

WHO IS AN ADDICT?

Most of us do not have to think twice about this question. WE KNOW. Our whole life and thinking is centered in drugs in one form or another, the getting and using and finding ways and means to get more. We use to live and live to use. Very simply an addict is a man or woman whose life is controlled by drugs. We are people in the grip of a continuing and progressive illness whose ends are always the same: jails, institutions and death.

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1 NOT RECOGNITION

1 We have all felt pain. As addicts we have a common bond. We have all felt the numbness, the aching loneliness, the separateness from our fellows, knowing inadequacy and feelings of uselessness and self-pity. We of all

2 people have surely had enough of self-destruction. We want first

3 Somehow, God gave ^{us} me a moment of clarity and ^{we were} I was able to look at the whole scene, in all its insanity. We stopped fighting and something inside said "no more".

4 The point is that until we got some real information on what addiction was and what recovery could mean to me, ^{we were} I was in a poor position to judge whether I was an addict or not.

5 Each one of us ^{has} have faced this question. ^{dilemma} I remember going through a lot of pain and despair before considering the possible connection between my drugs and my misery. ^{we} We had used all sorts of drugs over a seven year period, been married and remarried ^{several} ~~three~~ times and dropped out of college as a direct result of my addiction and yet did not consider myself ourselves to be an addicts. The problem was that most of the information I had at that time had come to me through television or from other people who used a lot of dope but never considered themselves to be addicted. As long as I could stop, for instance, I did not see myself as an addict. Of course I never thought of stopping, much less tried. By the time I asked the big question, could it be the dope, I was so far gone that I saw myself picking out of ^{garbage} ~~garbage~~ the rest of my life. My first act of surrender was a phone call to my parents to ask them to take me in. They were very kind and considerate. I kept trying to use but each time it was worse. I am grateful I didn't get into downers more because I probably be dead now. I took the beer cure because it didn't seem like dope. After five years and two more marriages my beer cure had grown to water glasses of Southern Comfort without ice. I would skin-pop my stomach through my built in hypodermic system, my throat. I had replaced one addiction with another and again become allergic in my reaction to the drug alcohol. I discovered the program and began to attend NA meetings as soon as they started in my area. NA has grown a lot here and I feel I have grown with it. My first step in recovery was to see how my addiction had affected my whole way of life. To see this I had to be clean for quite a few months so my head could clean up a bit, I went to meetings daily and learned about the

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6 I used drugs to initiate and maintain communication about thoughts and feelings that I otherwise held back. This relieved my feelings of loneliness and strangeness.

7 This is why, when I share with newcomers, I recommend 90 NA meetings in 90 days. If they by some chance they have attended a few meetings and felt the feelings of identification and find that they are not addicts, they can go on without us. If they are not addicts, they probably will have learned a few things that will help them where ever they come from.

8 I broke through many emotional barriers in N.A., and learnt a lot about myself by identifying with other addicts who were also willing to talk at depth. Today I am free of my addictions.

9 One of the things we have to learn about drug addiction before we can experience complete recovery is that it is a disease and not a moral problem.

5/1/20 We did not have the sense of personal responsibility which most people call a conscience. Our only concern was for our immediate gratification where is the next pill or shot.

11 (1) First an addict is a person who has learned to prefer to change their perception of reality rather than change the reality they contact.

42 In many cases newcomers allow their tendency to mind read, complain and criticize to help them avoid our simple program of recovery. It is easy and very dangerous for them to put personalities before principles. If they don't make a lot of meetings, they may never learn enough about the disease to really open up and ask for help. They may never realize that one way or another we have all faced the same terror and desperation and found new hope through the program. Many of those who slip back into their old ways make it back to the program free of reservations that kept them feelings apart from before. Others die or wind up in jails and hospitals. We feel from our own experience that each member has to answer the question, am I an addict. for themselves.

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3 Every attempt I have made to stay clean has failed. Looking back over the past I find that these failures have caused me to spend 18 years of my life in prison. At this moment anyone looking at my future would have to say it is a hopeless one. I actually felt and believed this to be true too; that is until I found "Pathway" and started going to meetings. I found that there is something intangible here that brings me back each week. I am seeking solutions to my problems which will keep me clean and out of prison.

14 From the start the theme of the meetings was recovery. We all knew how to use drugs, we all knew the effect they had on us. The primary thing we were all interested in was how to stay clean, how to cope with life without the use of drugs, how to handle unpleasant feelings and emotions, in other words, how to ~~get better~~ recover.

It was conceivable in my addictive thinking, that something would work for me without any work on my part, how wrong I was. It has been my experience that the program works as long as I work it, one day at a time to the best of my ability and that is ever changing.

7 The monotonous, imitative, ritualistic, compulsive and obsessive routines of active addiction render us incapable of responsive or meaningful thought and action. Personal growth is creative effort and purposeful behavior; it presupposes choice, change and the capacity to face life on its own terms.

8 "I became very dependent on people to carry me emotionally through life which always left me disappointed and hurt when they had other interests and other friends and loved ones."

19 ~~in my mind was fear.~~ I feared the past and I feared the future. I was constantly searching for "the answer" -- searching for meaning and purpose, and finding only meaninglessness and purposelessness.

Built in susceptibility plus contact equals addict.

20 Addiction is a combination of availability and susceptibility and must be dealt with in any moral society as a disease.

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We realize today that, while we were

21 using drugs, we did not have the sensibilities which guide normal people in their day-to-day affairs.

22 I had reached the point where I could no longer see reality. My fantasies were my only hope and I truly believed that some day they would all come true; and I would be HAPPY!

KIND OF NARROW AIN'T IT!!

23 We have gone through stages of dark despair when we were sure that there was something wrong with us mentally. We came to hate ourselves for wasting the talents with which we had been endowed and for the trouble we were causing our families and others. Frequently we indulged in self-pity and proclaimed that nothing could ever help us.

24 We can smile at those recollections now, but, at the time, they were grim, unpleasant experiences.

25 We were under the illusion that we had things under control. —

26 Any of us sought answers but failed to find any we could use. I/K

27 As long as our drug of choice was available to us we had no concern

28 for the rest of the world. We were kings and the world was our kingdom — until we got caught.

29 *I'm a heroin addict.
I'm down again, but this time it's different
for me. I'm trying. Since I'm still
itching for another nod.*

*I have the opportunity
to stay free from my addiction and not
be just another junkie on the streets
struggling for another fix. Surely, that's
blessing in the sky.*

29 Eventually, chemicals ceased to make me feel good, they
just made me feel normal. I couldn't get the fantastic
euphoria I craved anymore.

5

Drug addicts are keenly aware of the difference between right and wrong . Many persons with our disease are convinced they are right and the world is wrong and use this belief to justify their self destructive behavior. A person with our disease developes and maintains a losers point of view which enables them to pursue their addiction without the the restraints of concern with their own well being. Simply put, the losers point of view focuses on the negative in all things. Abuse in government, graft, corrupt law enforcement, corporate rip off and thoughts of revolution provide and excellent backdrop for our ingratitude. We rarely bring up

30
Addict

N.A. WORK NOT FOR C.

Addicts have no responsibility of their affairs while addicted. Remember that.

31

Addiction- when we uzz start using the drug of our choice and get from point A to point B emotionally predictably, we're addicted. Few of us have set out to become addicted.

32

If you think you might be an addict, you probably are. At the onset of our addiction we seek euphoria, the highest state of pleasure. When we want recovery we seek the absence of pain, the opposite state of euphoria.

NO WORK N.A. WORK NOT FOR C.

