

ALCOHOL AND DRUG DEPENDENCE ONE – SELF MEDICATION

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(This is based on belief in God. If that offends you, stop reading now)

This first presentation explores the physical side of drug and alcohol abuse.

We are told by God, no man yet ever hated his own flesh. If we use drugs, we have to somehow believe we will get more from the drug than it will take from us. And preferably sooner than later, we must decide what our lives are really worth..

I'm a little distracted by something I recently witnessed. In a fine shopping establishment, a clerk switched price tags at the register while a customer was having a diabetic seizure. The customer managed to take insulin, but while they were still dazed, the clerk rang up a higher amount than the sale, put it on their credit card and pocketed the difference when the customer was leaving. We live in a cruel world.

I watched all of this happen and it made me really angry, but what can I do? The buyer doesn't know they were overcharged and won't know till much later. They even thanked the clerk for her patience as they left. But that was about like stealing from someone who is blind. What would you do? Would you let the clerk victimize someone else? (To be continued)

General Drug and Alcohol Abuse;

Inside of us are many ongoing processes, keeping us alive and functioning. Many systems, involving enzymes, secretions and hormones, are chemical in nature. When a chemical stops being produced or too much is created, an imbalance results. We stop working correctly.

When doctors request tests of blood or other body fluids, they seek to determine where imbalances lie in our standard chemical makeup. Then they prescribe specific amounts of chemicals to replace those missing, slow down production of those in excess or that will counteract them. These chemicals are 'medicine,' meant to correct imbalances in our bodies.

When we prescribe chemicals for ourselves that create an imbalance in our bodies, those are called 'drugs.' We then inhabit bodies that are working incorrectly. *"When a physician prescribes for his own malady, and a lawyer pleads his own cause, the one is considered as having a fool for his patient and the other as having an ass for his client."* – Author unknown

In each presentation, we will discuss different drug types, including alcohol. We will talk about definitions, symptoms experienced by users, dangers of prolonged use and withdrawal and effects on the body, mind, family and society. We will discuss issues leading to abuse, including stress points in life, making us susceptible to trying drugs or keeping us bound to them.

When looking at how dangerous and destructive drugs are to life and living, it is always perplexing why anyone would put themselves in such jeopardy? The perceived reward has to be considered greater than the perceived risk. Two popular answers given for alcohol and drug abuse. It feels really good and pleasurable at the time or lets me escape an unbearable reality. We will also discuss legal ramifications of drug use, especially the predictable loss of liberty for a measurable percentage of our lives. The person we are in our normal state of mind, is not who we will become after altering the chemicals in our brains controlling our behavior. But who we actually are will pay and pay and pay for the behavior of the chemically altered version.

Similarities in Abuse:

Despite different classes of drugs, there are similarities components to their abuse.

Denial. I will not admit that I have a problem and am abusing any substance. If confronted about my poor choices or actions, they are no big deal. I place the blame on others, because it simply can't be my fault. My problems are just phases. First, part of growing up. When older, just a mid-life crisis. When caught, I minimize consequences, no matter how destructive to me and those who care about or depend on me.

Dependence is harder to ignore. After so many uses, I develop a craving for the drug, which I then affectionately call my drug of choice. As time passes, the same amount no longer yields the same effect. If I combine that drug with another, maybe I can still get away from it all.

I find myself always searching, hungry for something that will Affect me, fill emptiness inside or make me feel better. I need something to ease depression and anxiety. I can't stop using my drug now, since the withdrawal is too horrible to face. Even if I could get through the physical pain, I have problems and stresses the drug dulled in the first place, still waiting for me, with no other way to cope. I could turn to God, but have no interest in living like He designed and commands me to live. So, I no longer take the drug to feel good but to stop from feeling bad.

Are these Behavioral Signs? What happened to me? I used to be smart, able to do math problems in my head and handle stress. I enjoyed my job and was there every day, doing great work all day long. No one had to push me. Now they fired me for poor attendance, tardiness, excessive breaks, poor workmanship and causing problems with co-workers. I can't pay my bills. Where will my family live if we get evicted? Maybe my drug can take my mind off all this.

My life is so screwed up, suicide seems like my best option. I'm just a liability now. My family will be better off, not worrying about me or dealing with my messes. I had heard that sin would take me farther than I ever wanted to go. Now I just want to just die. I'm sorry how it all turned out. I really did love you all.

