

# Addiction and Recovery

*"I went through eight very different treatment programs. Had I been as willing to stay clean as I am now, I might have had more success with these programs."*

*I was always really sociable, and had a lot of friends. Everything I ever did, I went all out. When I was about 14, I started smoking pot. I always said I would never smoke cigarettes, but started that, too. I said I would smoke weed and never go any further, but friends started doing acid and mushrooms and I went all out again. At about 16, I started doing cocaine a lot on weekends. I was drinking heavily, too. I was good at hiding everything because I was rarely sober. I guess things just seemed normal.*

*I smoked cocaine every day for two years. At one point, I thought people could just quit, but I found I couldn't. I cleaned out RRSPs, mutual funds, and savings accounts. I didn't see a future. I lost my girlfriend, other friends. I would cry myself to sleep and then each morning wake up and resolve not to do cocaine. Wanting to kill myself was a regular thought.*

*I was spending \$3,000 a month on rock cocaine, and occasionally doing heroin to come down off coke. One day, about 30 pounds lighter than I should have been, and borrowing money, I was drinking with my brother who said, "You aren't doing very well, are you?" I talked to my parents the next day and started four years of treatment.*

Many believe that addiction is rooted more in our humanity than it is in the pharmacology of drugs. Some believe that the process of healing from addiction means finding different, healthy ways to feel elated, good, or high – to create positive feelings. Each individual will choose different options.

The process of recovery will also mean eliminating the antisocial behaviour which can become part of a drug addict's day-to-day life — such as lying, cheating and stealing — and trading old friends and patterns of behaviour for new ones.

The good news is that healing from addiction, while difficult, is eminently possible. The path to recovery is very well worn.



## Setbacks and relapses

Be supportive. Setbacks and relapses are almost inevitable. It takes tremendous strength to overcome an addiction. Even after the painful physical withdrawal is complete, the psychological craving (which is almost more difficult to deal with) can continue for months, even years. Hold onto the thought that relapses are a normal part of recovery and that change takes time, steady effort, and support.

**I** am a single parent of a child who is almost 30. My son is in recovery. He gets better and better at being who he is and at being drug free. He started with pot, beer, and cocaine. From there it was a steady decline. It became a habit. We could talk about anything, but he hid his problem.

He didn't get to see his father before he died and that threw him into a funk. He had no answers any more on who he was. Even though he was 23, he hadn't grown up a lot. He couldn't concentrate, couldn't hold a job. At first, we just thought he was lazy, but then he admitted he had a problem.

We got him to detox. Things were getting better. For a while it was good. It seemed antidepressants helped. The rest of the family prayed a lot, and cried a lot, while my son went into treatment again and again. We were proud of all the baby steps along the way.

At one point I wondered if I'd ever be proud of him again, and I am. I'm really proud. He's come a long way. The message? Never give up hope and faith and love.

### Remember:

- ◆ No treatment will work unless the user truly wants to quit/reduce using.
- ◆ Not every treatment is right for every person. An individual may have to try many options before finding one that works.
- ◆ Relapsing should not be seen as failure. It's normal and common and should be regarded as a point from which to pick up and continue.

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*"I had*

*a sincere desire*

*to stay clean*

*but didn't know*

*how to do it."*

- ◆ Abstinence may not be a realistic goal initially. Reduced drug use and an improved lifestyle are a good start from which to build.
- ◆ Controlled use, stable relationships and employment, secure finances, and good health are achievable goals for those not yet able to achieve abstinence.
- ◆ Parental and family support is one of the strongest factors in successfully treating drug and alcohol dependence.