Most drugs, especially the harder ones, require no period of usage to trigger any sort of allergic effect although physical and mental tolerance can play a role. Generally the effects are immediate and devastating. As usage continues certain things follow. Setting aside the physical effects of addiction, as the regularity of usage increases and the addict becomes accustomed to the state of mind common to addicts they forget

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IT'S NOT HOW MUCH WE USE THAT MAKES US ADDICTS BUT WHAT IT DOES TO US.

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what it's like to be normal. They forget the social graces, acquire weird habits and mannerisms, forget how to work, forget how to express themselves and show concern for others and they forget how to feel. Long time addicts must relearn the things forgotten and learn what they have missed. (2)

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Very many drug addicts are prisoners in their own minds, condemned to slow execution by their own sense of guilt. No

recovery

We must always remember that

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the first faltering effort is to be watched for and treasured as a tiny flame in a snowstorm. Even though the person is seemingly enveloped with insolvable difficulties, the addict should be encouraged that clean--anything is possible. A great tool is a day at a time. A great tool for encouraging recovery is a time at a time. 2. Each time we are able to help another, we

(1)

should. Imagined commitments and ~~existing~~ responsibilities to the PAST TYPE shouldn't keep us from doing what we can do today.

The sick, self-seeking, self-centered and self-enclosed world of the addict hardly qualifies as a way of life. At best, perhaps it is a way to survive for awhile. Even in this limited existence it is a way of despair, destruction and death.

Any life style seeking spiritual fulfillment seems to demand the very things missing in addiction: FREEDOM, GOODWILL, CREATIVE ACTION, AND PERSONAL GROWTH.

We tottered on the brink of self-destruction all are lives.

Our program is one of total abstinence from all drugs. A day at a time we are freed of the anxiety and frustration that accompany active drug addiction. No matter how bad it gets we will only make things worse if we try to alter the perception instead of the reality.

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HOW DO WE KNOW

Suicide was always on my mind

my few feeble attempts were unsuccessful, which only contributed more to my feelings of worthlessness.

Even the rock musician who has gone over the hill an knows only how to play music and pick strawberries. feels that there is no other way and no way out of his present situation. How many times have we heard, been told or told our selves that all your good for is ~~that~~ Not! That your no good for anything but being sick, a burden to family and society and that your doomed. These ingrained lies are a part of the social aspect of the disease of drug addiction or plain old addiction. Such was the case with me. The utter hell of an unmanagable life wering on my soul.

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drug use might have played a role in getting you behind bars. If the answer is yes you should see how they've let you down. They gave you the feeling that you were ok and strong enough to take whatever you wanted. Instead they got you landed in the pokies. I am one of the great uncaught, but I experienced. If you trust them again they'll burn you again.

I Our disease is manifested in the obcessions and compulsions that rule our lives operating.

44 The first thing we have learned about drug addiction is that it is one of the more severe problems in Man's history.

45 The frustration stemming from the repeated inability to transcend our self bondage by any natural means as non addicts do; is rooted in self centeredness. We addicts sick as we are, tried to transcend our egos and grow through the use of drugs. We were seeking then a means to escape from a disease that we wanted to deny that we had. It worked briefly, very briefly we then sunk into chemical dependency.

46 One night, after a meeting, he was waiting for my arrival at home with some dope, saying there was still some left. At that moment the "left overs" sounded good and I used. The minute the chemical was in my arm I went insane. It was cocaine and I never did like coke, for there was never enough. I threw some money at him and demanded he score some more. The next thing I knew we were fighting over the coke cotton. I knew there was nothing in the cotton and so did he, but we fought over it viciously -- as if our lives depended upon it.

47 The operating drug addict is a self destructive being whose lost the sensibilities to live in the world without using drugs.

48 Addicts are locked up in society's jails, carted off to society's mental wards, and finally comes the end, either we abstain from drugs totally and start to recover or we die!

49 Many of us in our addiction have cried out for something more.

When we realize the drugs are enslaving us instead of setting us free we experience great doubt and terror. Addiction is

over-riding reason, experience and sense perception to continue to use. Sometimes experience led something like: conscious blackout.

Couldn't predict what would happen after first use.

Continue to use after the thrill is gone.

Two things necessary for N.A. recovery: 1) to have the disease

2) to get a vision of the program as a way of life for you.

50 I started looking for some help, so I went to Alanon because it was obvious he had a problem with drugs and alcohol. I was 5' 9" tall and weighed 114 pounds when I came to this Program and thought I was "lookin' fine!" The miracle of this Program worked even in Alanon, for I had to get honest, they told me to Keep Coming Back and I did again and again, until I finally went to my first Narcotics Anonymous meeting and knew I was home and safe at last! I was still saying things like "I don't know what I'm doing here, it's my husband who has the problem, etc. etc." Naturally, they understood, and again I got the "keep coming back" and I did.

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Addiction insulates us from people, places, and things outside of our own world of getting, using and finding ways and means to continue the process. Hostile, resentful, self-centered, and self-concerned--we cut off all outside interests as our lives, and anything not completely familiar becomes alien and dangerous. Our world shrinks and isolation is its goal. ~~This might well be the true nature of our disorder.~~

52 Perhaps this chapter can best serve by providing a basis for identification with the program for the person who thinks drug addiction might be at the root of their problems. Addicts come from all backgrounds. The drugs addicts use may be legal or illegal. The dosages may be light or heavy. The effects of the drug of choice may be mild or devastating. The characteristics of associated with addiction may be noticed or unnoticed. We hope our general experience will help a person decide for themselves, if their problem may be our problem or if our help may be their help.

3 I used drugs and felt like my life was make believe I dug it until my whole life became make believe Allen L.

54 Sudden withdrawal from amphetamines produced a profound depression. Tranquilizers and dope offered temporary relief for six months. Eventually, the depression took over my whole existence. Everything was black. I would scream and cry and beg anyone and anything to relieve my misery. Reality was too harsh, and chemicals wouldn't allow me to transcend it anymore. I ended up on a psych ward, where my addiction was promptly transferred to Thorazine and Mellaril. After I was released, I continued to take the Thorazine and Mellaril. I hated the way they made me feel. They didn't take away the terrible depression -- only made me unable to do anything about it. I became pregnant and went on the wagon. I always rationalized that I wasn't an addict because I went nine months without. I now know that's not true. After my daughter was born, I went back to using. I couldn't use hard drugs and take care of her, so I maintained on pot. I hated the "high". I would beg my boyfriend not to let me get high, but I always would, and then would cry because I did.

55 Well, I must admit I do use both alcohol and drugs, but I don't think I have a problem with either one. I can take them or leave them alone. I realize that my record is not good, but this is due to being at the wrong place at the wrong time. Not only that, but I've had some bad luck over the years.

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16 If you think you might be an addict, you probably are, you should understand from the beginning that addiction is a terminal disease and without help the disease will progress in stages of increased difficulty in living to point of absolute despair. There are those paths addiction can take, there are no others: Sobriety, insanity or death.

If you question whether you have a drug problem or not than you are probably like us. Most of us never thought of ourselves as addicts but after coming to the program we learned more about the disease of addiction and it's symptoms. And were able to identify.

Avoidance of reality and personal responsibility had become our way of life. Illusion and fantasy replaced reality

We couldn't see our problems in their proper perspective because our drug use had clouded our thinking. We usually magnified our problems rather than viewed them realistically. We need real help with our real problems, but we also need to take it easy and realize that many of our problems will just work themselves out if we stop trying to run the show.

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NOT WORK FOR
I was 26 years old with two children and working on my second marriage (with my Knight in shining armor) when I started to use drugs -- as entertainment! After all, most people drank on weekends to have fun, why not a little dope to liven things up a bit? My weekend using of heroin went on for a few years until, inevitably, heroin began using me. Soon it was all I wanted and it didn't matter what day of the week it was.

