

## WHAT IS ADDICTION?

The American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) defines addiction as “a treatable, chronic medical disease involving complex interactions among brain circuits, genetics, the environment, and an individual’s life experiences. People with addiction use substances or engage in behaviors that become compulsive and often continue despite harmful consequences.”

Addictions are complex. Although there is no single cause, one common factor is that the substance or behavior triggers the “reward center” of the brain. Humans are biologically wired to seek pleasure and rewards. Certain substances and activities increase the release of dopamine, creating a level of excitement (“high”) in the brain. The dopamine may reinforce the association between the substance or behavior and a feeling of pleasure, creating the desire to “reward” oneself by repeating the experience.

### STEP ONE

Skim through the entire document. If demons are currently oppressing you, be sure to read the sections “If Demons are Actively Harassing You” and “How Addictions “Open Doors” to Demonic Interference

### STEP TWO

Take a few long, slow, deep breaths. Then, prayerfully and slowly, go through the “Substance Use Disorder” and “Behavioral Addictions” sections. Write a list of anything mentioned that you currently have strong cravings for. Also, add others that come to your mind. If any emotions begin to surface, let them release. Stop at that time to process that item or come back later. Make note of painful memories that surface.

After you have completed your list, focus on just one item. Quiet your mind and prayerfully ask the Creator to show you the next step for you to release the bondage this item has on you. Then, slowly and mindfully, read through this document. Highlight anything that relates to you. Begin to set up a plan action using ideas from Step Three or others that come to mind.

When you are dedicated to releasing this addiction, go to Step Four and read the “Trauma and Demonic Release Prayer.” It is good to do this even if you don’t feel you have any demonic interference. The prayer is most powerful when the person has or is creating a strong relationship with the Creator and/or Jesus Christ. This is because the demons know Jesus has authority over them. And when a person is working with Jesus, the demons will take notice and an eviction is more likely to take place.

Quite often, the root cause of any imbalance begins in early childhood. You are encouraged to go to the bottom of my website and check out all the resources that resonate with you. I highly encourage you to add the Daily Spiritual Practices and the Nightly Prayer and Review to your daily routine. After you have taken sufficient time to process the initial item, then select your next area of concern and repeat the process.

### TWO MAIN TYPES OF ADDICTION

There are two main types of addiction: Substance Use Disorder (SUD) and Behavioral Addictions. Some similarities between the two types include the elevated excitement (“high”) in the brain that results from the use or behavior. This leads to craving the “high” again. When the substance or behavior is repeated, the brain chemistry changes, tolerance develops, and more is needed to get the same result. Eventually, obtaining the “high” becomes more important than other activities or relationships. There is a loss of control even though the person knows their choices are harmful to themselves and others. Both SUD and behavioral addictions create psychological and physical withdrawal symptoms.

## SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER

**Substance Use Disorder (SUD):** The American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) has specific diagnostic criteria to define "Substance Use Disorders." "Substances" are defined as drugs with an addiction potential, both prescription medications or non-medicinal drugs. Each of these substances activate the reward receptors in the brain, which can make the user crave it more. This can lead to a mild, moderate or severe dependence on the substance. Substance addictions can be grouped into categories: alcohol, prescription drugs, illicit drugs and inhalants.

**Alcoholism** is the most common Substance Use Disorder which includes binge or regular heavy drinking.

**Prescription drugs** are prescribed by a doctor. Addictions can result when using the drugs in ways that are not prescribed. Some prescribed medications are naturally addictive. The following are the more common drugs that people become addicted to.

Anti-Anxiety, Sedative, Tranquilizer Medications: barbiturates, benzos, sleeping pills

Opioids: codeine, heroin, oxycodone

Plant extracts: cocaine, codeine, morphine

Stimulants: Adderall, cocaine, amphetamines

**Illicit drugs** are substances that are illegal to possess, produce or sell. The term includes illegal drugs and the non-medical use of prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) medications. The following includes some of the more common illicit drugs as well as other common addictive substances.

Hallucinogens: PCP and LSD

Nicotine: cigarettes, e-cigarettes, vaping

Plant based: caffeine, marijuana, psilocybin mushrooms, peyote (mescaline)

Semisynthetic: heroin (from morphine) and LSD (from lysergic acid)

Synthetic: ecstasy, fentanyl, K2/spice, ketamine

OTC products: sleep aids, stimulants, cough and cold products, laxatives, diuretics, pain relievers

**Inhalants** are products that produce chemical vapors that can be inhaled to induce mind-altering effects. The four categories include aerosols, gases, nitrites and volatile solvents.

**The key criteria of Substance Use Disorder includes the following.** Two or three of these symptoms is considered a mild SUD. Four or five of the symptoms indicates a moderate disorder. Six or more of the symptoms indicates a severe SUD.

Using more of the substance than originally planned

Craving the substance

Developing tolerance for the substance

Spending large amounts of time seeking or using the substance, or recovering from use

Relationship problems because of substance use

Reducing participation in favorite activities in favor of substance use

Being unable to keep up with daily responsibilities due to substance use

Continuing to use the substance despite negative health effects

Regularly using the substance in dangerous situations (while driving or operating machinery, etc.)

Unable to stop using the substance

Experiencing withdrawal symptoms when use is reduced or stopped

## BEHAVIORAL ADDICTIONS

There is controversy around the concept of “Behavioral Addictions” and whether they should be classified as an addiction. Currently, the DSM-5 only recognizes “Gambling Addiction” as a behavioral addiction. Although the DSM-5 mentions “Internet Gaming Disorder” as a condition requiring further research. Behavioral addictions can occur with any activity that stimulates the brain’s reward system.

### **The key criteria of a Behavior Addiction include the following.**

Continuing the behavior even when it causes negative effects on health or relationships.

Dependency on the pleasurable feelings, that lead to compulsivity of the behavior.

Difficulty controlling the behavior, including excessive use and unsuccessful ability to use less often or stop.

Excessive thoughts about the behavior or the desire to engage in it.

Giving up other important activities or hobbies due to the behavior.

Increased time or intensity of the behavior needed to achieve the desired effect.

Problems with relationships, work, or school due to the behavior.

Anxiety, withdrawal or other unpleasant symptoms when the behavior is reduced or stopped.

