



LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY
BEHAVIORAL MEDICINE CENTER

Staying with Sobriety

SPRING/SUMMER 2009

In This Issue

Economic Downturn:
A Challenge and Caution for
Sufferers of Addiction



Coping with Pain
After Treatment



At a Glance



Family Connection:
Environmental Risk Factors
of Addiction



Comforting those Who
Mourn: Three Principles

We want to hear from you

To inspire our readers and recognize your accomplishments, we would like to feature your story in one of our upcoming newsletters. Please send us a personal article or poem depicting your experience with addiction and/or alcoholism to:

**Attn: Elaine Coyazo,
LLUBMC, 1710 Barton Road,
Redlands, CA 92373**

Economic Downturn: A Challenge and Caution for Sufferers of Addiction

Addiction is manifested when an individual continues to use and abuse substances despite the negative effects of the drugs on the important areas of life's functioning. Even as a person experiences severe problems in social, vocational, educational, physiological, legal, spiritual, and economical dimensions of life he/she persists in drug addictive behaviors. In this period of economic crisis it is estimated that over 23 million Americans struggle with addiction and yet fewer than 10 percent of them are receiving any treatment. Even worse, addiction rates have been rising even as the economy declines. Addicts and substance abusers experience many losses but the economic loss remains a deficiency that is even more pronounced during this period of economic downturn.



The Drug Enforcement Agency noted that there is an increase in prescription drug abuse and trafficking at an alarming rate since 2000. Anecdotal reports suggest that there is no decline in trafficking of any of the major drugs during the recession. It is also noted that people who still have jobs are increasing their alcohol consumption during this period. Probably the constant reports of economic gloom are impacting people both in their pockets and in their state of mind. The stress

may be too much to handle and some people are ill-advisedly trying to ease their anxiety, depression, and fears by alcohol and other drug consumption.

A distressing and painful reality noticed during this recession is that members of our society who suffer from addiction are finding it more difficult to find the help they need to deal with their disease. For example, in one California community, it is observed that families are finding it more difficult to

spend money or secure credit to treat their addicted loved ones even as addiction rates rise. In another community in Florida, an addiction treatment center reported a 40 percent increase in requests for treatment. Even though the requests for treatment have increased and the demand for service has gone up, there is a decline of the number of persons receiving treatment. In this economic downturn there have been severe job losses, which unfortunately include the unavailability of health insurance to pay for treatment.

A few pertinent suggestions must be offered for addicts and potential addicts:

- a) If you are contemplating drug use to cope with the gloomy news or crises

continued on page 3

Coping with Pain After Treatment

Lansing has been a part of the Chemical Dependency continuing care program at Loma Linda University Behavioral Medicine Center (BMC) for almost five months now. He had been using prescription medications for over 15 years for back pain, and realized the pain had taken over his life—preventing him from doing everyday activities. He came to the BMC with pain levels of 8-10 on a scale of 1-10,

with 10 representing the worst pain. Upon finishing the Chronic Pain and Medication Dependency Program, his pain levels were reduced to levels of 1-2.

Going through the program, Lansing realized much of his pain was caused by the pain medications themselves as his body was trying to cope with the withdrawals from the medications.

After detox, he began working on the mental aspects of his pain and shifting his attention to more productive activities. The sense of community he experienced at the sober living homes really helped in his continuing care. The bond he has been able to forge with people who have similar experiences has offered Lansing hope and encouragement.

Months after his treatment, Lansing admits he thinks about taking pain medications so he can participate in his favorite outdoor activities of playing racquetball and golf but he says the thought quickly dissipates as he realizes the pills will not solve the problem. While limited in some of his activities due to his back pain, Lansing continues on the path to recovery by attending groups at the BMC, being an active member of his church, and participating in fellowship and bible studies. He recalls a friend telling him spirituality is experienced through community and being amongst people. Lansing's spirituality plays a significant role in his recovery and he hopes to one day travel abroad and serve those in need through missionary work.