Denial, Dependence, Effects, Behavioral Signs, Suicide - common factors of drug use.

The Rest of the Story:

We buy one escape, one small pleasure, then later find the price was not what was anticipated. We look for a pleasant buzz, but wake in jail to find to find the cost was not a \$10.00 cover charge and \$4.00/drink. It's is another DUI, no driving privileges for five years, \$500 in legal fees, \$400 in court costs, two years probation with monthly payments and \$3,000 in taxi fares over the next two years. But at least this time it's not twenty years in prison for manslaughter. Somebody lied to us and switched the price tags.

The free pill we took for pain from a well meaning friend? They are very costly now, but now we need them just to function. The price is also creeping up, the more desperate we become. Now that we've been busted, the cost isn't a few dollars a pill anymore. It's custody of our children, our marriage, all of our possessions, legal fees, years in prison, more years of parole and our jobs. And the joy of surviving withdrawal symptoms while incarcerated.

The ultimate loser in the bait and switch game, is being carried away in a body bag. He didn't get high. He got dead. Somebody lied. Someone switched the tags.

Visual Application



Help is sometimes available, if we want it..

My car is stuck in a ditch by the road, after veering off. You have a powerful SUV and are kind enough to offer assistance. After linking us with a tow chain, you start pulling, with no effect. In fact, we are both moving the wrong way. You notice my wheels are slinging mud on your car, since they are spinning opposite of yours.

You ask if I'm crazy. You can't pull me out while I am pulling myself further. As you begin a second try, you see my brake lights are now on. Exasperated, you get out to insist I stop with the brakes, put my car in gear to go the same way you are and stop hindering our progress.

In a family, when drug use is involved, one member often find themselves stuck in a rut. But if they will not pull in the same direction and hinder progress, would-be helpers lose interest. Playing tug-of-war gets no one free. No one can pull us out until we want out.

A Historical Application

To some users, it feels like we are above consequences of our dangerous actions.

King David knew a bit about that. In the Law given to Moses by God, a principle was established. If a man stole a sheep and it was dead or gone when his theft was discovered, the thief had to give back four sheep, in return for the one.

Fast forward many years to David's time. After becoming king over Israel, he found himself with multiple wives. Still a good man, great king and mighty warrior, he decided one spring to stay home, instead of leading men in battle. Relaxing on his rooftop, he looked over and saw a beautiful woman taking a bath on another roof. Her husband Uriah, was a faithful servant and mighty warrior, gone to do David's fighting for him. David saw Bathsheba, he wanted her and he took her in his bed, after which she wound up pregnant. So David arranged to have Uriah killed to cover up his adultery. Then he married the pregnant Bathsheba.

Afterwards, David received a visit from a prophet of a less-than-amused God. The prophet told a story of a rich man with many sheep, who stole one lamb owned and cherished by a poor neighbor. He slaughtered it and cooked it for his newly arrived guests. David became angry and swore that, per the Law, the man would restore four sheep for one. Then David would kill him, because of his heartlessness. He just needed the man's name.

Nathan cut deep when he told David, he was the man in the story. Though God had given him many wives, he had stolen the one belonging to Uriah. Nathan promised David the unborn child would not live. Unfortunately, the story did not end there.

David knew, as we saw from his words, the real price for stealing sheep that God had established. The baby died. Then another of David's sons raped his half sister Tamar. When Amnon refused to marry her afterwards, another brother named Absalom killed him before fleeing into exile. When he returned, Absalom conspired to steal the throne. David had to flee for his life to keep from being murdered. Absalom then committed adultery with David's wives who remained behind, doing publicly what David had done in private to another man. When Absalom declared war against David, he was killed by one of David's commanders. After David died, Solomon had another brother killed for trying to marry David's youngest widow.

The final body count of dead sons, stemming from the murder of Uriah? Four sheep, in return for the one taken by a thief. The price tag had never changed and David knew the Law.

Conclusion:

In an age of information, few people now take drugs without knowing the potential consequences. When addiction sets in, the drug has now taken us and the price tag has been switched. We think clerks who swindle others in such fashion should be punished, but instead, we drop back in the same rut, every time life becomes difficult and reality too harsh. We go back to the dealers and the drugs, knowing the price tags will get switched once more.

We will give them our money, get back on the same ride and wait to discover what it will really cost, this time around.



Bathsheba receiving David - Rembrandt