### **Common Behavioral Addictions**

Compulsive Exercise

Computer/Internet

Criminal Compulsion

Disharmonic Music

Escapism Activities

Gambling

Food

Gossip

Internet Gaming Disorder

Kleptomania/Stealing

Over-Achiever

Love

Relationship

Reckless Driving

Self-Harm: Cutting, Suicidal Ideation

Sex

Shopping

Social Media

Spiritual Growth Obsession

Sports

Television and Movies

Pornography

Phone Messaging

Workaholism

Conspiracy Theories

Tattoos

## SIMILARITIES BETWEEN SUD AND BEHAVIORAL ADDICTIONS

Addiction is a complex condition with many potential causes. Several factors contribute to the risk of a substance or behavior escalating into addiction. The following are some of the more common risk factors.

**Genetic Predisposition:** Researchers have identified specific genes and neural circuits associated with increased addiction risk. Thus, a person's genetic makeup can significantly increase the likelihood of developing an addiction. Both Substance Abuse Disorder and addictive behaviors tend to run in families.

**Brain Chemistry:** Both substance abuse and behavioral addictions significantly impact the brain, leading to changes in both its structure and function. The core of this impact is the disruption of the brain's reward system, particularly the dopamine pathways. Addictive substances, like opioids or stimulants, trigger a release of dopamine much greater than natural rewards, such as pleasure or satisfaction, which reinforces the behavior. The brain becomes conditioned to seek the substance over other activities.

With continued drug use, the brain adapts by reducing the number of dopamine receptors or decreasing natural dopamine production. This leads to "tolerance" in which the person needs more of the substance to achieve the same pleasurable effect.

The brain has the ability to adapt and rewire itself (neuroplasticity) which plays a role in both the development of the addiction as well as the recovery process. Continued substance use alters the physical structure and connectivity of the brain, creating "hard-wired" pathways that reinforce cravings for the substance or behavior. This can impact one's mood, behavior, judgment and decision-making abilities. Memory and the ability to learn new things can also become hampered. In addition, the new pathways make it harder for the person to resist the urge to use (impulse control).

**Brain Development:** The brain, especially the prefrontal cortex, the center for decision-making and impulse control, continues to develop until around the mid-20s. This, along with other factors, contributes to adolescents becoming more prone to experimenting with substances, as well as the effects the substances have on the brain.

**Mental Health Disorders:** Research shows there is a strong connection between mental health disorders and addiction. For example, individuals with conditions such as anxiety, depression, ADHD or PTSD may be more likely to self-medicate as a way of coping with their symptoms.

**Trauma and Stress:** Unresolved trauma and chronic stress increase the chance of substance abuse and addictive behaviors as a means of numbing the emotional pain and coping with overwhelming stress.

**Family Environment:** Growing up in a chaotic environment or when the child is neglected, abandoned, abused, unsupported or exposed to substance abuse or inappropriate behaviors increase the risk of developing an addiction.

**Peer Pressure:** Trying to fit in with a group, especially during adolescence, increases the likelihood of experimentation, which can lead to substance abuse or inappropriate behavioral addictions.

**Socioeconomic Factors:** Poverty, unemployment, gang membership, learning difficulties, exposure to pornography or sexual activities at an early age, ritual abuse and easy access to street drugs are just a few factors that can lead to addiction.

**Impulsivity and Risk-Taking Behavior:** Personality traits such as impulsivity and risk-taking can increase an individual's vulnerability to addiction.

## STAGES OF ADDICTION

As a person progresses through each stage, the likelihood and severity of dependence and addiction increases. The more engrained the use or behavior becomes, the harder it is to stop.

**Initial Use or Behavior:** There are many reasons why a person initially uses a substance or begins an unhealthy behavior. Regardless of how the initial use occurs, the initial use is the first stage of addiction.

**Repeated Use or Behavior:** The initial pleasurable effects can be alluring, drawing one in to continued substance use or repeating the behavior, exciting the “reward center” of the brain.

**Craving:** The person becomes increasingly focused on obtaining the next “high” from the substance or behavior. It may become more difficult to focus on other tasks as cravings increase. An increasing amount of time is consumed either using the substance or engaging in the behavior. Uneasiness or anxiety increases if the substance isn’t readily available. Craving is the first sign that an addiction is forming.

**Tolerance:** With repeated substance abuse or continuation of the behavior, changes take place in the brain leading to a level of “tolerance.” More of the substance or engaging in the behavior is needed to experience the initial “high.” The person may increase the amount or frequency of the substance or behavior. Experimentation with other substances or risky behaviors may begin as a means to reach the initial high.

Higher tolerance levels create a progression into heavier substance abuse and increased need to engage in the behavior. The cravings begin to take priority over aspects of their life. Risky behaviors may develop as the person ignores physical, mental, safety, legal, financial or other consequences. Problems may begin to develop with family and friends. School, work and recreational activities become less important.

**Dependence:** Eventually, the brain becomes dependent on the substance to be able to function properly. The body and mind believe that the substance is essential for survival. Even if the person wants to stop using the substance or engaging in the behavior, they may feel like they have to continue in order to feel good about anything. Obtaining the “high” becomes more important than other activities or relationships.

The person who wants to stop may make several attempts to reduce the substance or behavior without success. They may make sincere promises to loved ones that they will stop the behavior. When they can’t stop, they may lie or try to cover up their behavior. To compensate, they may begin to blame others for their choices or be in denial that they have a problem they can’t control. As the dependence increases, they may begin to recognize that they have lost control, which can lead to feelings of helplessness, guilt, depression or feeling overwhelmed. Yet, the brain continues to send signals that compel the person to continue the abuse or behavior, even though the person knows their choices are harmful to themselves and others.

If the person does stop using the substance or engaging in the behavior, they will likely experience withdrawal symptoms, such as increased anxiety, headaches, nausea and tremors. This may be frightening and cause create discomfort thus encouraging them to continue the behavior. Without intervention, the person will likely become addicted to the substance or behavior.

**Addiction:** At this stage, it can be nearly impossible for a person to quit on their own. They will likely need help from an addiction specialist or physician who can treat their symptoms and recommend the best method for recovery.

The substance or behavior is no longer a choice; it has become a compulsion. They may feel that life is impossible to deal with if they don’t have the substance or exhibit the behavior. The effects from the previous stages become more severe. By this time, they may find it difficult to hold down a job. They may be failing at school and have lost interest in former hobbies and recreational activities. Family and friends may have given up on them, especially if the person has pushed them away. View the key criteria for each type of addiction previously mentioned in the “Two Main Types of Addiction” section.

It is important to realize that once a person has reached the stage of addiction, it has become a chronic disease. Even after treatment and recovery, there is always the risk of relapse. Lifestyle changes and the commitment to remain sober or stop the behavior is essential to success.