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In a way society tells us we're addicted. The thought pattern hit me everytime they slammed those steel bars behind me. Society let me know and made me aware that I was screwed up in every angle.

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Addicts are locked up in society's jails, carted off to society's mental wards, and finally comes the end, either we abstain from drugs totally and start to recover or we die!

60 While there is no formal "N.A. definition" of addiction, most of us agree that, for us, it could be described as a (physical) compulsion coupled with a mental obsession. We mean that we had a distinct (physical) desire to consume drugs beyond our capacity to control it, and in defiance of all rules of common sense. We not only had an abnormal craving for drugs but we frequently yielded to it at the worst possible times. We did not seem to have sense enough to know when not to begin.

51 First an addict is a person who has learned to prefer to change their perception of reality rather than change the reality they contact.

Second the duration, ~~and intensity~~ frequency and intensity of their drug use indexes the degree of their addiction.

62 The obsessiveness is really common to all the addicts I've met or heard of... Like a guy will get a scene or a rap going that will be like his clack when his life is used up. The things he talks about when he has no real life left. Obsessions drive addicts past the normal human limits and many times wins them great fame of recognition-- until they burn out. The drug induced states can allow a person to exclude all the normal background awareness and focus entirely on a single point. At first this can be like a handy magnifying glass used at will. Later it can become a horrible sequence of all-consuming bits and pieces that rush up continually and we find ourselves powerless to control what's happening to us. Speed is definitely obsessive. Downs can relieve some of the pains of obsessions and become the ultimate obsession. Obsessions are like mental spasms. The mind ~~runs into~~ ~~an~~ draws up like a spastic muscle. It shorts out and ceases to function normally. The subconscious mind is free to act.

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He may have started using drugs moderately, may or may not have been a controlled heavy user - but at some point in his using he finds himself unable to control his drug use.

64 At these meetings I learnt that I was an addict, and that my addictions started as a child, long before I ever picked up a drink or a drug. As a child I became addicted to fantasy, because fantasy was much more preferable than reality. When I got older I didn't basically change, I just used alcohol and drugs to shield me from reality.

65 Addiction insulates us from people, places and things outside of our own world of getting, using and finding ways and means to continue the process. Self-centered and self-concerned we cut off all outside interests as our illness progresses. We live in fear and suspicion of the very people we have to depend on for our needs. This touches every area of our lives and anything not completely familiar becomes dangerous and alien. Our world shrinks and isolation is its goal.

66 That first joint made me feel so good, at one with the world and happy. I knew this was my answer and booze wasn't my path to follow. I was always looking outside of myself for an identity to assume where I would fit in and be a part and everything else I tried failed. I was always running one step ahead of feeling insecure, inadequate and was looking for people, places and things to change my life.

Using, I felt like a rat running a maze; making random moves, hoping something would work out.

13

Here is the man who no one, except another addict, can understand. He gets loaded at exactly the wrong time, in exactly the wrong place. He does absurd and amazing things while loaded, but may seem perfectly normal otherwise.. He'll get 90 days in jail for public intoxication, and when released will stop by the liquor store on his way to the bus stop. If in the hospital from a drug-related accident, he'll beg his friends to bring him his dope. He'll get the best job he's ever been offered, and show up stoned the first day. If he can afford it, he will have several "stashs" around the house, and only one will be for friends. If he can't afford it, he may risk his life and freedom daily committing crimes to support his habit. Often his friends will say, "It's killing him, and he knows it. Why doesn't he just stop?"

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69 Addiction is a state of mind which relies on an outside agency to maintain a person's sense of well being.

The

personal contact and the Steps of the N.A. program deal with the ~~problem~~ disease of addiction in a unique and effective manner. Addiction qualifies as a disease because the addict reacts to the drugs in aberrant behavior and compulsively seeking the drugs. This reaction is not wilful and does not constitute moral inferiority since

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For us an addict is a person who uses drugs in any form to the extent that they cannot live normally with or without them. They have passed a point of ^{no} return and must have outside help if they are to regain any sort of normal life. Prescription addicts are usually the last ^{to find out} so we will put them first here. Legal doses of prescribed medication can addict a person because of unknown side effects, combination with other drugs or an inborn potential ^{to} susceptibility to become addicted.

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19. Getting high during school or at work. Difficult to face the day without drugs. Drugs are used to escape self

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The individual is usually unaware that any real problem exists until a prescription lapses or they begin to experience failure in unacceptable living.

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They start losing jobs, become divorced, find themselves without friends and are unable to account for these changes. Generally their use of drugs will increase with these changes. They can in this condition indefinitely or increase their dosages or types of drugs by various means. If at any point they make the basic connection between their use of drugs and the way things have been going for them, they can begin their recovery by asking help.

41

We addicts

value personal freedom highly, perhaps because we want it so much and experience it so seldom in the progress of our illness. Even in periods of abstinence freedom is curtailed, we are never quite sure that our choice of action is based in a conscious desire for continued sobriety or an unconscious wish to return to using. We try to control our lives, unaware that need for control comes from the fear of losing control. This fear, based in part on past failures, often prevents us from making meaningful choices: choices which if put into action would remove the very fear which blocks us.

76

We can, however, see a little of ourselves in every addict.

2 where

~~Many have asked the question: "Why do the~~

7

addiction is hopeless. having cut all real ties to normal people, when we can't turn back or go on, we are stuck and the only way out is to take more drugs.

78

Addicts are scared- they feel they must be something they are not.

good line

It is the nature of the addict to perceive and precipitate a crisis . Many seek to adapt to living from crisis to crisis.

Most addicts remember only the good drug experiences, the fact that drugs make you feel great. It doesn't seem to keep them from destroying their lives and capacity to live.

Addicts are pawns in the game of enforcing drug laws enacted in the past and are subjects to the misconceptions of the past. I look forward to the day when addiction is recognized as a disease throughout of our whole human culture, including the medical establishment, the law enforcement establishment, the courts and the legislatures. In my opinion, the only criminal in the trafficking of drugs is the non-users who prey on the weakness of using addicts.

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THE USER'S WEAPONS

The first weapon is the ability to arouse anger or provoke loss of temper. If the family member or friend becomes angry and hostile, his ability to be of any help to the user has been completely destroyed. Consciously or unconsciously, the user is projecting an image of self hatred against the other person. When those close to the user react in an angry, hostile manner, he feels justified in his former using and has an additional excuse to use drugs in the future. The gods first make angry those whom they wish to destroy, and the drug user has a long experience of acting like a little god. If one loses one's temper, all chance of help at this time is thrown away, at least for the moment.

The second weapon is the ability to arouse anxiety on the part of the family. Thereby they are often compelled to do for the user that which can be done only by him if the illness is to be arrested. In their mistaken efforts to help, family members find themselves repeatedly protecting the user from the consequences of his actions, covering up, protecting, giving him a place to crash, covering up. A "bad check" is an illustration of this principle. The user does not have money to redeem the check. When the anxiety or embarrassment of the family becomes too intense concerning what will happen if the check is not redeemed, they secure money and cover the check. This relieves the anxiety of the family and the user, but it establishes a pattern for the user in the area of problem solving. He now learns that his family is not going to let him suffer the consequences and he may expect this to be done whenever a bad check is written.

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When an addict is away from drugs, as he may be off and on, he acts much like anyone else. This is especially clear to his friends or family. How often have we heard the phrase, "He's a nice guy when he isn't loaded, but ~~if he's high he's a~~ ^{CAN'T STAND HIM WHEN HE'S HIGH,}

~~you can't stand him when he's high.~~
~~_____~~
~~_____~~

1/5 case

It is just as clear that, if an addict takes any mind-affecting chemical into his system, something occurs, physically and ^{and Spiritually} mentally, which destroys almost completely his ability to stop. Any addict will confirm this, either by word or deed.

