

FAQ's Relating To Addiction

I struggle with an addiction. Is recovery really possible?

An addiction can be one of the most damaging factors for an individual's sense of self-worth and confidence, along with a significant barrier in building relationships. At times, it can seem all-consuming and can feel like a trap that you can't break free from, despite all your efforts and commitments. Addictions tend to be powerful in that they allow people a temporary outlet from the pain, hurt, or frustration they are experiencing. The problem is that rather than resolving the issue, the addiction generally creates more problems and havoc in a person's life.

Generally, an individual will be of "two mind" about the addiction. On the one hand, they love the reward (payoff) that the addiction brings them; while on the other hand, they hate the consequences it brings. This creates strong ambivalence towards change and leaves the person torn between which direction to pursue. Resolving this ambivalence is one of the key factors in developing and following through with a recovery plan that will lead to long-term success.

A man once became lost and was worried that he would not be able to find his way back. In his worry, he expressed his concern to another, who responded, "Don't worry, you can find your way from here." It is never too late to begin your road to recovery and you can always find your way no matter how far the addiction has taken you. In fact, that is one of the biggest lies we tell ourselves is that we are beyond help.

Recovery is possible and can begin as soon as you choose it. The first step is in having enough confidence in this fact that we are willing to seek out help, letting go of the pride and shame that has kept us trapped. As with anything in life, when we truly want it bad enough, we will find a way to get it.

If you find yourself wanting to change and stop the cycle of addiction, but struggling with where to start, call today to set up an appointment. There is a way out.

I have a loved one with an addiction. How can I best help?

Often times when we experience a loved one with an addiction, our heart goes out to them. We want so much for them to get help and become free from the negative effects of the addiction. Often times, our actions are well intended, but ultimately ineffective as a result of our approach. One of the first things to understand in order to be effective in helping is recognizing “what motivates change.”

In the book entitled “Motivational Interviewing”, it talks about three essential factors important to change. These are 1) Readiness, 2) Willingness, and 3) ability. A person may be able to change, but unless they possess the readiness and willingness, change is unlikely to occur. If a person is ready and willing, the ability will naturally come through their seeking appropriate help. The key to positive supporting is to engage in activities that will best develop readiness and willingness towards change in your loved one.

It is important for us to become aware of our “intentions” behind helping. Do we want to help so that our lives will improve or that we aren’t inconvenienced? If our intentions in helping are not “pure” and out of genuine care and concern for the other individual, our approach will reflect this. People generally don’t change for external reasons, but rather internal reasons. If we come across controlling or demanding, even if this is not our intention, the response is generally met with resistance.

Often our best approach is to reinforce our love and acceptance towards the individual. We can love someone while not supporting the choices that they are making. A person who is acting on an addiction is generally already suffering from low self-esteem or a lack of self-confidence. When another’s approach and is judgmental or critical, it generally destroys more than builds. These individuals need to begin to develop a more healthy sense of confidence and esteem in order to effectively battle the addictive behavior.

We can be encouraging and supportive while setting healthy boundaries for ourselves. We do not need to allow ourselves to continue to be victims of their behavior, but begin to take care of ourselves while sending messages of encouragement and hope. The irony is that a person is most likely to change when they feel accepted as they are. This approach allows them to stop blaming and focusing on others, but instead leaves them to have to look inside at their issues.

This approach is one of the most difficult approaches to take. It almost seems unnatural. Most people need professional help and support to effectively use these support tools over time. We, ourselves, often have developed unhealthy patterns of responding that need to be broken if we are to be effective in supporting another through their changes. Our approach and support can have a big influence in the progress experienced by others, although we have no direct control over another individual.

If you find yourself struggling in the relationship with a loved one due to their addiction, you can call for an appointment to further discuss some of these ideas.

I am in a relationship with an addict. They tell me that I need help. Do I?

Often times, a significant amount of time and energy in the relationship goes towards the addiction and the one struggling with it. The addiction can cause a huge amount of drama and havoc within the family system. As a result, we often grow unhealthy together.

It is hard to cope with someone else's addictive behavior and not be affected yourself. We may be trying our best to keep it together, but get weighed down by the hurt, frustration, and powerlessness we feel in the relationship. We may worry for other loved ones that can be affected and feel the need to protect them from harm.

Your partner may be telling you that you need help and they are probably right. You may or may not need help for the reasons they are stating, but in most cases, a couple has to get healthy and heal as a whole rather than just one individual. This may be hard to hear as you may feel like you haven't done anything wrong. You weren't the one to choose the addiction or allow it to take over your relationship. On the contrary, you were likely doing everything you could to stop it.

As crazy as it may seem, this behavior and thinking can be part of the problem sustaining the unhealthy patterns in the relationship. Without appropriate help and insight, all your positive intentions may lead to unsuccessful changes in the relationship.

Partners or loved ones who seek out treatment and support for themselves are much more likely to experience peace and happiness in their lives regardless of the addict's choices. This does not mean you are allowing the addict the freedom to act out as they choose or get away with things. Instead, it means to take charge of yourself so that you can begin to deal with the challenges that are presented in a more healthy way, set appropriate boundaries, and direct your life in a way that empowers and strengthens you.

You can only control your own self. Accepting that you may need help can be scary at first, but will empower and strengthen you as you gain personal insights and strategies to help you become whole again.

If you would like help in beginning your journey towards healing and strength, call and schedule an appointment today. I can help you find peace and strength again. Call 435-862-8124.