**Withdrawal:** Psychological and physical withdrawal symptoms occur when the substance or behavior is reduced or stopped. The person may truly want to quit, yet even after repeated attempts on their own or through professional rehab, they find they cannot do so. They and their loved ones may not understand that their addiction is now a body and brain dependence which is going to take more than will power to stop.

Common withdrawal symptoms include physical symptoms such as shaking, sweating or vomiting. These are often accompanied by emotional symptoms including anxiety, depression, irritability and restlessness. The symptoms may motivate the person to continue using as a means of seeking relief. Some substances, especially opioids, have such severe withdrawal symptoms, there is a lack of motivation to stop the usage.

**Relapse:** Changes in the brain from the addiction may continue long after the substance or behavior has stopped, which creates the potential for relapse. This is more likely to happen when the person tries to quit without help. The person must also take the initiative to heal the root cause that led them into addiction. Some behavioral patterns may also need to be changed to help break the cycle. In addition, healthier parameters, including avoidance, may need to be made with people who are likely to hook them back in.

If the person has received services with a professional treatment plan, the plan itself may need to be modified or a whole new approach taken to help break the addiction cycle. As you will find in the “Addiction Treatment Options” section below, there are a variety of options. There are no “one size fits all” plans due to the complexity of the addiction along with other factors.

Fortunately, the brain has the ability to adapt and rewire itself (neuroplasticity). Once the substance or behavior is withdrawn, the brain can gradually recover. As the normal dopamine receptor levels are restored, the person can regain the ability to experience pleasure more naturally. However, some long-lasting effects may continue. The person in recovery needs to be diligent because there always the potential for relapse.

## NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF ADDICTION

Generally, the physical symptoms that accompany substance abuse are not the same as those from behavior addiction. However, there are some that may overlap, being unique to each individual.

**Physical Health:** Substance addiction changes the body, especially the brain, creating various side effects that may differ during each stage leading to addiction. Internally there may be organ damage, higher risk of contracting a communicable disease, detrimental effects on the body including the immune, digestive and respiratory systems and cardiovascular systems. Lack of personal hygiene can foster infections, including injection sites. Extreme weight loss may occur and sinus problems for those who use inhalants or snort substances. Secondary injuries can occur due to increased falls and reckless behaviors such as driving while under the influence.

**Mental Health:** Each substance naturally has its own side effects which can cause mood swings, foggy mind, sleep disturbances, blackouts, memory loss, hallucination, aggressiveness, anxiety, depression, paranoia, suicidal ideation and a host of other symptoms. Secondary problems may arise leading to impaired ability to learn, to make decisions and irrational judgment. The person may be in denial or have obsessive thoughts regarding the addiction to the point that it is hard to given attention to important aspects of their life.

**Spiritual Issues:** The person may blame God for their problems, thus rebelling against any spiritual help. On the far extreme, certain substances and behaviors may lead the person to believing they are a god or sent by God for an important mission that they must fulfill. Satan’s entire agenda is built upon pulling humans away from the true God. Addictions create an “open door” for demons to gain a foothold.

**Relationship Problems:** Often, the root cause of an addiction lies with unresolved trauma, often beginning in early childhood. As the addiction increases lack of trust may occur as the person lies in order to hid their addiction. Broken promises that they will stop the behavior may frustrate family and friends. They may withdraw from others or become more aggressive. Schoolwork and household responsibilities may decline, causing more friction. Family fractures leading to divorce exacerbates the problems for all involved.

**Social Problems:** Unable to keep up with school, the person may be expelled or willfully drop out of school. It may be more difficult to fulfill obligations at work which can lead to being fired or unable to hold down a job. Loss of interest in hobbies and other passions may increase social isolation as the addiction gains priority. Unacceptable behaviors and a tendency to withdraw may leave the person receiving less invites to social events. Eventually the person may find themselves alone, with no support, making it even harder to pull out of the addiction or even have the motivation to want to stop.

**Financial Difficulties:** Loss of job or ability to work may significantly impact the person's ability to pay rent, utilities or even food. Money spent on the addiction may take priority over paying household and other expenses. Out of frustration or for reasons of safety, one's family may evict them from the home, increasing the risk of being homeless with little resources to get back on their feet, if they do choose to recover.

**Legal Problems:** Criminal behaviors such as stealing and prostitution to support the addiction may arise. Driving under the influence may result in jail time and losing one's driver's license, hampering the ability to get to work, school or court appointed community service. A high percentage of violent crimes are related to addictions. Felony charges create long-lasting effects making it harder to obtain employment or finding a place to live.

## STEP THREE

### ADDICTION TREATMENT OPTIONS

The first step of treatment is a proper diagnosis. Your healthcare provider may refer you to a psychiatrist, psychologist or a drug and alcohol therapist. Various diagnostic tools may be used including a questionnaire involving one's medical history, non-beneficial behavioral patterns and events that tend to trigger the addictive behavior. Family patterns, as well as genetic and environmental factors may also be explored.

A physical exam, as well as blood and urine tests may be used to diagnose or rule out chemical imbalances and other underlying health conditions. Quite often, a dual diagnosis is discovered, this refers to the simultaneous presence of a mental illness, such as anxiety or depression, and a substance use disorder.

Once a diagnosis is determined, the next step is to develop a personalized treatment plan. It can be very difficult to quit or control an addiction without the help of trained professionals, community and family support. It is important to know that all addictions are treatable and that it is possible to lead a healthy and fulfilling life. Like any behavior, it can be easy to have a relapse. If this happens to you, don't beat yourself up, instead, "Pick yourself up, dust yourself off and start all over again."

The following are a variety of treatment options that your healthcare provider may suggest to you.

**Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT):** Once all testing is complete, medications may be prescribed to help with the withdrawal and detox process from substance abuse. Certain substances can create dangerous withdrawal symptoms. MAT can normalize brain chemistry, reduce cravings, and prevent withdrawal symptoms. Medication may also be prescribed for other physical or mental health conditions, including anxiety and depression.

**Rehabilitation:** Depending on several factors, your provider will encourage either inpatient or outpatient treatment. In both cases, specialists provide medical treatment, including medications. Counseling, education and support are offered to help manage the addiction and deal with other underlying issues. Some rehabs also include family and supporters to help ensure long-term success and reduce relapse.

**Inpatient** facilities include specialized hospital units, residential treatments and sober living facilities. Each are designed to help the client through the detox period, offer therapies to help resolve the core issues of the addiction and to help with long-term recovery and integration. The prescribed program may last anywhere from a few weeks to up to a year.

