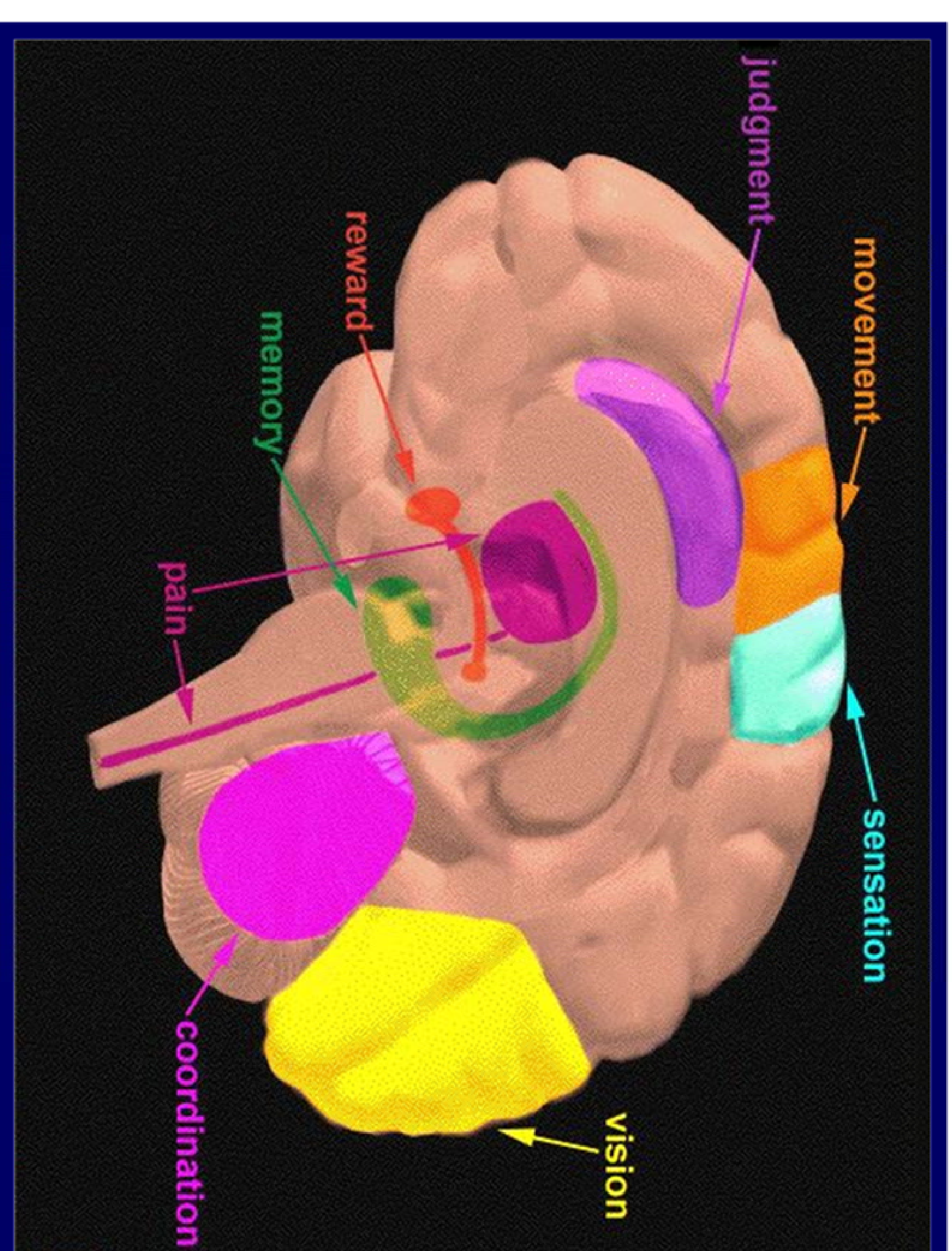
Addiction & the Brain

The Brain

The **Reward Pathway** in the brain is responsible for feelings of motivation & reward. It makes us feel good when we do things that are needed for survival (ex: eating).

The **Reward Pathway** is connected to several parts of the brain including the 5 senses. When the 5 senses tell you something feels good, special neurons release the chemical dopamine, which gives you a small 'jolt' of pleasure .

You repeat behaviours because the **Reward Pathway** is connected to the part of the brain that controls memory & behaviour.



Addiction

Drugs bypass the 5 senses & directly activates the **Reward Pathway** fast & hard. It gives a 'jolt' of intense pleasure by 'dumping' dopamine in the brain.

As the brain adapts to the drug, areas outside the **Reward Pathways** are affected. Using drugs over time changes brain structures & functions. It decreases the amount of dopamine & serotonin.

Chemicals

Dopamine is important for controlling our drive to seek out rewards & obtain pleasure. It affects motivation, memory, senses, emotional responses, motor control & hormone regulation.



Serotonin is involved in controlling many important functions including sleep, aggression, eating, sexual behaviour & mood.



Western
Health

If you are concerned about your use of alcohol or other drugs, contact your local Mental Health & Addictions office or your family doctor.

NL Health Line: 1-888-709-2929