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The sick self-seeking, self-centered and self-enclosed world of addiction hardly qualifies as life; if anything, it is the way of despair, destruction and death.

Any real way of life seems to demand the very things missing in addiction; Freedom - Goodwill -- Personal Growth-- and Creative Action.

84

In our time, more physical addicts have a well entrenched criminal association. many new drugs and media attention have created a social anti-hero image of the addict. the fact that people who become addicted come from all levels of society has given addicts a social climber feeling in the excitement of sharing the stimulus of certain drugs, ideas, and feelings find expression and the addiction begins as a sort of material and spiritual seduction. Addicts hurt and are desperate for achieving images beyond the physical.

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Prescription Addict

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One drug addict that escapes attention is the prescription addict especially the house wife. Their's is a path of quiet desperation. The student, housewife or businessman has the problem of being able to conceal his addiction to drugs with ease. By the time that the progression has reached the stages where it has become obvious, the addiction pattern may have been reinforced by years or decades of undetected addiction. Valium addicts for instance often never even guess that they have a drug problem. All they know is that they have a prescription from a competent professional to take a certain medicine as prescribed. All is well until the weekend comes and the prescription runs out on Friday. By Sunday they may be in serious withdrawal. If they fail to seek or secure hospital help, they stand little chance of detoxing alone. Learning to live without drugs is complicated by the fact that it is so hard to accept their disease. Again susceptibility and availability have combined in the addict to form dependency. The cosmetic overtones can restrict or prevent the detection and/or treatment.

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Doctors

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Many doctors develop undetected addiction. Recovery for them requires the risk of losing their professional careers. It's a little like a policeman turning himself in for shop lifting or burglary. In the course of it's devastation the disease eventually progresses to the point where denial is futile. Part of the risk run by society in keeping the lid on addiction is that the social stigma keeps the person that might need help from seeking it because of the fear of never being able to live it down. A more open attitude would encourage many to seek

Prescription Addiction

#0057

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88 Drug manufacture and innovation in modern times has created an availability and of potentially addictive drugs never seen before in the history of man. One of the ancient dreams of men in all times has seemed to be coming true. The ability of modern drug technology to combat disease and alleviate human suffering is a great blessing. Hidden in this blessing is a cruel reversal of effect called drug addiction. The innate susceptibility to this disease through genetic factors or behavioral inclinations is of little concern to addicts recovering through the Narcotics An Anonymous program. The why is not so important, the what to do is our chief question. We feel it is important, however, to share the experiences of many of our members to benefit others who may suffer from our disease and not know it.

89 That first joint made me feel so good, at one with the world and happy. I knew this was my answer and booze just wasn't my path to follow. I was always looking outside of myself for an identity to assume where I would fit in and be a part and everything else I tried failed. I was running one step ahead of feeling insecure, inadequate and was looking for people places and things to change my life.

90 result seems to be that a cult of socially acceptable secrecy and deception is among us. The slogan of this cult might be the time honored cliché: "What they don't know won't hurt them." The

91 Personal growth is creative effort and purposeful behavior; it presupposes choice, change and the capacity to face life on its own terms.

92 We seek to manipulate people and conditions and control all our actions, and thus we destroy spontaneity, an integral mark of freedom. We fail to realize that the need for control springs from fear of losing control. This fear, based in part on past failures and disappointments in solving life's difficulties, prevents us from making meaningful choices - choices which, if acted upon, might remove the very fear which blocks us.

93 Occasionally an addict will be honest about his drug use. And the strange truth he will tell is that he has no idea why he took that first dose. He is as confused as anyone.

14 Addiction insulates us from people, places, and things outside of our own world of getting, using and finding ways and means to continue the process. Hostile, resentful, self-centered, and self-concerned -

Recy
15

The very nature of our disorder and its observed symptoms points up this fact. We addicts value personal freedom highly, perhaps because we want it so much and experience it so seldom in the progress of our illness. Even in periods of abstinence freedom is curtailed. We are never quite sure if any action is based in a conscious desire for continued sobriety or an unconscious wish to return to using.

16

He may have great plans and schemes, hopes, dreams, convictions that someday ~~he~~^{will} get out of ~~his~~ mess - all of us had these hopes. But deep in our hearts we knew we were in the grip of something powerful and deadly, and we feared there was no way out.



EVENTUALLY GOES

7

An addict is someone who ~~is~~ out of control. In every addict's using there comes a time when even the most sincere desire to stop is useless. And, tragically, this situation is usually in full swing long before the addict suspects it.

Here is the truth: For reasons that are not yet clear, addicts have lost the power of choice in their drug use.

Willpower seems to have vanished. We are at times unable to bring to mind the pain and degradation of just weeks, ~~DAYS~~, OR EVEN HOURS before. We have no defence against the first dose of drugs.

The obvious consequences of starting to use ~~chemicals~~^{DRUGS} again seem non-existent, or ~~well~~^{AWAY} rationalized, when we begin. If we do have second thoughts we can usually beat them down with the idea that this time we will stay in control.

We had to settle for whatever we found when we came back to ourselves. Many of the people in jail were operating as addicts or alcoholics. Isn't it curious, when we stop using ~~a~~ we become people again in the sense that we are less and less compulsive and more and more free to respond to our true feelings and needs. A friend once suggested that we are trying to perceive life with defective instruments. Our senses lie and ~~the representation of reality~~ distort our view

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#0057

IF I DID IT FOR DRUGS, I CAN DO IT FOR ME!

Addiction is a contradiction in living. On one hand we seek feelings of superiority and on the other we accept the most intolerable existence on the planet. Some of the drug induced states felt great but the thing we had to tolerate to support our habits ~~are incomprehensible~~ reflect our desperation. Strangely we were compelled to live and use drugs and on the other we knew we were committing suicide. Rip off, prostitution, burglary, cheating friends, forgetting completely the ~~normal~~ responsibilities normal people feel toward themselves and others. Somehow we accepted all of these things as part of our addiction whether we faced up to it or not. The mystique of the drug subculture gave us an illusory feeling ~~that~~ of being someone special. As our departure from the normal ways of living grew so did our craving for apologetic living. Operating we could really get down. When we experienced a periodic jolt of self awareness it would seem as if we were two people instead of one. Operating we became capable of any depravity, any betrayal of ourselves or others. Clean we would run around trying to get it all squared away before our next spree. Sometimes we could do this very well, but later it ~~became~~ seems less important and becomes more impossible.

Through several years of trying to make myself happy with cars, women, dope I was more unhappy & less satisfied than when it all started.

So when someone tells you about his/her life being unmanageable they have finally realized their inability to cope with their life. It for them alone is unmanageable.

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100

To begin with there is no way to take enough safeguards with some of most addictive types of drugs. Inexplicably many people are exposed to them and show no evidence of addiction. Others can become addicted through a minimal usage. What we feel is most important is that the disease of addiction be recognized by councilors, physicians and persons concerned with the laws of our country. We believe we have a positive solution for anyone with a drug problem and an honest desire for help.

Habitual usage, compulsive behavior and denial seem to be the main symptoms of our disease. To be able to receive the help we have to offer, most of us have had to reach a personal point of pain which makes it possible for us to seek help. The trouble with addiction is that in the early stages the individual may not only meet the demands put on them by their fellows, they often exceed them. The assurance is that if all looks right, all is right. As the disease progresses, the addict becomes expert at avoiding detection and manipulating others to enable them to continue their addiction regardless of the trouble they cause. In other words in the early stages friendly caution can be made to seem foolish and in the later stages the addict is usually the very last to admit their need for help. When they do, who can help them to understand the hopeless confusion they experience. The most sincere and constructive efforts of some of the nations best doctors in all specialties have shown meager results. New breakthroughs may come in the future but it seems likely to us that the principal of one addict helping another pyramids and the solution has begun in our program.