**Outpatient** rehab allows the person to remain at home while visiting the facility during scheduled appointments.

### MENTAL HEALTH THERAPY

Various types of therapy and addiction counseling is designed to help the client to discover and explore the root cause of their addictions. Healing the wounds and developing coping strategies helps to break the cycle, offering better ways to handle the past trauma and current life stressors.

**Psychotherapy (Talk Therapy)** is a method of treating psychological issues and mental distress through verbal and psychological techniques. The trained therapist and client work together to explore feelings, thoughts and behaviors to improve, discover and address underlying issues in order to uplift well-being.

**Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)** helps individuals change negative and non-beneficial thought patterns and behaviors to improve overall well-being. It's a structured, goal-oriented approach that focuses on the present moment.



**Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)** helps people to manage intense emotions and improve social skills. It is particularly effective for individuals struggling with borderline personality disorder (BPD), depression, PTSD, and substance use disorders. DBT focuses on four core skills: distress tolerance, emotion regulation, interpersonal effectiveness and mindfulness.

**Family therapy** addresses relationship and behavioral issues within the family. Family members work with a therapist to resolve conflicts, improve communication, and strengthen overall family functioning. Groups like Al-Anon support the family and friends of people with substance use disorders. These groups offer an opportunity to share personal experiences and find ongoing support.

### **Group Therapy**

Twelve-step programs like Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous and Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous helps many people achieve successful recovery. These programs rely on self-help treatment and support from others who have achieved or still working toward recovery. Although support and guidance are helpful, additional assistance is often needed.

**SMART Recovery** is an international community of peer support groups that aims to help people recover from addictive and problematic behaviors. SMART stands for Self-Management and Recovery Training. The SMART approach is secular and research-based.

## **ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS TO HEAL ADDICTIONS**

Quiet your mind and focus on just one addiction or incident at a time. Pray to be shown when this fear, behavior or belief first began to manifest in your life. Ask to be shown the root cause that allowed you to take on this emotion, belief or behavior. If you start to feel emotional, let them surface. Healing occurs when repressed emotions are released. Ask yourself if this emotion, behavior or belief is still relevant in your life. Pray for help in seeing things from a new perspective so you can heal.

As much as you can, bring the trauma to closure by forgiving yourself and everyone else involved. To effectively keep this door closed, set steps in motion to keep this addiction out of your life. That may include getting rid of items in your home, changing behaviors, letting go of certain people, seeking professional help, etc.

The goal is not only to heal all issues, but to also discover any “doors” that may be making you vulnerable to demonic interference. Most therapies don’t include the releasement of entities. Yet, without this important piece of the puzzle, one may not realize just how much they are being oppressed by demons. Some of the negative thoughts pushing you down, may not belong to you.

While working through this lesson, each day that you are able to come to a greater understanding and let loose of stuck energy, follow up with the Releasement Prayer in Step Four. This will bring you into closer union with Divine Love, allow you to heal deeper and hopefully close the door to demon interference.

Following are several suggestions to help you increase self-love, get to the core root of your trauma, release the emotional pain and make choices so that you can have a happy, fulfilling life. Healing from addiction is a lifetime process, but well worth the effort. Be sure to always balance your “inner work” with things that are fun and uplifting. Enjoy the journey to wholeness!

### **SELF-DISCOVERY**

\* Do some online research on the specific addiction you are grappling with. This may help you to better understand why you act or react in ways that are detrimental. You might also discover books and other healing suggestions.

\* Use the Inner Child Healing meditation to talk to your inner child. Assure “hurt you” that you are of value. If you have mind fragments or sub-personalities, let them know they are needed for you to be whole. Help them to heal the trauma by seeing the reality of the current situation. [theresacrabtree.com/inner-child/](https://theresacrabtree.com/inner-child/)

\* Use your traumatic experiences as a learning tool. As objectively as you can, notice if there were some “red flags” that you ignored. Then you can break the pattern. Ask others for constructive feedback. Take note of the behaviors of others and yourself that draw people in and those that tend to repel others. Then mimic those that draw healthy to you.

\* Acknowledge and own the addiction without minimizing or burying it. Identify how you feel about it. Let go of blaming yourself or creating negative stories such as “I deserved this.” Accept what happened so that you do not let the addiction continue to rule your life.

\* Those who suffer from addiction often become self-critical. Monitor the things you think and say about yourself that are negative. Make a list and write positive statements about your good qualities, such as: “I am lovable.” “I have good employment skills (and list them).” “I may get hurt in some relationships, but it is better to love and lose that love than never to love at all.” Reread them when you start getting down on yourself. I have included more, along with comforting Bible scriptures, at the end of this document.

\* Scrutinize your weak areas and notice your shortcomings. Be wary of expecting to be rejected because that will only lead to isolation. Open your heart and allow yourself to give love and to receive love without expectations. The more unconditional love you give, the more love that can return to you.

\* Be responsible for any actions on your part that caused the addiction and subsequent effects. Healing the wounds is your responsibility. Take charge of your life.

### **SELF-CARE**

Nurturing oneself is important. Addictions can deplete one’s physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health. There are often feelings of unworthiness and lack of self-love that may have led to and been exacerbated by the addiction. The following are some suggestions to encourage you to nurture and empower yourself. Take your time working through this list. It took you a lifetime to build the layers and removing them will take time, along with courage, dedication and desire.

#### **PHYSICAL HEALTH**

\* Exercise at a gym or at home using online videos.

\* Take walks in nature by yourself, with friends or groups such as bird watchers or trail cleanups.

\* Join dance or aerobic groups.

\* Nurture your body with relaxing salt baths.

\* Eat nutritious meals. Join a cooking class.

\* Get plenty of sleep.

\* If your days are too busy, see if there are ways you can simplify. Be sure you aren’t engaged in unhealthy “people pleasing” activities.

#### **MENTAL HEALTH**

\* Keep your focus in the present. As soon as you notice you’re dwelling on the past or the addiction, immediately refocus on something that is more uplifting. At first this will be hard, but with practice, you will retrain your brain, and refocusing will become easier.

\* When negative thoughts arise, practice self-compassion. Don’t engage in “stinking thinking.”

\* If you mess up and relapse, don’t beat yourself up with guilt, shame or blame. Just admit that you don’t like the choice you made and plan to do better.

\* Engage in activities that you enjoy.

\* Manage your time so that you don’t create extra stress with self-imposed timelines.

\* Exercise your right to say “no” to things that are not yours to do or that you have no interest in.

\* Balance your work and recreational time so that you don’t exhaust yourself.

