

Christadelphian Caring Network Bulletin

Summer 2014



Some Stats...

- 47,000 Canadian deaths annually are linked to substance abuse
- 42% of Ontario students have used an illicit substance in the past year
- The top four substances used in Ontario are: alcohol 58%; cannabis (marijuana) 25%; prescription pain relievers 17%; tobacco 11.7%

Warning Signs

Change in friendship patterns

Change in dress/appearance

Isolation

Drop in grades in school

Secrecy

Staying out past curfew

*Our Care Line is open for calls. Caring brothers and sisters are ready for your call.
Our toll-free support line is 866-823-1039*

Understanding Addictions Part 2

A Letter Sent in Love



My name is Brother George Constantine, and I am an inmate in a prison in Trinidad. What is a Christadelphian Brother doing in prison? Well, I was not a Christadelphian when I came into prison 21 years ago. I became a Brother while here in 1997. How did I end up in prison? Addiction was the cause.

I had a good job, I was an Air Traffic Controller for 10 years, my life was going pretty okay, but I drank a lot of alcohol, and I wasn't living a godly life. Then in 1991, while going through a miserable period in my life, after I broke up with my girlfriend, I started using cocaine. One night while drunk, I hit my mother on her head with a stool, which killed her. I was so drunk I didn't know what I had done till I sobered up.

I was arrested, sent to prison, convicted and sentenced to hang. I spent 13 years on Death Row, and in 2008 I was given a life sentence, which I am now serving. Addictions can have very serious consequences, like what happened with me. I also smoked cigarettes, another bad addiction. When you are addicted to substances like cigarettes, alcohol or drugs, they will have a negative effect not only on you, but also on those around you. Your health will be affected – cigarettes can cause deadly cancers, alcohol can destroy your liver causing death, drugs will damage your brain. Those around you – your loved ones, friends, schoolmates, co-workers can develop cancer from second-hand smoke, and you will behave differently when under the influence of alcohol and drugs. Your loved ones may not want you to be as close to them as before. Although you may feel good while under the influence of alcohol or drugs, your judgment will be weakened, and your reflexes slowed down. It's also dangerous in that you may do things and take risks that you wouldn't take when not under the influence.

Toll-free support line is 866-823-1039

Protective Factors that help prevent experimentation with drugs

Parental expectations and example

Positive peer pressure

A drug free school environment

The development of social skills

Personal values, morals, goals, hope, respect



Parents can further reduce risk by emphasizing:

The power of a positive example

Supportive family ties

Friends who share the same values

Regular physical activity

Spirituality

Hobbies

Music

Addiction can also cause you to neglect many important things that you should be doing. Instead of doing these important things, you just want to get “high”. Addiction can also be expensive, and because you are hooked, you must have it, and you will spend money to get high that you should be spending on important or necessary things. Some people even turn to stealing to satisfy their thirst for these substances if they cannot afford them. Prisons have lots of people serving sentences for stealing to support their drug habits. Most addicts believe that they have control over the substances they are addicted to, but in reality they don’t, they are just fooling themselves.

Many addicts don’t eat properly, and their physical and mental health deteriorates. They do crazy things; get into trouble with their relatives, friends, the Law. I hope that you can see that the negatives attached to addiction far outweigh the positives. In fact there are really no positives that make sense. Getting high for a little while is not worth the terrible consequences that will follow.

Addiction is a downhill road to disaster. My advice to you is don’t get addicted to anything. Don’t even try them to see what they are like, because one taste may be enough to get you hooked. Learn from my mistake instead of making the mistake yourself. Keep God at the centre of your life, and keep trying to do what is right in His sight.

God bless you all. Love in Christ, George

Bible References to Addiction

In the previous bulletin dealing with addictions it was recognized that the root cause of all addictions is sin-prone human nature. Furthermore, we are *all* susceptible to addictions and require help and a remedy to deal with this condition. We need to be open, approachable and non-judgmental when dealing with others, and exercise patience, forbearance and forgiveness. Recognizing our responsibility to our brothers and sisters in Christ, we must encourage those struggling with addictions to never give up even in the face of continued failure. When we help one another, we are in effect helping our Lord and Master. This bulletin contains biblical references to addictions and addictive behaviour, suggestions for getting help and a letter from a brother whose experience will hopefully help us to see the devastating impact that substance use can have.

Addictions have been around since Biblical times and the Bible describes the effects in dramatic language. Brawling (Proverbs 20:1; 23:29), wasted resources (Proverbs 21:17), psychotic hallucinations (Proverbs 23:33-34) are some of the effects listed.

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Preventing Relapse

- **Relapse** is defined as a failure to maintain behavioural change. Strategies that are effective at initiating a change in drinking or drug use behaviour may be ineffective in maintaining that change over time and avoiding relapse.
- “Relapse” can be associated with a **value judgment**: and has the connotation of failure, weakness, and shame; of having fallen from a state of grace. This places unnecessary blame when really it a common behavioural event. Miller (1996)

Social Support is essential!!

