



HOW TO CLEAR AWAY THE WRECKAGE OF THE PAST and MOVE INTO A HEALTHIER WAY OF LIFE

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When we were using drugs and alcohol, it was fun at first. Then it became a routine, a habit, and then it became something that we had to do. We were self medicating in a perpetual cycle. But what was the reason for medicating? Why were we compelled to continuously abuse drugs and alcohol in order to escape reality? What were we really running from? What was always the constant in every situation?

In family, friends, work, significant others, legal issues, school, and life in general, *the constant was me*. What is a constant? The invariable. The one thing in any given situation that does not change.

I can look back now at my time in active addiction & see that I was running from myself. I was sick of myself, I did not like myself & I wanted to escape from my own life. So I medicated..... I used drugs and alcohol and preferred oblivion to reality.

For anyone who suffered from low self esteem as an addict or alcoholic, the question then becomes: "How can I live with myself sober? How can I be OK with myself while existing in my own skin?"

The answer lies in Emotional Sobriety

When you get clean and sober, reality smacks you in the face, and there is no more escape from life or medicating your feelings away. You have to face everything head-on and confront reality without the fog of drugs or booze. We have to relearn how to handle emotions.

When we realize that we are not able to manage our emotions anymore, the results can be depression, anxiety, hostility & resentment. Unless we learn how to work through understanding, honesty, open-mindedness & willingness, we are likely to self-destruct. We need more experienced guides who have been in this unfamiliar territory and can show us the way out.

There are 3 ideas we need to understand

1. We are powerless over addiction and our lives are unmanageable
2. Although we are not responsible for our disease, we are responsible for our recovery
3. We can no longer blame people, places & things for our addiction. We must face our problems & our feelings

Our inability to control our usage of drugs is a symptom of the disease of addiction. We are powerless not only over drugs, but over our addiction as well. We need to admit this fact in order to recover.

Three Aspects of Addiction

Addiction is a physical, mental & spiritual disease that affects every area of our lives.

1. The physical aspect of our disease is the compulsive use of drugs: the inability to stop using once we have started.
2. The mental aspect of our disease is the obsession, or overpowering desire to use, even when we are destroying our lives.
3. The spiritual part of our disease is our total self-centeredness. We are focused on getting our drug of choice (DOC) over everything else.

Physical Aspect of Addiction - Total abstinence is vital - once having started the process with one fix, one pill, or one drink we cannot stop through our own power of will. Because of our physical sensitivity to drugs, we are completely in the grip of a destructive power greater than ourselves. Once we have detoxed, we can start getting better. Whatever our DOC is, by the time we reach our bottom most likely we are in bad shape. We ignored our physical well being while we were using. Eating well, exercise & plenty of sleep helps us regain our physical energy & feel good again.

The Mental Aspect - The mental aspect of our disease is the obsession, or overpowering desire to use, even when we are destroying our lives. Obsession—that fixed idea that takes us back time and time again to our particular drug, or some substitute, to recapture the ease and comfort we once knew.

Addiction & withdrawal distort rational thought, and newcomers usually focus on differences rather than similarities. They look for ways to disprove the evidence of addiction or disqualify themselves from recovery.

We know that we are powerless over a disease that is incurable, progressive & fatal. If not arrested, it gets worse until we die. We cannot deal with the obsession & compulsion. The only alternative is to stop using & start learning how to live. When we are willing to follow this course of action and take advantage of the help available to us, a whole new life is possible. In this way, we do recover.

The Spiritual Aspect - The spiritual part of our disease is our total self-centeredness. What does this mean? How would you define a person who had spiritual characteristics? The stronger the character defects (self) the lesser the character assets (spiritual) & vice-versa.

DEFECTS

DISHONESTY
PRIDE
SELFISHNESS
INTOLERANCE
HATEFUL
GREEDY
UNGRATEFUL
APATHETIC

ASSETS

HONESTY
HUMILITY
SERVICE TO OTHERS
TOLERANCE
LOVING
GENEROUS
GRATITUDE
CARING

Remember...Practice not Perfection!!!

We are not going to be perfect. If we were perfect, we would not be human. The important thing is that we do our best. We use the tools available to us, and we develop the ability to survive our emotions. We do not want to lose any of what we have gained; we want to continue in the program. One of the problems is that we found it easier to change our perception of reality than to learn how to accept and deal with reality. We must give up this old concept & face the fact that reality and life go on, whether we choose to accept them or not.

We can only change the way we react & the way we see ourselves. It is necessary for us to accept that change is gradual & recovery is an ongoing process.

Gratitude & Humility..... Why should we be grateful?

As addicts, we turned our will & our lives over many times to a destructive power. Our will & our lives were controlled by drugs. We were trapped by our need for instant gratification that drugs gave us. During that time, our total being— body, mind & spirit—was dominated by drugs. For a time, it was pleasurable, then the euphoria began to wear off & we saw the ugly side of addiction. We found that the higher our drugs took us, the lower they brought us.

We faced 2 choices: either we suffered the pain of withdrawal or took more drugs.

Now that we are clean, we have a choice!

- We are lucky we are alive
- We have not burned EVERY bridge
- We have a second chance!
- We have people that believe in us
- We are making the choices now, not our disease
- We have the potential for continuous growth in all aspects of our life
- We have been given a proven plan for living that can keep us clean & sober, but also make us better people who contribute to the lives of those around us, not drain them dry.
- We are no longer the center of the universe & we don't run the show
- We realize we don't know everything
- Loss of our ego gives us a chance to be more open, aware and giving
- People are drawn to us because we are soothing & stable, not crazy & chaotic

Emotional sobriety will happen for us only as long as we are willing to do the work that the program asks of us. So many of us run around like emotionally handicapped king babies, not even realizing consciously what we are doing to ourselves or others.

To empower ourselves we need to own our emotions & behavior. **We are solely responsible for our attitudes & reactions.** It is up to us to get better or get worse.



Ben Wilson, Transitional Housing Coordinator at Talbott Recovery, has been in recovery since 2007 and soon after became a volunteer, then an RA with the Talbott Young Adult Program. Ben now serves as the Transitional Housing Coordinator, working with both adults and young adults currently in treatment. He currently writes a blog on recovery @TRCalumni.org, and is also a frequent contributor of motivating recovery articles for the weekly Alumni Newsletter. Ben is a founding member of the Talbott Recovery Alumni Group. He says of himself, " I love the 12-Step program, and love to share with others what it has done for me. My life today has been transformed from a disaster to a miracle at Talbott. I am forever grateful and humble to the staff at Talbott who were my treatment team; that I now get to call my peers & mentors."

To learn more about Talbott Recovery's Family Services, please visit http://www.talbottcampus.com/family_overview.php.

Talbott Recovery is recognized nationally as a leader and pioneer in the assessment and treatment of chemical dependency and dual diagnosis with locations in Atlanta and Dunwoody, GA. We offer specialty programs for impaired professionals, adults, and young adults. More information contact Talbott Recovery Campus-www.talbottrecovery.com or call 800.445.4232.