LONG RANGE RECOVERY

A frequent mistake is to conceive of the problem simply in terms of keeping the individual away from drugs and keeping drugs and drug using friends away from him. This cannot be enforced short of incarceration or commitment. And even then, human ingenuity seems to enable them to locate a source of supply. In any case, any battle won today will be fought again tomorrow.

When the drugs are washed from our bodies through daily abstinence and our minds begin to clear from the effects of our drug of choice, a miracle takes place. We come to understand that our recoveries are a gift from a power greater than ourselves. We are made aware of this gift in a thousand ways. This power wants only that we realize ourselves as much as possible. The longer we stay clean and sober, the more we will probably want to clear away the sham and falseness from our lives. It is a great gift to be a human being and the opportunities we seek are closed to us only by our own sense of worth. When we lie, cheat or steal, we devalue ourselves in our own eyes.

Many crimes can be shown to result

04 from the improper use and abuse of chemicals. It must be borne in mind that an addict cannot choose whether or not to do drugs. They are in the grip of a powerful obsession that forces them to do drugs at all costs.

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105 What the addict must strive for, more than anything else, after he realizes he cannot be free alone, is a richer experience of personal freedom. This is far more important than anything he may learn from medicine, psychology or sociology. It is of course true that scientific facts can help him in his pursuit of sobriety, provided he has already developed some desire for the freedom which sobriety will give him.

106 These ingrained lies are a part of the social aspect of the disease of drug addiction or plain old addiction. Such was the case with me. The utter hell of an unmanageable life warring on my soul.

The frustration stemming from the repeated inability to transcend our self bondage by any natural means as non addicts do, is rooted in self centeredness. We addicts sick as we are, tried to transcend our egos and grow through the use of drugs. We were seeking then a means to escape from a disease that we wanted to deny that we had. It worked briefly, very briefly we then sunk into chemical dependency.

107 Drug addiction is a disease.

It cannot be cured, only arrested.

The first step in this arrest is to admit we are powerless over our addiction, that our lives have become unmanageable.

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108 Addiction is a mental, ~~physical~~ and spiritual disease.

109 In my addition I never was what I thought I was. If I based my feelings on what others felt, I may have made it. I was incapable of responsive or meaningful understanding.....

- 6) Low self-esteem. Confuses failures with self-worth. Confuses acceptance and love with self-worth. Inability to give love because of inability to accept self. Continually seeks self-inflicted punishments. An individual suffering from sense of inadequacy and inferiority.
- 7) Feelings of isolation. A feeling of loneliness, of being different, and apart, and alone. Afraid to socialize. A sense of unworthiness and social isolation. Addiction is a lonely disease.
- 8) Perfectionism. Impatient with others or to life. Seeks immediate reward for efforts and immediate release from pain or stress. Sets unrealistic goals. Learns to rely on a deeply inadequate radically immature approach to solving life's problems. Finds in others what is unacceptable in self. Transfers need for perfection on to others. Expecting too much from others. Wanting too much. Makes value judgements. Inclined to judge self harshly. Disguises these feelings by submitting family and friends to same rigid value system.
- 9) Guilt. Paranoid sensitivity. Using up present moments in self-pity because of real or imagined past behavior. Feeling guilty is a common cause of stress and the most useless of all emotions. It prevents taking action now. Guilt results when efforts to please people are unsuccessful. Guilt is self-imposed reaction when the individual feels an adult rule or moral code has been broken. It is an attempt to change history. Often it is left over from early childhood. The opposite side of guilt is worry or concern about something in the future over which you have no control. Worry enables escaping the now and avoiding taking risks.
- 10) Compulsiveness. With emotional swings from elation to depression. Inability to cope adequately with most aspects of life. Repetitive behavior patterns. An irresistible impulse to perform an irrational act. Can results in actions and thought processes.
- 11) Angry over-dependency. Dependent personality. Failure to demonstrate appropriate aggressive behavior. Sees self as loser. Strong need to be accepted. "Other directed", people pleasing for acceptance. Leads to low energy drive, inability to compete - - - and fear of trying. Lacks the aggressive means to achieve a satisfying place for himself in society.

Addiction is a slavish devotion to the need for the habituating drug more powerful and more compelling than the dictates of all the rest of one's known highest values and principles.

The real personal craving is the desire to be oneself.

Addiction is a disease - a sickness with a difference. This difference vitally involves impairment of the act of choice.

Addiction has been attributed to personality, heredity, general constitution, psychotic tendencies, environmental factors, occupation, physiological tolerance and customs of the community. It is a behavior resulting from an interaction of biological, social, and chemical phenomena. There is a vague dividing line between normal and deviant.

There are certain behavioral traits or attitudes common to most addictive personalities. These include:

- 1) High level of anxiety in interpersonal relations. Feelings are easily hurt. Very sensitive and especially susceptible to the pain of others. Inability to experience impersonal love. Inability to accept love. Suspicious of others. Fear of people, needing acceptance and approval of others. Easily disappointed. Depending upon others for personal happiness.
- 2) Emotional immaturity. Being dependent, childlike, and passive. Neurotic tendencies since childhood. Never attained mature avenues of self-expression. Never learned to play as children and can only play as adults with aid of chemicals. Had few childhood friends. Temper easily aroused.
- 3) Ambivalence toward authority. Argumentativeness. Conflicting value systems.
- 4) Low frustration tolerance. Inappropriate emotional explosions. Forms unbearable burden of pent-up emotions with no avenue of relief. Intolerant of human failings.
- 5) Grandiosity. When sober, never the person he would like to be. A direct contradiction of his most cherished values. Boastful behavior to compensate for deep feelings of inadequacy. Addiction is a mechanism to achieve a sense of power as compensation for a profound feeling of inferiority. Cockiness. Exaggerates own importance at expense of others. Overestimates abilities, intelligence and judgement.

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somehow to live. Without Obsession is not thinking but more like a mental spasm that produces action without the normal restraints. Operating an addict is capable of doing many things that normally would horrify them. It is directly related to the way a person can continue to appear normal and even carry on a conversation while in a blackout under the influence of alcohol. An addict can walk, talk and rob a bank and never experience the sensation that anything is wrong. Women can prostitute themselves and surround themselves with all sorts of romantic fantasy instead of experiencing the reality. Kids can strike off into the world like Quixote tilting windmills extending their youthful negation into reality and suffering the consequences. If you think you might be an addict and never experienced these forms of behavior, count yourself fortunate.

0099
(3)
Narcotics, sedatives, and alcohol are drugs which relieve pain. This is the pleasure of chemical escape. It is a problem solving device to relieve unpleasantness, anxiety, tension, and resentment. Drugs, including alcohol, enable the individual to avoid pain for the time being, but pain, tension, anxiety, and resentment are increased severely in the family. When the effects of the drug wear off, when the individual is clean and sober he feels little desire to suffer the consequences of using. There may be complete unwillingness to discuss what happened, or the reverse side of the coin may appear; remorse and guilt may compel the addict to prostrate himself before the family, beg for mercy, and promise that it will never happen again. Each attempt to gain the same goal — the avoidance of the consequences of taking drugs. If the addict or user succeeds by either means, his pain is again avoided or relieved, but the family again pays the price of drinking or using.

110
The progression of addiction has been compared to an elevator that is always going down. We have found that we can get clean at any level we want to ~~or we can continue the downward~~. In other words if you think you might have a drug problem, the likelihood is that you do and our program might have something very special to offer you. Unfortunately the nature of our disease makes us abnormally susceptible to rationalizing our addiction instead of dealing with the fact.