## **EMOTIONAL HEALTH**

\* Be authentic. Train yourself to stop worrying about what others think or say about you. Remember that other people's opinion about you is just that, their opinion. Their opinion does not need to be part of your reality. Don't let others' opinion define who you are.

\* Take into consideration that you could be misperceiving what others think and do.

\* There may be times when it is good to reflect on something that triggers you. Allow your emotions to surface. Then when you have a chance, pray and ask to be shown the root cause of what knocked you off balance. Then take steps to resolve the issue.

## **SPIRITUAL HEALTH**

\* Start each day with prayers to God. Express love to Him, then be open to receiving love in return. Express gratitude for the opportunity of another day on earth, even if things are currently rough. Ask for guidance and offer yourself in service to the needs of others.

\* Each morning, feel gratitude for at least three things in your life. You can do this in your mind or write them in a gratitude journal. A journal has an added benefit. When you feel down, read your past entries.

\* Read scriptures daily to become more connected to God. Consider subscribing to a site that sends daily scriptures to your email address. Or obtain a monthly or annual printed copy.

\* End each day with prayers of gratitude to God. Admit your shortcomings and plan to do better.

\* Embrace comforting messages from the Bible and other writings. I have included several below.

\* Make the Nightly Prayer and Review part of your bedtime routine. Celebrate the things you did that increased your alignment with Divine Love. Look at your unsatisfactory actions and reactions. Without adding guilt or shame, come up with some ideas on how you can do better when a similar situation arises.

\* Incorporate the "Daily Spiritual Practices" into your daily routine.

You can download the Nightly Prayer and Daily Spiritual Practices at the bottom of my website.

## **SEEK SUPPORT**

When one has suffered from addiction, it can be difficult to build enough trust to connect with others. Conversely, others may have lost trust in you. The fear of more pain can overwhelm one so deeply that it feels safer to isolate but that only creates more loneliness. As you heal your inner wounds, it is also important to reach out and create a safe support system. Here are a few ideas to consider.

\* Try a 12-step program such as Alcoholics or Narcotics Anonymous or ones tailored to your specific behavioral addiction.

\* Join a local church that has groups in your age bracket or interest areas to build healthy friendships and build your connection with God.

\* Addiction Support Groups: You can find these locally or online. If you are considering a treatment plan, ask the therapist for any recommended local groups.

\* If you have family members or close friends you can trust, develop a stronger relationship with them. They likely have also had similar hurts and may have some good advice or feedback for you.

\* Join community groups that have like-minded interests. These can be found online, at your local community center and in the newspaper. The best place to make friends is by doing things you love with others who have the same interest.

\* You're not only fighting with the addiction, you also need to retrain the brain in order to break the cycle. Many feel it is a weakness to seek help, yet sometimes a new perspective is what is needed to get past one's barriers. A qualified therapist can help you discover if there are underlying causes such as a personality disorder or anxiety disorder that is complicating your life. They can help you heal the trauma, regulate your

emotions and learn how to build healthy relationships with others. Reach out for help. You deserve to have a life filled with joy and happiness!

## STEP FOUR

**WARNING:** If you have demons that are manifesting violently, it is suggested that you have someone with you when you do the prayer. You may want to fast and pray beforehand to help make the process go smoother.

If you suffer from Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID) aka Multiple Personality Disorder (MPD), paranoia or schizophrenia, have someone with you when you do the prayer. Most split personalities begin when a person has a rebellious nature blended with rejection trauma. Those two personalities may make it difficult to release the other personalities. When the split began during early childhood, one may have some identity issues arise as they begin to meld these personalities back into one.

### TRAUMA AND DEMONIC RELEASEMENT PRAYER

**Read through the prayer first so you know what is involved.**

Then state the following out loud, with conviction.

*“Dear Creator, I ask for full healing from the trauma leading to addiction and my subsequent actions. Help me to see any new perspectives that will help me to more fully understand the situation in order for my healing to be complete. I admit that I have (name any offenses you have committed). I know this is against your will. I truly want to stop this behavior. Help me to fully forgive any who have or will consciously or unconsciously cause me pain or harm. I accept your promise of forgiving me to the same measure that I forgive others.*

*I make null and void any contracts or vows I have made with any and all demonic kingdoms, whether done consciously, ignorantly, or that came as the result of demonic deceit. I give no consent for any demon power to continue to harass me, no matter how they have gained admission to my body, mind, emotions and will.*

*Holy Spirit, I ask that you show me anything else which I need to change, so that I (and my children) may be totally free from the consequences of any unwise choices I have made.*

*(Pause, while listening as the Holy Spirit leads you.)*

*Right now, in the mighty name of Jesus Christ, I call to attention every demon power that is in me, attached to me, coming, going or in free circulation or in any way connected in my life. Every demon power, you are now under the authority of the living, resurrected Lord Jesus Christ. I bind you and command that you will not harm me or anyone else associated with me. You will not hide, leave, call others to help or go to someone else. You will not split, divide, multiply, clone, fragment or pass your duties onto any other demon. Any parts of you that are in others or elsewhere, call them back now and unite as one. You are commanded to do so in the name of Jesus Christ.*

*You will repair any damage you have caused me, my descendants and all future generations. You will put everything back in order now, in the name of Jesus Christ. I command you to pack all your bags, take any equipment, implants, seeds, energetic debris, and completely pull up and pack any roots you implanted. Take it all with you. Gather your entire kingdom, ranks and all members of your groups connected to me and unite into one. All of you, go directly into the abyss\* in the name of Jesus Christ. Completely and totally release from me now. All demon powers present, go into the abyss now, in Jesus Christ’s name. That is a command. It must be obeyed. Go, now!” Michael, I request that you send your angels to be sure they go into the abyss.*

*By faith, I receive freedom from all demonic influences in my life due to the choices of myself and/or my ancestors, in the name of Jesus Christ. I thank you Father for sending your son, Jesus Christ, with the promise of forgiveness and deliverance from our unholy choices and demonic oppression. Amen.”*

\* If you feel uncomfortable casting them into the abyss, command them to go to the feet of Jesus. They must be taken out of circulation, or else they may return to you or go to someone else.

## HOW ADDICTIONS “OPEN DOORS” TO DEMONIC INTERFERENCE

Humans are created with a physical body, a soul that includes emotions and a conscious mind able to make willful choices. These are what demons target. They have one main agenda, to pull humans away from a personal relationship with the Creator. Those who don't love God with all their heart, soul and mind, fall prey to demonic snares. Usually, a person is experiencing demonic interference before a full-blown addiction takes root. The following are some common ways demons gain access that can lead to repeated substance abuse and unhealthy behaviors. Be sure to check out the other topics in the “Open Doors” series to help heal those that led you into addiction, as well as any you have acquired as a result of addiction.

