

Breaking Through Addictions

In this edition, we introduce you to key elements of addiction and where to begin as you reach out to someone in need.

Progression of Addiction

An addiction typically begins when the individual performs an act that makes them feel good, excites them or covers up past trauma. They do this act instead of dealing with their problems or finding a healthy way to gain the euphoria or escape the want. Tolerance is built as their frequency of certain acts is increased in order to mask or control their emotions, as well as maintaining the adrenaline rush. Consequently, the behavior's effect diminishes and the "use" becomes unsustainable, leading to loneliness, hopelessness, shame and anger.

The Many Faces of Addiction

Addiction can manifest itself in any number of ways. We quickly attribute addiction with substance abuse or pornography, giving little attention to over or under eating, excessive exercise, shopping, social media, and gaming. While the face of addiction takes many forms, it does have three consistent attributes:

1. **Loss of Control**
2. **Craving**
3. **Persistent use Despite Negative Consequences**

Loss of Control: Over Life and Events

Everyone experiences loss, failure and disappointment. Healthy individuals do their best with events over which they have control. However, this is not the case for those struggling with addiction.

Regardless of its form, addiction causes gradual loss of control of many, and sometimes all aspects of an individual's life. This often manifests itself in a string of poor or damaged relationships, unstable employment, financial strain, anxiety, anger, and/or depression. When seeking to identify whether addiction is playing a role in the individual, look for an apparent loss of control.

Craving

Cravings are powerful desires which initiate one's pursuit of natural rewards because of their perceived critical survival value. In other words, the addict must have it. These signals or cues, can be sights, sounds, smells or thoughts, and may be manifested emotionally, physically or psychologically. For example, "I just get a feeling in my stomach," "My heart races," "I can't get it out of my head," "It calls to me," "I get nervous," or "I'm bored." It is important to understand how the individual experiences and responds to cravings in order to address them. (See Toolkit #1 Triggers)

3 Second Rule

Give yourself three seconds to get rid of the thoughts you don't want and replace them with positive or healthy thoughts.

Don't beat yourself up for having the thought; just get rid of it.

Persistent use Despite Negative Consequences

Individuals struggling with addiction

In This Edition:

- Breaking Through Addictions
- Loss of Control
- Craving
- 3 Second Rule
- Persistent Use
- Where to Begin

With new challenges and addictions arising every day, seek first to understand and listen before counseling or correcting.

Who is West Ridge Academy?

- Gospel Centered
- Spiritual Based
- Youth Residential Treatment
- Helped over 25,000 youth and their families
- Established in 1964



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are often disappointing, frustrating and difficult to deal with. They regularly make the same mistakes over and over. When determining if an addiction is at the heart of their struggles, look for this pattern specifically.

As you separate the behavior from the individual, this pattern gives greater insight into the mother who truly loves her child but leaves her unattended to stop once more at the gym; or, the dedicated husband who just can't leave the office for family events; or, the individual struggling with substance abuse who risks their very lives to obtain their next "fix". A key point to teach is while an individual has the agency to make choices, they don't get to choose the consequences. Consequences are a result of their choices and may have lasting temporal and/or spiritual significance.

Where to Begin

It doesn't matter the specific addiction, what is most important is that a person starts taking action that moves one toward change. Recovery is all about action—deliberate, purposeful action.

Stop the Addiction

The individual must draw the line on specific behaviors in which he/she will no longer participate. These negative behaviors serve as distractions, and lead to a loss of perspective and a sense that other choices are unavailable to them. By identifying and eliminating the patterns and behaviors which trigger the addiction, healthier

choices become more apparent, and the individual will strengthen their willpower toward abstinence and a reunification of human will and moral agency. Recovery is a progressive journey, and as such, the "line" will be redefined many times.

Develop a Network of Support

Outreach is a critical step to recovery - perhaps the most important for early recovery because this is when hope is kindled and shame is reduced. Lasting recovery requires outside involvement. Encourage interaction with family, trusted friends and religious leaders. Working with a licensed therapist in an addiction recovery program is equally critical. Also, connecting with community support groups allow the individual to share in similar experiences where they will find support, positive feedback and strength knowing they are not alone with their emotions, weaknesses and trials.

Care For Yourself

This is a time to learn a new way of living - a new and ongoing way to think about yourself and your life. Addicts often neglect their physical, emotional and spiritual well-being, which makes the inward focus of a healthy state seem unnatural. They may need to be pushed to go beyond convenience and inaction. The key to long term success in recovery is overcoming complacency. Set goals to stay more active, find new hobbies and seek out ways to serve others. Give yourself permission to enjoy life and have fun.

Journaling

Writing down thoughts or feelings when the stresses of recovery seem to be overwhelming provides a healthy and immediate release for deep, sometimes overpowering emotions. These entries provide a chronological history by tracing successes and triumphs. Equally important is documenting their relapses as they revert back to old behavior patterns. Some addictions are so pervasive, it is not uncommon to not entirely overcome these behaviors the first time. Through detailed journaling, previous pitfalls can be avoided.

Recovery

Recovery from addiction requires a total lifestyle change including thoughts, emotions and behaviors. You must get outside yourself and serve as this desire is a natural result of spiritual awakening. It is critical to maintain forward momentum by keeping the individual focused and conscientious on their recovery through spiritual and moral changes. Through these tools and activities, they will move closer to a life free from addiction.