113 There are probably as many definitions of addiction as there are theories or ways of thinking based on both research and personal experience. It is not surprising that there are many areas of honest disagreement in the definitions that we hear. Some seem to fit the observed and known facts for some groups better than for others. If we accept this as a fact, then perhaps another viewpoint ought to be examined in the hope that we may discover a way more basic to all addiction and more valid in establishing communication among all of us.

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114 We understand now that once a person has crossed the invisible borderline from heavy drug using to compulsive addictive using, he will always remain an addict. So far as we know, there can never be any turning back to "normal" using. "Once an addict, always an addict", is a simple fact we have to live with.

We have also learned that there are few alternatives for the addict. If he continues to use, his problem will become progressively worse; he seems assuredly on the path to Skid Row, to hospitals, to jails or other institutions, or to any early grave.

115 I am a young woman, 20 years of age and for the past year and one half I have been wandering down the nightmare alley of the junkies. I want to quit taking dope and I try but I can't.

"Jail didn't cure me, nor did hospitalization helped me for long.

The doctor told my family it would have been better and indeed kinder if the person who first got me hooked on dope to have taken a gun and blown my brains out, and I wish to God she had. My God how I do wish it".

-3-

116 Reality became so painful that oblivion became pleasure. A person living in that state of mind cannot be expected to react normally to life. One essence of addiction is that the addict when confronted with unpleasant reality has learned to change the perception instead of the reality.

117 Our disease is manifested in the obsessions and compulsions that rule our lives operating.

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Initially we must understand that the problems of drug dependence lie not just in chemicals but in the people using them. However, real recovery does not begin until the individual starts breaking away completely from drugs, alcohol, and other mind altering substances. Recovery is also similar to the construction of a Gothic arch. There are unseen foundations; many persons may lay various stones in the arch; but the keystone must be put in place by the drug user himself or the whole structure fails. No one can do for the user what must be done by him. You cannot take the patient's medicine and expect the patient to benefit. Choices must be made and action taken by the user of his own volition if recovery is to occur on any permanent basis.

It is appalling how the drug abuser controls the family, especially the mother or father or husband. The individual uses drugs again and again. The family screams, yells, begs, pleads, prays, threatens or practices the silent treatment. It also covers up, protects and shields the person from the consequences of his using. If the drug dependent continues to act like a little god, it is because the family helps to preserve this illusion of omnipotence. In the preservation of this omnipotence neurosis (the attempt to play God) the user has two primary weapons.

We have learned that addiction is an illness - not a moral issue. It is a two-fold disease: A physical allergy coupled with an obsession of the mind. It can be arrested, but never cured. It is similar in nature to diabetes in this respect. Only complete abstinence from the use of drugs or alcohol in any form including medicine, can arrest this disease. We can no more prevent the addict's use of drugs than we can stop the tubercular's coughing. No one, not even the doctor, nor the clergy, nor the family, can do this for him or her.

We have found that compulsive use of drugs does not indicate lack of affection for the family. It is not a matter of love, but of illness. The addict has lost the power of choice in the matter of drugs. Even when he knows what will happen when he takes the first drink, pill, or fix, he will do so. This is the "insanity" we speak of in regard to this illness.

When we fully understand and accept that addiction is a disease, that it is both mental and physical, and that we are powerless over it, we became ready to learn a better way to live.

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111 An ^{active} operating addict is reduced to the basics of survival.

112 If they are addicts, they will find a new line through the program that would not otherwise be possible.

118

Non-addicts have great trouble understanding our delima.

It is very nearly impossible for them to make any sense of our random behavior and the consuming drive to use even after repeated and prolonged efforts to stay clean.

Mostly, ^{we} think, addiction is a statement of how the addict feels about himself and the world. For the addict to want to make another statement he must reach a point of pain at a time when the program or some form of higher power is at hand. For the addict to succeed in making another statement it is useful to spend a great deal of time with persons who have been there. These people usually take great pleasure in helping a suffering addict recover and have great insight and many useful suggestions to offer when asked. Recovery as is found in Narcotics Anonymous must come from within and no one can get clean for anyone else.

Obsessions drive

addicts past the normal human limits and many times wins them great fame of recognition-- until they burn out. The drug induced states can allow a person to exclude all the normal background awareness and focus entirely on a single point. At first this can be like a handy magnifying glass used at will. Later it can become a horrible sequence of all-consuming bits and pieces that rush up continually and we find ourselves powerless to control what's happening to us.

Most drugs, Especially the harder ones, require no period of usage to trigger any sort of allergic effect although physical and mental tolerance can play a role. Generally the effects are immediate and devastating. As usage continues it can be

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121 The monotonous, imitative, ritualistic and compulsive routines of active addiction render us incapable of spontaneous action. Personal growth is creative effort and purposeful action. It presupposes choice, change and the capacity to face life on its own terms.

22 Addiction insulates us from people, places and things outside of our own world of getting, using and finding ways and means to continue the process. Self-centered and self-concerned we cut off all outside interests as our illness progresses. We live in fear and suspicion of the very people we have to depend on for our needs. This touches every area of our lives and anything not completely familiar becomes dangerous and alien. Our world shrinks and isolation is its goal.

123 Long-time addicts must patiently relearn the things forgotten and learn what they have missed.

24 Obsessions drive many addicts past the normal human limits and helps them excel for a time in the area of their obsession. (3) They never seem to realize that they have ripped themselves off by putting something else ahead of themselves until they burn out. The drug induced states can allow a person to exclude all the normal background awareness and focus entirely on a single point.

125 The sick self-seeking, self-centered and self-enclosed world of addiction hardly qualifies as life; if anything, it is the way of despair, destruction and death.

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all outside interests as our illness progresses. We live in fear and suspicion of the very people we have to depend on for our needs. This touches every area of our lives, and anything not completely familiar becomes alien and dangerous. Our world shrinks and isolation is its goal. This might well be the true nature of our disorder.

All that has been said above could be summed up in .

Excerpt from "Thirst For Freedom"

Any addict will tell you that medicine alone will not cure his illness. He may regain good physical health only to relapse. Many addicts report that they got in good shape the better to enjoy their next binge.

Psychological insight, if it were the only required remedy, would enable addicts to resume their habit. The records show that it is impossible for an addict to indulge with control no matter how enlightened he may be about his emotional trouble and no matter how well he may control his feelings.

Social adjustment similarly fails to bring recovery, if it is thought that a suitable job and harmonious social relations alone are the answer to the drug habit. They report they "Never had it so good." then relapse.

At the end we are consumed with terror and despair. We know for sure that we are dying and many of our friends are usually dead. No one can explain the incredible fact that addicts confirmed beyond hope in their addiction can and do reach for and receive help in Narcotics Anonymous.

Addicts are locked up in society's jails, carted off to society's mental wards, and finally comes the end, either we abstain from drugs totally ~~xxx~~ and start to recover or we die!

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Addiction is asocial disease . That's right
a social malady. Why do you think it is that as our
disease progresses that we become mysteriously looked down
on by society as rebels, lunatics, fanatics, bums, degener-
ates ad infinitum. Because by those standards we addicts could
neither accept or live up to we were frowned upon by many
many took pity on us. Also this is because of ignorance
, a failure a failure to look at the social aspect of
the disease. We may have an idealistic approach to life.
Condemned by church , formal and informal laws, and
by Doctors. Not by all of these of course but the ones
who we in our sick state perceived to be persecuting us.
Why do you think the guy working in a gas station doing
dope goes no further and his social life is ruined.

He may and may furiously deny that he craves further
social contact with other people and other ways of life.

