Notice that the word “Adventist” is in bold letters? It is worth thinking about why the name Adventist Recovery Ministries was chosen. Although a Google search shows many connections between other denominations and recovery, there is no such organization as Baptist Recovery Ministries or Methodist Recovery Ministries. Why then Adventist Recovery Ministries? What is special or unique about us that we thought that we needed to have our own recovery program?

I do not pretend to have all of the answers to these questions, and I would be very interested in your thoughts about this subject. But allow me to share some of my thoughts. In most ways, I do not believe that we are any different than other human beings or other Christians who struggle with addictions. We are all broken, victims of sin and its effects. To some degree we all have affections and attachments that are misplaced, i.e., connected to anything or anyone other than God. As Christians, however, we also are empowered to “walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4).

But how about Adventist Christians? Are we subject to special attack because of the end time message that we proclaim? Or are we in greater denial of our need for recovery because we focus so much on the future coming of Christ and we just don’t see our present need for recovery? When our focus is on the future coming of Jesus only, we miss opportunities to experience him with us daily in the present moment. The kind of faith that we will need to survive the events that are soon to come is built by dealing with present daily struggles right here, right now. Adventist Recovery Ministries gives a safe sanctuary for those of like faith to process all aspects of their spiritual journey, and to be strengthened by one another’s testimony (Revelation 12:11). We should also be humble enough to attend other 12 step meetings be they Christian in focus or not. We do need others, and gain much from what they have to teach us about their journeys as well. These are some of my thoughts. What are yours?

We are looking for recent events, upcoming events, recovery testimonials, brief articles on how you are working the steps and other items of interest for the newsletter. Please feel free to e-mail them to me at the address below. They will be seriously considered for future editions of Journey to Life newsletter.

David Sedlacek, PhD, LCSW, CFLE  
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We need always remember the word “Him” in Step 3. Therefore turning our will and lives over to the care of an inanimate object would not qualify. The reasoning for the suggestion made in many recovery programs that “God” could be anything more powerful than us is based on the general perception new candidates to recovery had of the God they knew. The perception of many newly recovering addicts is that God is punishing them, and that He perhaps has caused all their troubles. They want to stay away from Him at best or hate Him at worst. The addict has a relationship problem with God during his/her active addiction. The root of the problem is self-centeredness as stated in the book Alcoholics Anonymous page 62. The Bible calls it the carnal nature as described in Romans 7:14-24.

We who practice Christ-centered recovery specifically understand God to be God of the Bible expressed through the example of Jesus Christ. Jesus showed us many times how He surrendered His will to His Father’s. He did this in His life and death when He chose to be our example and Savior. The Bible tells us in Philippians 2:13 “For it is God who works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” Surrender implies growing in faith. I have grown in faith through my recovery program through the power of the Holy Spirit for over 26 years, Praise Him.

This surrender is not easy because of our fallen nature and it was not easy for Jesus. Remember the night in Gethsemane where he started the final trip to the cross for us? Luke 22:41-44 “And he was withdrawn from them about a stone’s cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, 42Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. 43And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. 44And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” He overcame and saved us using in part the method we now call Step 3. Thank you Jesus for showing us the way!

God’s will not mine, that’s the answer to overcome any dysfunction we have in our lives. Join an Adventist Recovery Ministries group or start one in your church. To help folks in dysfunction, see adventistrecoveryministries.org or call me at 864-238-8602.

Contributed by Frank Sanchez,
Southern Area Coordinator
After serving as pastor, missionary, and college Bible teacher, my final 25 years in church employment were as hospital health educator. One evening a recovering alcoholic gave me a copy of Alcoholics Anonymous which of course I did not need! But when I finally got around to reading it, what a surprise to find its stories and counsel resonating with my own experience and feelings. Page 62 brought it into focus in a painful and powerful way. Rather than alcohol it said that “Selfishness, self-centeredness is the root of our troubles. . . . We had to have God’s help!” Now that was getting real personal, way beyond alcoholism. At the bottom of the page came this painful summary: “First of all, we had to quit playing God.” When I read that I said, “Wow, that’s it. That is my problem. I didn’t originate it, but I did inherit it. So the power of 12-step programs lies in the fact that they address the root cause of real problems. They challenge our selfish nature and remind us to acknowledge our powerlessness and to continually turn our will and life over to the care of God as we understand Him.

A dozen years later, by the grace of God, I’m still recovering. The process continues because He is passionate about my progress and I claim the promise that “He who began a good work in me will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” What a journey! From self-centered life to a God-centered land where we will see Him face to face. Now that is eternal recovery and good news!

Harold B

Gratefully Recovering!

Understanding the Process that Gives Birth to Addiction

What is addiction? Definitions range in detail from the description by Dr. Pat Carnes who considers addictions an illness of escape to the clinical criteria outlined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual 4th Edition. For our purpose let us note two components that can alert us to the presence of an addiction:

1. Compulsion
2. Negative Consequences

I have noticed that addictive substances or behaviors are consumed or engaged in compulsively, and are linked to negative consequences.

What is the nature of the process by which people become addicted to substances or behaviors? It is tempting to assume that genetics load the gun and environment pulls the trigger as one highlights the role that genetics and social environment play in determining if a person will become an addict. The answer is deeper than that. In fact, to meaningfully answer this question we will need to journey back – way back to the beginning.

