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Addiction the Path of Devastation: A Moment of Pleasure or a Lifetime of Regret, the Choice is yours!



Japneet Ahluwalia^{1*} and Shiva Raman Pandey²

¹Consultant Clinical Psychologist and Lecturer in Clinical Psychology, India

²Founder and CEO, eWellness Expert, India

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***Corresponding author:** Japneet Ahluwalia, Consultant Clinical Psychologist and Lecturer in Clinical Psychology, Atur Park, Pune, Maharashtra, India; E-mail: contactjapneet@hotmail.com

Shiva Raman Pandey, Founder and CEO, eWellness Expert, Villa- 39, Phase-2, MIMS Ardenale, Kannamangala, Main Road, Whitefield, Bangalore, India, Pin: 560067, Tel: +918073798078; E-mail: shiva@ewellnessexpert.com; Website: www.ewellnessexpert.com

Abstract

An addiction is a complex mental condition with multiple factors involved in its development and maintenance. Considered as one of the most devastating illness, it has the potential to ruin everything from the person's health, relationships to his achievements and life plans. The family of the person is especially hit the worst and made to witness misery they don't deserve. However, it is essential for the caregivers to differentiate between the person and the illness. Many reliable psychiatric and psychological treatment options are available today that can be sought for recovery and rehabilitation. Moreover, online services have made the access to initial treatment easier. Making a choice towards a fulfilling life instead of an unhealthy existence is crucial. The person's motivation and will power, family and friends' support and professional help can make it possible.

Keywords: Addiction; Meaning; Predisposing factors; Affect on family; Struggle; Treatment; Recovery; Possibilities; Choice

Introduction

Dictionaries define the term 'addiction' as the state of being enslaved to a habit or practice or substance that is psychologically or physically habit-forming. It has reached out far and wide in the recent times, creating both awareness as well as young victims. Simply put, an addiction can be for a substance (alcohol, nicotine, drugs etc.) or an activity (gambling, sex etc.) or both; the former being more common. The American Psychological Association (APA) describes addiction as a chronic disorder with biological, psychological, social and environmental factors influencing its development and maintenance [1]. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-5 (DSM-5) states that the essential feature of a substance use disorder is a cluster of cognitive, behavioral, and physiological symptoms indicating that the individual continues using the substance despite significant substance-related problems [2]. The International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD-10) explains the 'dependence' on the addictive substance as a cluster of physiological, behavioural, and cognitive phenomena in which the use of a substance or a class of substances takes on a much higher priority for a given individual than other behaviors that

once had greater value [3]. Thus there is consensus from all the important international sources that the factors involved in this mental condition are multidimensional and complex.

The struggle

The journey of any addiction many times begins with a seemingly harmless 'new experience' that gives a sense of pleasure and satisfaction of some sort to the person. To 'live' your life and to have varied experiences in life is one thing, but losing all else to attain it is quite another. A family history of the addiction is a major predisposing factor for the kin; high risk-taking behaviour, novelty-seeking, the tendency to blame others for everything and a weak willpower as predominant personality traits make him/her further vulnerable and finally, being surrounded by the company of individuals/groups (in the form of family, friends, neighbours or colleagues) with similar habits and dependencies, completes the path to destruction. Thus, quite often than not this 'new experience' becomes the 'only experience' for the person. Sometimes, the person continues indulging in the addiction despite realizing that everything from his health, relationships to work and finances are falling apart

in the process. The craving of the substance or the activity can drive the person to the lowest mental zone of human values and the need to satiate the same doesn't even stop at blocking the conscience all together.

One of the saddest observations as a clinician is to see the patient choosing the harmful path and the family forced to live in that imposed horror of a life. As a parent, partner or a child, nothing is more painful than to watch the person you love at his worst vulnerability, giving in to the addiction and deteriorating bit by bit in front of your eyes. The life of all the family members comes to a standstill and the quality of their day is solely dependent on the person's latest condition. The choice of sobriety or intoxication of the addiction by the person on a particular day determines the mental state of his close ones. A day or two of 'normal' days fills them with hope but any deviation robs them of all the optimism gathered. While coping with the constant threat of/actual relapse of the addiction; much love, trust and respect is lost in the family, shattering the very foundation of their relationship. Another crucially upsetting reality is that an addiction rarely stops at the person, its infact carried on for generations to come, both due to genetic as well as social reasons.

The possibilities

Addiction is a classified mental condition so should be understood before the jumping to- conclusions. It is crucial to differentiate the 'addict' from the 'addiction'. The former evokes a plethora of negative emotions like anger, disgust, and frustration and loathe in the caregiver while the latter helps in seeing it as an illness that will require love and support towards the patient and his/her struggle to recovery. Being in an addiction or being around a loved one in addiction is nothing short of a living nightmare. But there is a bright side to this illness that cannot be missed. If diagnosed in time, it is an illness

of choice. With the person's intent and motivation, family and friends' support and most importantly professional psychiatric and psychological treatment, the person can be pulled out of this hole of devastation. Owing to the latest developments in the field of mental health, today there are ample psychiatric medications to help curb the craving as well as many scientific and reliable psychological techniques available to motivate the patient to get past the vulnerabilities

that follow an attempt towards abstinence. With the advent of online services for mental health conditions, treatment has become more accessible and taking the first step towards a healthier future has become easier.

Conclusion

An addiction is not easy to overcome but it is not an impossible feat either. Take the dreaded step to clean-up...reach out to the ones who care...seek professional help...you deserve better. Life is precious and there is so much to experience and explore. Not to sound preachy, each one of us is here in this world for reasons... don't let a substance or an activity choose your life path and make you lose the purpose of your unique self. Embrace your existence and celebrate this journey called life. Make the choice now...choose yourself, your health, your loved ones, and your potential...your life!

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