How many times have we felt we would like to love and
be loved , to give of our selfs , to make contributions.
but that for us this was impossible so screw it.

The horror show of not working in with society
, not fitting in is hell.

We of NA raised up from that hell to find that there
a lot of sense in living, that a new life was laid out
for us every day if we wanted it and didn't use drugs that
one day at a time. New places awaited us in that society
that had held for us only seeming misgivings. We came to
know success and its secret of dependence on a power greater
than our selfs, a group of people and spiritual principles

Addiction the disease ramifies through out our
life tree and shakes it to its roots.... depression.

So, not being cured our lives are unmanageable pronouncitly
at times but that is no reason to use rather it is a reason
to seek help with vigor. Another tool is surrender and
acceptance,.

The drug dependent person
uses drugs or alcohol to escape pain and learns
how to use the family to escape the pain of the
consequences.

Billions can be spent and not do half the good of
a knowing smile and the warm feeling we get from our meetings
and the warm feeling our fellowship.

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The frustration stemming from the repeated inability
to transcend our self bondage by any natural means as
non addicts do is rooted in self centeredness. We addicts
sick as we are, tried to transcend our egos and grow through
the use of drugs.

The key to ~~an addict~~ helping a suffering addict that resides in the recovered addict is the insight and remembrance that while using drugs an addict is without the sensibilities which guide normal people in normal affairs. Conscience, the sense of personal responsibility, is in the anesthetized forebrain. Memory is faulty. Concern with personal well being, present and future, is beyond a person in the grip of compulsive drug use. Moved by forces hidden within our natures, the operating addict moves in a world where he is master and the world is his kingdom-- as long as he doesn't get caught. The ultimate catch is running out of dope and fighting to keep up the illusion that we have got it under control. To us, the members of Narcotics Anonymous, any addict with a desire to avoid the next pill, fix, or drink a day or a minute at a time is ready for the program. As their grip on the old ways of thinking and doing begins to relax the mind begins to accept new ideas that lead to a new life. In this new life they find themselves no longer pressed between those who use drugs and those who do not. Their world constantly expands to include new members and eventually members of society at large. Problems that had no solutions became transparent and unreal in the light of our new understanding. Old ideas grudges and resentments fade as we loosen our sick point of view. A warm feeling of belonging replaces the old hole in the gut. It's no accident though! Nothing is free. We pay for our recovery with our sharing and

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They are quite normal for the operating addict. In an operating addict some parts of the brain are ~~not~~ not able to carry out their normal functions and the resultant individual is literally "not all there". The human brain has evolved from functions we would consider basic to functions we would consider higher. The higher functions such as conscience, the ability to experience certain pleasurable sensations of wonder, love etc. Left are the abilities to seek food, to seek security, to seek possessions of value.. In short what we would call an animal. This animal functions as other animals do. It exists. It has needs and wants. It can survive. It has cunning and its instincts sharpened by fear or deprivation. The person within is submerged and the capacities to be human are not present. This is an extreme state, but I've been there and so have many others with our disease.

more regular use

Simply using more does not, by itself, indicate dependency. But a pattern of regular use, coupled with some adverse behavioral changes, can show a definite move towards possible dependency. The point here is not how much is being used, or how often, but why it is being used and what behavioral changes occur as a result of the use. If teenagers have to lie to their parents about their savings accounts, about why they have dropped out of school sports or other activities, or about who their companions are, and have to maintain these fictions in order to continue using drugs, they will begin to experience real guilt. Unfortunately, this guilt produces feelings of intense self-hate, which results in increased drug use. A cycle of use-guilt-remorse-increased use begins.

For instance many

of our people have never learned to work. They started dope to young or just bummed around. Others

The obsessiveness is really common to all the addicts I've met or heard of... Like a guy will get a scene or a rap going that will be like his clack when his life is used up. The things he talks about when he has no real life left.

3

daily preoccupation

Preoccupation with drugs is one of the major indicators of a chemical problem. More and more of the student's time, energy and money are spent on thinking about being high and insuring that a steady supply of drugs is available. Questioning a user at this stage will reveal that very few of his or her daily activities do not include drug use. The user accepts this as normal. Problems with parents or police may serve to cause the abuser to decide that it would be smart to get down or to quit using all together and they may succeed for a few weeks. Generally though these periods of abstinence will not last. They do serve, however, to strengthen the abuser's sincere delusion that, because he or she quit, there is no problem. It can be pointed out to the abuser that, even though he or she feels that there is still a choice as to whether or not to use, the "choice" is always the same: to keep using.

4

dependency

By the time the user has reached a state of dependency, negative personal feelings have been building steadily until they require daily, even hourly, medication with drugs. Abusers in this state are unable to distinguish between normal and intoxicated behavior. To them, being high is normal, and no rationale or moral argument can break through their chemically maintained delusion. This delusion persists even in the face of overwhelming evidence that his or her abuse is out of control and is physically, mentally and emotionally strangling him or her. The abuser will continue to insist that there is no problem, that it is not out of control, and that he or she can quit at any time.

experimental use

Junior-high age students, especially boys, are great experimenters with various types of mood-altering substances. Some may never go beyond the experimental stage. They may decide that chemical use is not for them. But a majority of them will continue to experiment and become regular users. They will use beer and, but in this stage, and will learn to seek and enjoy the mood swings that these substances will provide. A child who exhibits abuse at this stage may be establishing a lifelong pattern. Or the chemical use may level off and stay at the "social-recreational" level, causing no intrapersonal conflict or externally harmful consequences. It is difficult to assess chemical dependency at this stage. The normal turmoil of adolescence is baffling to both teenagers and their parents, and caution is advised in any evaluation procedure. Many students have been inappropriately labeled as dependent when in fact they are not. They may be using drugs, but that fact alone does not make them dependent.

Addiction involves more than drug use. It aggravates character defects and reinforces personality disorders. It stunts emotional, social and other forms of personal growth. As addiction progresses failure and fear of failure begins to invade every area of the addicts life. The addict in the grip of drug induced compulsion is forced to survive any way he or she can.

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We realize that, while using drugs, we are without the sensibilities which guide normal people in thier daily lives. Our conscience (the sense of personal responsibility) is aneticized; our memory is faulty; and the concern for our personal well being, present and future, seems non-existent. Even when the drugs run out we are handicapped to the point where living life on a daily basis seems impossible. Moved by forces hidden within our nature as addicts we seek to be the master of our universe---until we get caught. The ultimate catch, (even though we cling to the illusion that we have our drug use, and our life under control) we cannot live with or without drugs.

Each of us is a prisoner, condemned by our own morality, our own sense of guilt. WE have commotted the ultimate crime of acting against our own true inner nature by doing things we really can't condone and really don't want to do, not just once, but again and again. Not just the criminal things, but even worse the petty things, and the time we spent doing nothing. We committed the crime and we pay the price in feelings. Reality, at times became so painful, the oblivion became a pleasure, a goal. Part of our nature is thar when confronted with an unpleasant or intolerable reality, we change our perception rather than deal with reality.

We feel that addiction is a statement of how the addiçt feels about himself and about the world. In order to make another statement we must reach that point of pain, hopelessness, and dispare at a time when help is close at hand.

At the end I feared the past and I feared the future as if I was being eaten away from my insides.....

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If asked why he started using again, an addict will present hundreds of excuses that seem valid on their own, but in light of the ^{CONSEQUENCES} following-horror-seem ridiculous. We get a picture of a man who, injuring his foot, cuts it off so he won't feel the pain.