Studies show that married men have a lower rate of relapse than unmarried men. Marriage can be protective for some women, and is related to relapse for those who return to relationships in which their partner uses alcohol or drugs. (Walton et al., 2001) Women see their substance abuse as secondary to problems such as anxiety...

Bible References to Addictions, continued

The drunkard is similarly described in Proverbs 23:29-35, NIV, “Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaints? Who has needless bruises? Who has bloodshot eyes? Those who linger over wine, who go to sample bowls of mixed wine. Do not gaze at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly! In the end it bites like a snake and poisons like a viper. Your eyes will see strange sights and your mind imagine confusing things. You will be like one sleeping on the high seas, lying on top of the rigging. “They hit me,” you will say, “but I’m not hurt! They beat me, but I don’t feel it! When will I wake up so I can find another drink?”

One of the critical problems with alcohol and other substances is that inhibitions are lowered. As a result, we can lose control and do foolish and dangerous things. In effect, we have given ourselves over to another ‘slave-master’: Romans 6:16, NIV “Don’t you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey?”

Substance use is listed as one of the attributes of the sinful nature which will keep us out of the Kingdom. God wants an alert mind, not one that is clouded by the use of mind-altering substances! Some have said that the Bible does not mention the use of drugs, only alcohol, but consider the following passages:

Galatians 5:20, NIV “The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft [Gk: pharmakia = enchanting with drugs, the use of medicine, drugs, spells] . . . drunkenness”

Revelation 9:21, NIV “Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts [Gk: pharmakeia = ‘the use of medicine, drugs, spells,’ Vine]

Revelation 18:23, NIV “Your merchants were the world’s great men. By your magic spell [Gk: pharmakeia = ‘the use of medicine, drugs, spells,’ Vine] all the nations were led astray”

Revelation 21:8, NIV “The cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practise magic arts [Gk: pharmakeus = ‘one who uses drugs, potions, spells, enchantments. ,’ Vine], the idolaters and all liars . . .”

Revelation 22:15, NIV “Outside are the dogs, those who practise magic arts [Gk: pharmakos = one who uses drugs, potions, spells, enchantments,’ Vine] the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practises falsehood.” The Bible also speaks of the recovering addict as “coming to his senses”: 2 Tim. 2:25-26, NIV “In the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses [Gk: ananepho = ‘to return to soberness, as from a state of delirium or drunkenness,’ Vine] and escape the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.”

Preventing Relapse, continued

...and depression and make more effective use of medical and psychiatric services. (Osorio et al., 2001)

Youth

Lack of parental support, awareness and monitoring of the whereabouts and activities of young people is **strongly** related to use of illicit substances (Miller & Plant, 2003)

Older Adults

For older adults, negative emotional states related to anxiety, interpersonal conflict, depression, loneliness, loss and social isolation provide high risk situations. Retirement, the death of a partner or child, and the stressors of aging can all add to these difficulties and make older age a risky time for alcohol or drug use or relapse.

Concurrent Mental Health Disorders

Approximately, 50-65% of people with substance abuse problems also experience another mental health disorder. Along with adverse health, social, legal and financial consequences, these individuals also experience decreased treatment compliance, increased risk of exacerbating the symptoms of mental illness, increased risk of relapse and compromised efficacy of medications (Bellack&DiClemente, 1999)

Getting the Help You Need

The first line of attack in dealing with substance use is often the family physician. A medical doctor can refer you to counselling and treatment centres and offer assistance in the way of directing you to the most appropriate treatment. In Canada, the Drug and Alcohol Helpline (1-800-565-8603, www.drugandalcoholhelpline.ca) can tell you the nearest treatment centre, what they offer in terms of treatment, cost, wait times for admission, and contact details. Organizations such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Al-Anon and Al-ATeen can provide ongoing support while pursuing treatment options. In addition, mental health counsellors will list their areas of specialization in the areas of addictions and substance use. Don't be discouraged by the lack of suitable immediate treatment – see this as another challenge. Both residential treatment and non-residential treatment for addictions usually require a lengthy assessment process.

You might be faced with a phone assessment, the completion of written assessments and in-person assessments before getting in to treatment. Try to see this as another hurdle to be faced and overcome, rather than an obstacle. You have made the important decision to get treatment, that is the first step on a journey – a journey of a thousand miles that begins with a single step (Laozi) – the Proverbs say “Consider the path for your feet and take only ways that are firm” (Proverbs 4:26, NIV).

“It is for freedom that Christ has made us free. Stand firm, then and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery” (Galatians 5:1, NIV).

**Resources**

http://www.camhx.ca/education/online_courses_webinars/mha101/introtoaddiction/Introduction_to_Addiction_.htm

http://www.camh.ca/en/hospital/health_information/a_z_mental_health_and_addiction_information/drug-use-addiction/Pages/addiction.aspx

Ontario Drug and Alcohol Helpline

In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts: Close Encounters with Addiction. Gabor Mate

Love Her As She Is: Lessons from a Daughter Stolen by Addictions.-Patricia Morgan with Kelly Morgan

PLEASE NOTE, Tax-receipted donations can be made to The Christadelphian Caring Network c/o Bob Chisholm, 2206 Donald Rd., Burlington, ON L7M 3R9