### DEMONS AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE

**The State of Being High or Drunk** makes one more vulnerable to entity interference. You likely have seen people who act dramatically different when high or drunk, compared to their normal state of being. When they are “out of their mind,” it's easier for demons to take over, causing them to do things beyond their control. Those who experience “blackouts” are even more susceptible and may have no memory of what they have done. *“Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” 1 Peter 8*

**Psychedelic and Dissociative Drugs** create a feeling of being detached from one's body. Using substances to connect with other dimensional beings is like putting out a cosmic sized neon blinking sign that reads “Demons Welcome Here!” While the person is “out,” demons can attach to their “silver cord” and be pulled back in when the effects of the drug wears off. Although one may be hoping for an exciting astral or enlightening experience, they are more likely to attract demons who may pretend to be angels, spirit guides or wise consultants. *“Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.” 2 Corinthians 11:14*

**Psychoactive Substances** are often used during healing and enlightenment ceremonies. They significantly change the persons, thoughts, mood and perception. It can become very difficult for the person to distinguish between reality, side effects from the drug, and demonic interference. Many of my clients had terrifying encounters with demonic beings while using these substances. Some come away with the belief they are Jesus or an important historic figure who has been sent by god or ETs for a mission that only they can accomplish. Demons are more than happy to enhance these false beliefs. *“Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.” 1 John 4:1*

**Using Substances to Numb Unresolved Trauma** only creates more problems. Demons can monitor humans and will prey on their weak areas. When one is under the influence, it is easier for demons to project thoughts that heighten the weakness and to manipulate the person into doing their bidding. They also attempt to lure the person into abusing other substances and behaviors to further degrade themselves. Unresolved trauma often harbors unforgiveness, resentment and anger. These, in turn, open doors to demonic interference. Thus, it is important to heal past trauma and forgive oneself and others. *“In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.” Ephesians 4:26-27*

**Ritual Use of Substances**, whether for Satanic worship, pagan practices or spiritual enlightenment, can open doors to demonic interference. Countless numbers of my clients had their first demonic experience while participating in “spiritual” rituals using substances such as ayahuasca, cannabis, peyote and mushrooms. One problem with group rituals is that other participants often have attached demons. It's not uncommon for the same to be true for the group leader and helpers. These demons can readily jump from one participant to another. There is also the danger that one goes to a “healer” who consciously works with demons and lures in unsuspecting clients. The demons are invoked to make the client worse. This is a common ruse to pad the wallet of the healer with “repeat customers.” *“The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.” 1 Timothy 4:1*

**Prescribed Medications** always have an assortment of possible side effects. Many of the side effects mimic demonic interference which can make the person believe they are under psychic attack. That belief and fear in turn can open doors to demons. Some of these symptoms are hearing voices, unusual body sensations, suicidal ideation, paranoia, hallucinations, tremors, disturbing dreams and delusions. Additionally, emotional side effects such as guilt for abusing substances, shame for lying to others to cover up their usage, and fear of getting caught for stealing to supply their addiction opens even more doors. The following is a promise for those who want to get right with God. *"The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen."* 2 Timothy 4:18

**Demon Infested Hangouts** include places such as prisons, psych wards, hospitals, rehab centers, ritual sites, party houses, bars, strip joints, porn shops, black magic shops and anywhere that people congregate to get drunk, high or engage in immorality. The demons on one person can affect others who are present. They may jump from one person to another and remain attached. They will do all they can to create more chaos. Add to the mixture the abuse of substances or immoral behavior and it's buffet time for demons. *"The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work."* 1 John 3:8

**Mental Health Issues** are exacerbated when substances are abused. The demons will project thoughts to target the person's weak areas such as low self-esteem, codependency and narcissism. It is common for people suffering from demonic oppression to be diagnosed with dissociative identity disorder, bipolar disorder and schizophrenia. In these cases, the voices in their heads, mood swings and odd behaviors are the personalities of the demons attached to them. It is not uncommon for some mental illnesses to disappear completely after a successful exorcism. Luke 8:27-36 demonstrates this when Jesus healed a man tormented by a legion of demons.

## DEMONS AND BEHAVIORAL ADDICTIONS

**Criminal Compulsion** is often accompanied by substance abuse. There is a myriad of reasons that lead a person down the path of criminal behavior. Demons often "groom" their targets over a period of time, slowly desensitizing and manipulating them into criminal behavior and addictions. Oftentimes, the offender shares that they felt a being within them or outside of them pushing them into the activity. Some state that when they were doing the crime, it was as though they stepped out of their body and watched a demon take it over. Many victims state that when the crime was occurring, they could see something evil looking at them from out of the perpetrator's eyes. These are times when the demons are actively possessing the person. *"The thief (devil) comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I (Jesus) have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."* John 10:10

**Spiritual Enlightenment Obsession** through New Age, New Thought and other non-Biblical practices is on the rise. These tend to keep a person trapped in a hamster wheel, always seeking the next step to enlightenment. Since this is a false belief, the quest is never-ending. The Bible repeatedly warns against any practices that leads a person to rely on anything besides the Creator. God's goal is to help protect us against the traps of demons. These are some of the activities to stay away from. *"Let no one be found among you who sacrifices their son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord; because of these same detestable practices the Lord your God will drive out those nations before you."* Deuteronomy 18:10-12

**Disharmonic Music** rattles the brain and body, causing disharmony. Song lyrics that promote hate, rebellion, mistrust, immorality, drug use, immoral sex and such reprograms the mind. What one focuses on becomes their reality. Demons lead the music and movie industries through human pawns, pulling their audience into substance abuse and immoral behaviors. Don't let these demons in your house! *"In fact, no one can enter a strong man's house without first tying him up. Then he can plunder the strong man's house."* Mark 3:27

**Gossip and slander** can be devastating, rightfully called instruments of the devil. In the Bible, James 3:6-8 states it clearly, *"The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison."*

**Self-Focused Addictions** are often spawned by demons who enhance the person's underlying fears and false beliefs such as unworthiness, being unattractive, low self-esteem or feeling unloved. These often show up in harmful behaviors such as self-harm, suicidal ideation, compulsive exercise or over-achievement. It is my prayer that you will come to know God's love for you. *"Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows."* Matthew 10:29-31