I often hear that life does not come with a manual. Some of the simplest devices are accompanied by a manual and yet we think that we are expected to navigate this world without being provided a manual. My belief is that we have been provided a manual, and the manual is so important God made sure that it is ubiquitous and available in most parts of the planet. This provision was not simple. In fact the path the Bible has traveled to make its way into our hands and unfortunately sit dusty, and neglected on our bookshelves is blood stained. Perusing its pages further underscores its life-giving relevance to our lives.

As we consider the genesis account we see God doing some amazing things. God literally showcases a process

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Resources

Journey to Wholeness:
A series that can be used in support groups or small groups as a resource to facilitate recovery of breaking away from harmful practices and strengthening an intimate relationship with God in the Journey to an abundant life. Facilitator guides and participant guides can be purchased in our online store at www.AdventistRecovery.org

Journey to Life Newsletter:
This bi-monthly newsletter is available in English, Spanish, and soon in French as well. Print a free pdf copy, download, or register to subscribe and receive it via email at www.AdventistRecovery.org

Choose Full Life Resources:
These are posters, calendars/bookmarks, booklets that can be used to share with others 10 Ways to Choose a Full Life embarking on a Journey to Recovery. For more information and to place an order please go to www.NADHealthMinistries.org and check out the online store. The Choose Full Life theme song is also available for download.
Dopamine is pre-eminent, it works in concert with that mediates our experience of joy. Although activity. Dopamine is a pre-eminent neurotransmitter connecting with one another and God, and sexual include eating, drinking water, meaningfully sustaining activities. These life sustaining activities a biochemical rush of joy when we engage in life brain. Our brains are designed by God to experience neuroscience has helped us to understand about our role of the man, and man would rule over the woman (Adam blames Eve for the fall), and his divine purpose (her desire will be for you, and you will rule over her). In other words the woman would covet the role of the man, and man would rule over the woman in fear. Life had just become much more stressful. Also whereas the devil’s ability to antagonize the humans had been restricted to the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, after they ate from the tree the devil and his evil angels could access them much more pervasively. In essence life became much more stressful.

To further understand the process by which we get addicted let us review what the world of neuroscience has helped us to understand about our brain. Our brains are designed by God to experience a biochemical rush of joy when we engage in life sustaining activities. These life sustaining activities include eating, drinking water, meaningfully connecting with one another and God, and sexual activity. Dopamine is a pre-eminent neurotransmitter that mediates our experience of joy. Although Dopamine is pre-eminent, it works in concert with other important neurotransmitters such as oxytocin to mediate the experience of connectedness and trust.

Dr. Jeanette Norden is a Professor of Cell and Developmental Biology in the School of Medicine, at Vanderbilt University. She highlights a number of structures that function in making up what Neuroscientists call the Reward Pathway. Dr. Norden states in a DVD by “The Teaching Company” called “Understanding the Brain” that addictive substances and addictive behaviors have in common modulating dopamine at the level of a neuro-anatomic structure called the Nucleus Accumbens producing compulsive repetition of ingesting the addictive substance or engaging in the addictive behavior despite negative consequences. Dr. Bruce Alexander in his book “The Globalization of Addiction: A Study in Poverty of the Spirit” highlights the role of “Dislocation” in promoting addictions. In short Dr. Alexander conducted studies on mice (famously dubbed “Rat Park”) in which he showed that mice would reject opportunities to use drugs when their living environments were filled with opportunities to socially connect and physically exert themselves. Dr. Alexander went on to postulate that when humans become isolated, it produces an emotional pain that increases the risk for addictions. Recall God’s original plan that man be connected to Himself, fellow humans, resources, and a divine purpose. It’s time we embrace God’s plan for recovery. The good news is that Christ is returning to rescue us from our addiction to sin.

By Ricardo Whyte, M.D.
Director of Chemical Dependence Program,
LLU School of Medicine / Behavioral Medical Center

Recent Events

The Institute for the Prevention of Addictions along with the Behavioral Sciences Department and the School of Social Work hosted the 22nd Annual Summer School of Addictions at Andrews University. This year’s focus was on Families and Addiction. Featured speakers were Carol Cannon co-founder of the Bridge, Drs. David Sedlacek, Harvey Burnett, Lionel Matthews, Romulus Chelbegean, Curt VanderWaal, Gary Hopkins, Duane McBride and Mrs. Alina Baltazar from Andrews University as well as Yvonne Terry from the University of Michigan. In addition, individuals struggling with addictions talked about their recovery stories and local treatment providers presented successful treatment models that incorporate families. The workshop was well attended and received by the Andrews University undergrad and graduate students.

Reported by Alina Baltazar

Intercessory Prayer

One of the most important steps in the recovery process is praying for God’s power in the lives of those living with the daily challenges in this journey. Praying for and with people is something we hear often and sometimes think is just a “phrase” to be said, however, prayer is key in successful recovery.

In the ARMin office we have prayed for all those who email us sharing their struggles and asking for help. We add their names to our daily prayer list. Many of them are facing what they is the end of the line, as they struggle with pornography, alcoholism, and many other habits that have taken a toll on their relationships and had a negative impact on their physical, mental , and spiritual life.

We have been able to link these people with professional counselors and to ARMin groups in local churches where they can find help. We then add them to our intercessory prayer list. If you would like to be added to our list, please send us your name via contact us on the website, or email recovery@nad.adventist.org.

We hope that as you read this newsletter, you will share this resource with others who need to have a touch of hope and encouragement knowing that they may find complete healing in Jesus -their Creator and companion on this journey.