

# Acceptance and Addiction Recovery

The anti-social nature of **drug addiction** results in a "Life-Style". The **addict** becomes out-of-synch with the social structure in which he must live. **Addicts** begin to associate only with other **addicts** or **drug** dealers and then transcend into the subculture of **drug** use. Paranoia triggered by many different things, and at many different levels, causes the **addict** to become less and less comfortable around anyone who is not doing the same as they are, partially because they are becoming criminals as well as **addicts**. Over a period of time, **addiction** requires particular justification, and rationalization to live with the results that it is producing. Gradually, these ego-defense mechanisms morph into an Anti Society philosophy created from "distorted thinking". As the **addict** becomes more dysfunctional they inevitably go so far outside of the laws of society that they assume a profile that is easily identifiable, and as a result they get arrested. Usually, the crime factor progresses as the **addiction** progresses and the distorted thinking progresses. A completely changed set of principles, morals and beliefs is adopted. Unfortunately, this is usually gradual to the point of becoming a long-term, overall behavioral change.

The **addiction** progresses as the "Brain Chemistry" changes. As the brain chemistry changes the behavior changes. As the behavior changes the entire personality changes. Much of the change in brain chemistry has far reaching effects that are not easily overcome or reversed. The chemistry changes are in "**Neurotransmitters**", which are at the heart of the relationship between the brain and the rest of the "Central Nervous System". Specifically, lowered Dopamine levels are personality changers. Dopamine affects hunger, sleep, emotions and even the "body clock". In their search for "Euphoria" craving for the **drug**-of-choice becomes incessant.

Sadly, this craving becomes less easily satisfied. As the brain changes, the **drug** is less capable of producing the same effects that it had on the brain before the changes. The **addict** literally has a "different brain". The **addict** then is "chasing" the feeling that they originally derived from use of the **drug**. The problem is that the **drug** can no longer produce the feeling that the **addicts'** memory has branded. Eventually the **addict** loses the "high" and is now just trying to get "well" or feel "normal". Without a specific level of the **drug** in their system, the **addict** begins to feel generally "sick". Tolerance for the **drug** increases incrementally with the length of the period of time that the **addict** has been using. As time progresses it takes more and more of the **drug**, that can no longer satisfy, to fulfill the needs or desires of the **user**. As the **addict** becomes more dysfunctional and the amount of

the **drug** needed increases, the ability to obtain it becomes harder and requires methods that are almost always illegal. More serious criminal behavior is adopted to obtain the amount of money needed to get the increasingly greater amount of the needed **drug**. The "Circle of **Addiction**" becomes "Life". Need for the **drug** is followed by obtaining the money for the **drug**. This in-turn, is followed by obtaining the **drug**, and **using** the **drug**. Satisfaction decreases and the need increases. More **drugs** inspire more crime, and more crime results in more "time"... Life has become the **drug**-of-choice! Detoxification from the **drug** usually only happens after being arrested for a crime and being forcefully removed from the environment where the **drug** is accessible. Detoxification is most often the easy part for an **addict**. The chemistry changes in the brain that have been paralleled by behavior and personality changes, are not easily reversible. The **drug** is removed from the scenario but the distorted thinking has been "hardwired" into the **addicts'** brain in the form of an anti-social belief system. Incarceration only adds to the dysfunction because jails and prisons also have an anti-social belief system in place, of their own, developed by criminals of all kinds. This sick **addict**, whose ability to think is very poor, easily succumbs to the belief system in place wherever he is incarcerated, only too easily. As the length of terms of incarceration increases with the severity of crimes committed, the length of time outside of incarceration decreases, and criminal behavior becomes as strong and as much of a problem as **addictive** behavior. Combined, they are a very difficult state of being to change. Very few people, if any, have the ability to make the needed changes on their own, if they are truly an **addict**.

Some form of structured and rehabilitative "Help" becomes a necessity if the **addict** is ever to return to being able to function in society. Strict rules and routines are needed. Acceptance of the need for help is important. It's important because the nature of **addiction** is that it produces "denial" of the "problem". Coming out from under the distorted thinking is nearly impossible because the "brain" is the most severely affected part of the person that has become an "**Addict**"! 12-Step programs and a limited number of Christian based programs are the only source of help that is not expensive beyond the financial capability of most **addicts** and their families. Acceptance becomes the "key" factor for Recovery from this dread disease. Frequently multiple episodes of formal treatment are the only solution or answer. Yes, multiple episodes, because "Relapse" into **addiction** is usually inevitable as a result of how complicated this problem is. Physiology, psychology and even pharmacology may all factor into treatment of this chronic, progressive, and fatal disease. The 12-step program's fundamental requirement of "Acceptance" has produced "Miracles", but should we rely on miracles to solve our country's greatest problem? Treatment in a controlled environment enables the **addict** to more easily discover and realize the need to identify and "accept" that they need to

change their primary way of thinking, and behavior. In treatment, this reality is also reinforced by "peers" who share a common problem. This "acceptance" must be complete and must be constantly reinforced over a long period of time. Its much easier to do when those around you have to do the same thing. You don't become an **addict** overnight and you can't **Recover** overnight. Before an **addiction** is properly addressed, it has usually developed over a period of many years, sometimes even decades. It is hard for a human being to accept that a great portion of life has been thrown away. Shame, guilt and fear that come with sobriety and the restoration of the thinking process, are common complications for the **addict**. These feelings are so difficult to deal with, that they are often regarded as the primary cause of relapse into **using**. Acceptance of defeat is also a stumbling block, because no one likes losing. Thus it becomes crucial to move past the defeat and focus on the accomplishment of becoming "Sober". "Sobriety" is a term commonly used in both AA and NA in regard to abstention from both alcohol and other **drugs**. Narcotics Anonymous declares regularly, in their meetings, that "Alcohol is a drug, period". Most alcoholics of the older generation resent this claim. Current knowledge supports the NA declaration and acknowledges that all are mood altering substances. Acceptance of this idea is crucial, because most "**drug addicts**" begin a relapse with the use of alcohol, often deceiving their selves into believing alcohol is not a **drug** so they'll be able control use of it.

Acceptance, acceptance, acceptance, it just runs through the philosophies of **Recovery** like a river. Before you can do this you have to accept that. Before you can do that you have to accept this. Accept it! Accept it! Accept that the Therapist or Counselor knows what they're talking about. Accept the fact that you are sick. Accept that you have become dysfunctional. Accept that things will only get better the longer you are clean and sober. Accept that this is wrong and that is right. Accept help! Accept the belief that Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous are and will always be an integral part of long-term maintenance of "Sobriety"! An inescapable fact is accepting that not only your body has to recover from using the **drugs**, but that your mind will probably need even more time to recover from using them. Accept that people are not going to immediately accept your intention, ability or desire to change.

Quoting AA's Big Book, Third Edition, Page 449: "And **acceptance** is the answer to **all** my problems today. When I am disturbed, it is because I find some person, place, thing, or situation - some fact of my life - unacceptable to me, and I can find no serenity until I accept that person, place, thing, or situation as being exactly the way it is supposed to be at this moment. Nothing, absolutely nothing happens in God's world, by mistake. Until I could accept my alcoholism, I could not stay sober; unless I accept life completely on life's terms, I cannot be happy. I need to

concentrate not so much on what needs to be changed in the world as on what needs to be change in me and in my attitudes." The 12-Step program and the Recovery process are not just an excursion into learning how to stop drinking or **using**. These concepts are a "Journey" into a simple plan for learning how to live life on life's terms. End of Discussion!