**Internet Gaming Disorder** can cause a variety of problems in all aspects of a person's life. Violent video games can program one's mind, distorting reality or causing a person to be more aggressive. The elimination of "bad guys" is a stimulating and rewarding activity. I can't help but wonder how many murderous rampages were rooted in these games. I remember an incident when a boy shot his friend. He thought his friend would get up, unharmed just like in the video game. He was 18! When my grandson was four, he thought the Super Mario villain, Bowser, was real. A demon took advantage of his fear and began terrorizing him by manifesting as Bowser, not only in his dreams but also while awake. I convinced him that Bowser was a cartoon and that a bad spirit was pretending to be Bowser to scare him. I encouraged him to tell Bowser to go away and never come back. It took him two nights to build the courage to do it. When he did, Bowser vanished in front of him and never returned. *"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."* James 4:7

**Sex Addictions** attract sexual demons, succubi (female) and incubi (males). When one masturbates, the thoughts from the fantasy can be broadcast and received by demons. Loneliness and repeated thoughts about wanting a mate can also attract predatory demons. These demons often start by showing up during the fantasy, in the person's dream time and in the bed itself. The person may not know they are dealing with a demon and follows through with the sexual activity. Bingo! To the demon, it's an open invitation to enter. Sometimes a person will consciously "call in" a spirit lover. That's never a good idea! Demons can shapeshift, often manifesting or appearing in dreams as the body type the person finds attractive. Once the demon gains the person's trust or slips in uninvited, all hell can break loose. Incubi and succubi are aggressive, jealous and possessive. They will disrupt any romantic relationship their target tries to develop with other humans. The demons are forceful and brutal, able to sodomize and rape at will. These demons oversee the porn industry, prostitution, sex trafficking and gain great enjoyment when they can break up family units. *"Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body."* 1 Corinthians 6:18

**Social Media, TV, Internet Sites** are powerful tools used by demons. They can easily incite people to deceive others through scams, using false identities, stealing information, defaming others, etc. Another increasing problem is for demon-induced humans to instantly disseminate false information around the world, instantly stirring up all kinds of chaos. The following verse is good advice for everyone. *"He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap."* 1 Timothy 3:7

**Escapism Activities** are distractions that contribute to a person ignoring their unresolved emotional issues or physical needs. Demons will do anything to keep a person busy so they don't have the time, money or energy for inner healing or to engage in activities that build a relationship with the Creator or Jesus. The following are a few of the alluring distractions they use: gambling, internet searches, phone messaging, shopping, sports, television, movies, videos and workaholism. Demons delight in provoking people to try this, to do that, to go here, to go there, enticing them like a carrot in front of a donkey. Don't be an ass! *"But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore, do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."* Matthew 6:33-34



## IF DEMONS ARE ACTIVELY HARASSING YOU

If you have gone through the SoulCleanse, Breaking Ancestral Curses, Forgiveness and Soul Ties exercises and been casting off demons each time, any ones that are remaining will be clinging on tight. They will either hide or try to stop you from proceeding. Their usual tricks are to project threatening thoughts, nightmares, make your body move or feel like you are being touched in some way. You may feel their anxiety in your body such as a churning stomach or headache. Ignore them as much as possible and allow yourself to dig deep so that you can discover and free yourself from the weaknesses that allow them to oppress you.

They will do what they can to distract you whenever you try to work on your healing. One of their favorite tricks is to make the person feel very sleepy, exhausted or distracted. You can help combat that by saying a prayer and asking Jesus or the Inner Spirit to give you strength and direction to combat them.

When doing the work, keep a good balance between doing the inner work and enjoying your life. The demons would love to keep you focused on them. Their hope is to wear you down so then can continue to manipulate you.

***The following are tools you can use to weaken them. Each demon will respond differently to various methods. Keep trying different ways until you find the ones that will work most effectively.***

- \* Quote Bible verses to show your authority to cast them out by the authority of Jesus.
- \* Mention the great miracles Jesus has performed.
- \* Talk about passages where Satan was defeated in the Bible.
- \* Play and sing songs about Jesus or the greatness of God.
- \* Say "The Lord's Prayer," the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm or other Bible scriptures.
- \* Read or hold the Bible, reminding the demons that Jesus has authority over them.
- \* Hold the symbol of Satan's defeat—a cross. This can be even be made of paper and placed in areas of your home.
- \* If you have water that has been sanctified, sprinkle this on your head while praying.
- \* Prayer and fasting
- \* Bind the demons, with conviction, out loud say something like, "You, demon who is poking me... sending nightmares... sending thoughts of suicide... (whatever it is doing), in the name of Jesus Christ, I bind you. You are commanded to stop that right now. Be quiet and be still." You may have to repeat it a few times. Then ignore them as best as you can.
- \* Repeat the Trauma and Demonic Release Prayer.
- \* If the demon tells you they do have a legal right to remain, ask it what that right is. If there is truth to what it says, then cancel that right by renouncing it, then cast the demon out. You will need to be sincere that you are stopping that belief, fear or activity, because the demons know if you are telling the truth.

## POSITIVE AFFIRMATIONS

As soon as you realize that your mind is replaying old negative thoughts, immediately refocus onto something more positive. Below are some positive affirmations to help along your path of recovery.

All of my problems have at least one solution.

I have the confidence and courage to move forward.

No matter what comes my way, I can handle it.

I can do anything that I set my mind to do.

My life is a gift and I am of great value.

I choose to be positive and live a fulfilling life.

I forgive myself for past mistakes. I deserve to be forgiven.

I am proud of my progress, no matter how small.

I am in charge of how I feel right now.

I am capable of making healthy choices.

I am a survivor.

I can overcome this.

Today, I will search for the good in each moment.

I refuse to give up on myself.

I am open to new and positive experiences.

I am in the process of creating the best version of myself.

I accept myself for who I am.

I matter and am at peace with who I am.

I deserve and am open to receiving love, respect, happiness and all good things.

I am committed to achieving my goals.

I am not defined by my past; I am driven by my future.

I was made with Divine intention. God don't make junk

I am confident and capable of achieving anything I set my mind to.

I am enough, I do enough, I have enough.

I live in the present, and take action to ensure an awesome future.

I am grateful for all the blessings in my life.

My strength is greater than any struggle.

I believe in myself and my abilities.

I greet each day with renewed hope.

I love myself and accept my individuality.

## RISING ABOVE ADDICTION

**1 Corinthians 15:33** “Do not be misled; bad company corrupts good character.”

**Romans 5:3-5** “We also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance, perseverance produces character, and character produces hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.”

**John 2:16** “For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world.”

**Micah 7:8** “Though I have fallen, I will rise. Though I sit in darkness, the Lord will be my light.”

**Psalms 18:2** “The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.”

**Psalms 86:6-7** “Hear my prayer, Lord; listen to my cry for mercy. When I am in distress, I call to you, because you answer me.”