Huma Shah, MPH, CHES



At a Glance

66ers Baseball Game

Sunday, July 4, 2009

Arrowhead Park, San Bernardino, CA

Recovering Alumni Association invites alumni members to come join in the fun and attend a night out at the local baseball game. The 66ers are the Dodger's single A affiliate ball club in San Bernardino. For more information, come to Alumni on Thursdays at 6:00 p.m. or call James D. at 909-215-4779.

Mountain AA Conference

Saturday – Sunday, August 1 – 2, 2009

Performing Arts Center and
Big Bear Discovery Center
Big Bear, CA

There will be marathon meetings, AA and Al-Anon Speakers, dance with live band, Sunday morning pancake breakfast with campfire and speaker. For more information, visit www.mountainaaconference.com

13th Annual Inland Empire Women's AA Banquet

Saturday, August 29, 2009

Orange Show Center, San Bernardino, CA

Come enjoy the good food, good fellowship, and a fun night out with "the girls". For more information, call Sherry M. 909-798-6611 or Gayle Marie L. 909-534-8554.

RAA 18th Annual Golf Tournament

Saturday, September 12, 2009

Join us for a day of golf, fun, and fellowship. The day will include refreshments, awards, luncheon, prizes, etc. For more information, contact James at 909-215-4779.

Family Connection: Environmental Risk Factors of Addiction

Over the years, there have been discussions of nurture vs. nature when it comes to addiction. Roughly, 10% of all people who experiment with drugs become addicted. Combinations of environmental and genetic factors influence the likelihood of addiction.

Most scientists now agree that 50% of the risk of developing addiction is due to genetics. If there is a genetic predisposition towards addiction, any experimentation with drugs or alcohol is much more likely to lead to addiction. However, your genes are not your destiny. While one cannot control genetics, one can control the other 50% of risk factors in the environment and coping skills. There are many people who have overcome the family trait of addiction and live addiction free lives.

Environmental risk factors are characteristics in a person's surroundings that increase their likelihood of becoming addicted to drugs. A person may have many environments, or domains, of influence such as the community, family, school, and friends. Their risk of addiction can develop in any of these domains.

The single biggest contributing factor to drug abuse risk is having friends who engage in the problem behavior. An individual's connection with the community in which they live can also play a big part in their likelihood of abusing drugs. Statistics show that if a person's community has favorable attitudes toward drug use, firearms, and crime, the person's risk of addiction is increased. In speaking with many of our patients who have entered recovery, they tell us that at many of the high schools in the area, heroin is an easily accessible, inexpensive drug.

An example of the role of the environment comes to mind when one enters recovery. Recovering addicts and alcoholics are encouraged to change their environment; to change the people they associate with and change the places they go. The environment places one in situations that can increase or decrease the likelihood to use again.

Family conflict and home management problems are contributing factors in drug abuse risk. In addition, if parents have favorable attitudes towards drug

use or use drugs themselves, often their children will be more likely to abuse drugs. Families who state, "I'd rather have them here if they are going to do it than do it somewhere else" unfortunately give the perception that drug and alcohol use is okay.

A student's lack of performance, participation and commitment to school can be a major risk factor in addiction. Many families encourage students to get involved with school sports or other activities to keep children out of trouble.

There are many environmental risk factors for addiction. We need to pay attention to them and alter our environment if we find our families or ourselves consistently in these situations. Genetics play a part of the addiction; however, avoiding the environment will lessen the likelihood of the possibility of addiction.