This is not an easy thing for many of us to do. All through our usage we tell ourselves "I can handle it." Maybe this was true at the beginning but it is not so now. The drugs handle us. We avoided places and people that didn't condone our usage. We spend our money on drugs first and if any money can be spared we may or may not eat. We assumed everyone in the world was crazy while we were the only sane people. We couldn't understand why some people didn't want to use 24 hours a day. The thought of running out of dope left us with a feeling of impending doom. Peace of mind was non-existent. The only relief was a short lived nod.

If you are like us, you have tried to do it yourself. Maybe under extreme duress you were able to stay clean for a while, two weeks maybe or a month. Many of us didn't see two consecutive days clean. Or maybe you used the beer cure. Or the pot cure. But we as addicts centered our whole existence around "the cure" and soon developed another addiction.

Most of all we became unmanageable. Our lives became unmanageable. Our jobs and family situations became intolerable. We found relief only in drugs and alcohol.

The ends to this disease are always the same, jails, institutions and death. Some of us hit many institutions and few or no jails. Some of us spend the rest of our lives in jail for a drug related crime or a crime committed under the influence. But the most common pattern is many jails, the institutions, because we are presumed crazy and finally death. But before we die the disease takes from us our pride, our self-esteem, our families and loved ones. And finally our desire to live.

Drug addiction is the disease and N.A. is the cure.

I have never seen anyone fail who has thoroughly followed our path. It is not an instant cure. We continue our recovery until we die. But when we do die, we die happy and free.

In our disease, we practice dying and in recovery we practice living. We can feel, care, love and we can be loved. We no longer have to be isolated and with time can feel free to go anywhere and do anything, except use. As don't use because we don't want to, we do have a choice.

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A friend in the program and I discussed what a person would be like if they slept all day, did not work, didn't talk to anyone, did not think or read-- in short did nothing all day long. Well wouldn't they forget social graces, acquire weird habits and mannerisms, forget how to work, forget how to express themselves and show concern for others, forget how to feel...

And he says just as often, "Drugs are my solution. They're the best thing I've got." He is, in the truest sense, the walking dead.

Inability to deal with anger. Anger often aimed at least resisting target - himself.

Inability to express angry feelings adequately.

I was constantly searching for "the answer" -- searching for meaning and purpose, and finding only meaninglessness and purposelessness. Suicide was always on my mind -- my few feeble attempts were unsuccessful, which only contributed more to my feelings of worthlessness.

Eventually, chemicals ceased to make me feel good, they just made me feel normal. I couldn't get the fantastic euphoria I craved anymore. Sudden withdrawal from amphetamines produced a profound depression. Tranquilizers and dope offered temporary relief for six months. Eventually, the depression took over my whole existence. Everything was black. I would scream and cry and beg anyone and anything to relieve my misery. Reality was too harsh, and chemicals wouldn't allow me to transcend it anymore.

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21. Can't tell what normal behavior is any more -- normal means being stoned nearly constantly.

Any addict will tell you that medicine alone will not cure his illness. He may regain good physical health only to relapse. Many addicts report that they got in good shape the better to enjoy their next binge.

Psychological insight, if it were the only required remedy, would enable addicts to resume their habit. The records show that it is impossible for an addict to indulge with control no matter how enlightened he may be about his emotional trouble and no matter how well he may control his feelings.

It is obvious that this cycle would never begin if the addict didn't take the first dose of drugs. It would seem therefore that the problem centers in the mind more than the action we have taken in life's miseries.

Last but not least we want to consider the poor old street addict. The most conspicuous addict and the addict most vulnerable to the abuses resulting from a categorical attitude toward people with our disease, these people can be killed and a few needle marks will assure a diagnosis of overdose. The legal system is geared to process them as habitual offenders when treatment for their disease could restore them to normal productive life.

Physical condition worsens. Loss of weight, more frequent illnesses, memory suffers, flashbacks may increase. Thoughts of suicide may increase.

Curiously, before 1918, addicts had no criminal connotation. Opiates in pure and tincture form were readily and easily available. In the ~~old~~ old days, cocaine was considered a cheap substitute for alcohol.

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There is the heavy user. His chemical intake is enough to affect his health and social standing, but he also is able to stop or moderate his use if given a sufficiently powerful set of circumstances - such as threat of jail, or near loss of life.

Social adjustment similarly fails to bring recovery if it is thought that a suitable job and harmonious social relations alone are the answer to the drug habit. They report they "Never had it so good." then relapse.

What the addict must strive for, more than anything else, after he realizes he cannot be free alone, is a richer experience of personal freedom. This is far more important than anything he may learn from medicine, psychology or sociology. It is of course true that scientific facts can help him in his pursuit of sobriety, provided he has already developed some desire for the freedom which sobriety will give him.

Long-time addicts must patiently relearn the things forgotten and learn what they have missed.

It wouldn't explain the special attraction we seem to have to oblivion. It wouldn't explain our seemingly universal illusion that tells us "this time it will be different" irregardless of our past experience. It doesn't explain why after years of physical abstinence we often return to our drug of choice or some substitute. A strictly physical interpretation of addiction doesn't explain any of these characteristics and much else we seem to have in common.

Obsessions drive addicts past the normal human limits and many times wins them great fame or recognition - until they burn out.

only we avoid the
next pill, fix, and drink. It is crucial that we maintain the
memory of what the last fix did for us. When we can see it was
the dope that made us crazy,

Obsessions are like mental spasms. The mind runs
and draws up like a spastic muscle. It shorts out and ceases
function normally.

The most important point of this chapter is the
fact that an addict still using drugs is capable of many forms
of behavior that would never occur if that person were clean.

It is obvious that this cycle would never begin if the
addict didn't take the first dose of drugs. It would seem
therefore that the problem centers in the mind more than the
action we have taken in life

If I look back on my life I was limited in a concept of a higher power and had no
spiritual fulfillment. If I would have only known that God loved me anyway.

A friend in the program and I discussed what a
person would be like if they slept all day, did not work, didn't
not talk to anyone, did not think or read-- in short did nothing
all day long. Well wouldn't they forget social graces, acquire
weird habits and mannerisms, forget how to work, forget how
to express themselves and show concern for others, forget how
to feel. Reality became so painful that oblivion became
pleasure.

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Newcomers to the Fellowship especially should learn to recognize the fact that many of the things that happened while they were still using are not going to recur if they succeed in getting this program and stay clean and sober a day at a time. This will comfort many who cannot yet distinguish between fact and fantasy in their new lives.

... Very few persons in jail or mental institutions have had no experience with drugs. Some even speculate that the Anonymous Programs are divinely inspired to help us survive.

Long-time addicts must patiently relearn the things forgotten and learn what they have missed. For instance many of our people have never learned to work. They started dope to young or just bummed around. *Other...*

The obsessiveness is really common to all the addicts I've met or heard of... Like a guy will get a scene or a rap going that will be like his cloak when his life is used up. The things he talks about when he has no real life left.

It is our hope that as time goes on the realities will become more evident and available to those who could exercise some control and that laws relating to the status of the drug induced offender might be able to relate to the problem of addiction and treatment as well as the legal. It is estimated that many of the people in jail have were on drugs at the time of their arrest.

Let this not be taken as a denial that the true deliberate criminal should be freed to continue his crimes but that involvement with N.A.A.C.S. could help a percentage of convicted criminals return to society and live normal lives.

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The drug induced.

states can allow a person to exclude all the normal background awareness and focus entirely on a single point. At first this can be like a handy magnifying glass used at will. Later it can become a horrible sequence of all-consuming bits and pieces that rush up continually and we find ourselves powerless to control what's happening to us. Speed is definitely obsessive. Downs can relieve some of the pains of obsessions and become the ultimate obsession.

In my addiction I never was what I thought I should do. If I based my feeling and thoughts on what others felt. I may of made it but I was unable of responsive or meaningful understanding.

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