**Matthew 11:28-30** “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

**James 4:7** “Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”

**1 Peter 5:10** “And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.”

**Philippians 4:13** “I can do all things through him who gives me strength.”

**Psalms 9:9** “The Lord is a shelter for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.”

**1 Corinthians 10:13** “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it”

**Romans 8:5-6** “For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace”

**Ephesians 5:15** “Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise.”

**2 Timothy 1:7** “God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.”

**Romans 12:1-2** “Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

**Philippians 4:8** “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”

## HOW CAN I HELP SOMEONE WHO HAS AN ADDICTION?

Trying to support someone with an addiction can be frightening, frustrating and feel futile. Those who love them the most are often pushed away. This may leave everyone feeling hopeless, not knowing how to bridge the gap. Your loved one needs your support, but unfortunately, the addiction may have the strongest pull. Before throwing in the towel, consider the suggestions below.

### **Educate Yourself**

Read through this article and do other online research so that you will have a better understanding of the nature and stages of addiction. Recognize that stopping the addiction is not just a matter of expressing one's will power. Addictions take root in the brain, stemming from one's natural response to rewards. Another factor that is rarely considered is the impact from demonic interference. Where there is addiction, there are usually demons behind the scenes doing their best to create as much chaos as possible.

### **Talk Sooner Than Later**

When you first realize there is a problem, your loved one may be in the earlier stage of dependence. Offering assistance before the problem blows into full addiction can help to stop the progression. Give them literature on the stages of addiction and let them know you are concerned about the path they are taking.

### **Initial Conversation Tips**

Timing is important. Never try to have an important conversation when your loved one is high or in the midst of an addictive behavior. Approach them when both of you are calm, in a quiet place and have the time to let the conversation flow. Be prepared for a variety of emotional responses from both of you. Try to remain calm. If things start to get out of hand, be prepared to walk away. Let them know you are willing to continue the conversation when you both are calm. They may be self-sabotaging, with little concern over their own life. Yet, they may be more receptive if gently shown how their behavior is affecting their family, friends, work and other aspects of their life.

### **Investigate the Cause**

It is helpful to know what led the person into the addiction. No one starts a behavior with the goal of becoming addicted to it. Encourage your loved one to share with you what led them into using the substance or the behavior initially. Ask what kept drawing them in. Be open to listening without judgment. Healing the root cause will also help the person find better coping strategies and release the underlying pain. Trauma is not always the initial cause that leads to addiction. Oftentimes, the person is simply curious or wanting to fit in with peers, not realizing how addictive a specific substance is. Some get hooked on drugs to help reach goals such as increasing athletic abilities or needing drugs for the energy to push forward at school or work. The euphoria itself that triggers the reward system has an incredible effect on some people, leaving them wanting more.

### **Offer Support**

Show the person that you care. Both of you may feel unloved, lost, forgotten or steeped with guilt and embarrassment for the situation they are in. If they accept your support, listen to what they state their needs are. Even if you don't agree with what they are saying, let them know you are listening. People want to feel heard. Before offering input, ask if they want it. If they don't want your opinion or follow your suggestions, try not to react. Just plant the seed and let them choose what to do with it. By doing so, you keep the door open and hopefully, trust will develop. Then healing can take place on a deeper level. If the person blames you as part of the problem, try not to react defensively. You may want to suggest that you go to counseling together to build better communication skills as well as to heal past hurts.

### **Don't Take it Personally**

Keep in mind that mainly the brain is running the show. The person may repeatedly promise to stop the behavior. They may be sincere when making the promise, but the brain stimuli and demonic interference pulls them back in. Encourage them not to lie or to cover up the addiction. No matter what they throw at you, try not to take it personally. Recognize these as indicators of how progressive the addiction has become.

### **Set Parameters**

Their needs may not be in alignment with what you are willing or able to offer them. Together, set parameters on what is acceptable and what is not. For instance, if they need money to pay their rent, instead of giving them cash, offer to pay the rent directly or in a way they cannot use it to feed the addiction. On the other hand, paying their rent helps them, but that also frees up money coming from other sources that can be used to feed the addiction. Set clear expectations on what you expect from them in return. Make them responsible for their choices and be prepared to say "no," when their demand is not aligned with the support you are willing to offer.

### **Enhance Your Forgiveness Skills**

Your loved one is stuck in a cycle. That cycle may include sucking you in and spitting you out. You may be the person they need the most, but the draw of the addiction poisons their mind. They often are totally obsessed and absorbed in the addiction, focusing solely on getting that next "high." Jesus offers good advice for this type of situation. "Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, *'Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?'*" Jesus answered, *'I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. (Matthew 18:21-22).'*" Although easier said than done, do your best to remain compassionate and to be there to support when they are truly ready to turn over a new leaf.

### **Avoid Labels**

Avoid calling them an addict and encourage them to do the same and not to say "my addiction." I cringe every time I hear the opening statement at Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, "Hi, I'm [their name] and I'm an alcoholic." Another statement that does not resonate with me is "Once an addict, always an addict." The person clearly has an addiction and may be more likely to relapse or engage in other addictions, but the addiction does not define the person. The brain responds powerfully to "I am" statements, which is why affirmations work to help people change beliefs and behaviors. Change your wording and encourage them to do the same with something such as "I have a problem that I am working to overcome."

### **Encourage Professional Help**

Consider contacting an intervention specialist who can help guide you in ways to better help your loved one. Do your own research and give them information or brochures on rehab resources. Hand them a few phone numbers to anonymous help lines or websites addresses. Offer to help them research online and local resources. When appropriate, be persistent in getting them to make the initial call or offer to go with them to check out an agency. Offer to go to a support meeting with them or to find ones online where they can gain peer support. Help them with transportation to appointments.

### **Support Through Recovery**

Quite often, the person may agree to seek professional help, yet then relapse, not once, not twice, but repeatedly. Each time, encourage them to keep moving forward. Exercise patience and try not to belittle or guilt them. Remind them that will power alone is usually not enough to break the cycle of addiction.

### **Take Care of Your Needs**

Helping someone who isn't ready or able to help themselves can lead to frustration, anxiety, depression and burnout. Find online or local resources for support. There are groups that support those whose loved ones are enmeshed in substance and behavioral addictions. Don't let yourself get emotionally, mentally, physically or financially drained while helping your loved ones. It's hard to help others if you are burnt out. Know your limits and get support for new ideas and the hugs that you are going to need along the way.