*Roberta Reid, LMFT, Family Counselor
Genetic Science Learning Center,
"Environmental Risk Factors for
Addiction," Learn Genetics,
29 April 2009*

continued from page 1

Economic Downturn

- resulting from the recession consider alternative coping strategies; therapy, support groups, church activities, meditation, and prayer are all good alternatives.
- b) If you are already engaged in a treatment program please adhere to the steps outlined by your program. Stay aggressively engaged in order to succeed.
 - c) If you are struggling with an addiction or substance abuse problem and have the means to do so, consider getting help through a Chemical Dependency program like the one offered by Loma Linda University Behavioral Medicine Center.
 - d) Join a 12-step program that is free in your area; Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous can provide excellent support.
 - e) If you are an alcoholic or an addict and you are on the path to recovery, work on changing your places of recreation, and activities in which you participate. Engage in healthy activities with healthy friends.
 - f) If you ever had spiritual inclinations, belief in God, or belief in a Higher Power now is the time to commit your will to such a being. A power outside of yourself can be very helpful to get you through your personal crisis and this economic crisis.
 - g) Finally, work to maintain meaning and purpose in your life despite any economic setbacks. Focusing on the positive can help to decrease any desire to use drugs or alcohol.

In this time of economic hardship it is worthwhile to remember that there are many important reasons to keep on living well. Be creative in enjoying your life in simple, inexpensive, but healthy ways. Remember, if you are on the road to recovery keep focused on your recovery. If you need some additional help, seek it out.

Horatius Gittens, MA

Comforting those Who Mourn: Three Principles

Genuine humility is essential if we want to experience recovery. Pride is often the major obstacle with many as they struggle with chemical dependency. When we humble ourselves before God or our Higher Power, we will mourn and grieve over our mistakes and losses. This attitude of humility always brings the wonderful comfort that only God can offer, and which He gives through counselors and therapists and others in the helping and healing professions.

How is it done? I have observed and identified three principles helpers/healers adopt or characteristics they possess.

1. They will not change the subject when you talk about your pain from the loss you have sustained. On the contrary, they will encourage you to express yourself in words or in deeds as you

act out your deep pain and anguish. Tears often accompany words in the expression of sorrow. I heard a favorite therapist of mine say: "Sorrow that's not expressed in tears will make other organs weep."

2. They will listen more than they speak. They have perfected the art of active listening and hear not only what you are communicating in your words, but also through your body language.
3. They will not tell you how or what you should feel or pass judgment on you. What you will experience is their acceptance of you just as you are and their response will be with appropriate words and actions. They have incorporated the love of God into their very being and communicate it in their relationships with those who mourn and grieve.

What loss have you sustained for which you are in grief or mourning? Is it the loss of a loved one or a pet? That is often the loss initially identified. People in recovery have many more like the loss of identity and self-esteem; loss of family, rejection and divorce; loss of connectedness and support; loss of hope, meaning and purpose; loss of possessions and financial security; loss of health and a vision for the future; loss of trust. The list continues for persons with a chemical dependency.

Whatever loss you may be grieving or mourning, there is comfort for you. The most famous of all rabbis, more than two thousand years ago, said: "God blesses those who mourn for they shall be comforted" (Mt. 5:4 NTL)

Clyde Cassimy, Chaplain



Women's Spiritual Retreat

The women's spiritual retreat in one word is...well that's just it; I can't explain it in one word. On the ride over there I was lucky enough to carpool with my sober living roommates. We had such fun on the way to the beach; we blasted the music and sang along. My bond with my roommates got even closer than I thought possible. Down at the beach was such an experience – there were a bunch of women I didn't know. We had speaker meetings, played volleyball, went shopping, etc. Everything was fun and all of us bonded so closely. And what was even better yet, I got closer to God. I definitely recommend that any girl/woman, who can go, should go. It was such an amazing, spiritual experience.

Nichole G.



LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY
BEHAVIORAL MEDICINE CENTER

Staying with Sobriety

Chemical Dependency Services
1710 Barton Road
Redlands, CA 92373

Please write to the address below if you wish to have your name removed from the list to receive announcements or notices introducing new services, health educational programs and events, or products of Loma Linda University Behavioral Medicine Center. All reasonable efforts will be taken to ensure that your request is honored.

Promotional Services
c/o Access Center
245 East Redlands Blvd. Suite A
San Bernardino, CA 92408

LLUMCMKTGBMCMC-081-0908094000