

# You Can Be Free

**Introduction to Chemical Dependency**



# Six Images That Tell Our Story



Look at Photo #1. What do you see? What's going on with this young woman?



The guy in Photo #2 looks desperate. Maybe he's feeling a little hopeless over trying to control his addiction on his own. Can you identify with this guy? In what way(s)?



Ultimately, by God's grace, we arrive at Photo #3. We have to make a decision: a choice to admit we're powerless; or, continue to attempt to manage our addiction on our own. Have you stood at this decision point? When? What were the circumstances?



What do you think the guy is doing in Photo #4? How important is what he is doing?



The compass lying atop an open Bible in Photo #5 illustrates the pathway on which your healing and recovery will occur. The issues that have contributed to your addiction may seem overwhelming and formidable. But, Jesus said if we would know the Truth, the revelation knowledge combined with our faith would set us free (John 8:32). You will find healing and full recovery by the amazing process of confronting your issue with the powerful Truth of the Word.

Look at Photo #6 carefully. What would that type of freedom feel like for you? How would that freedom affect your relationships (family, friends, employment)?

*It's hard for me to accept that I'm addicted to alcohol. I didn't think I was drinking more beer or more Scotch or more wine than anybody else.*

*Sure, I got drunk. But, didn't everybody?*

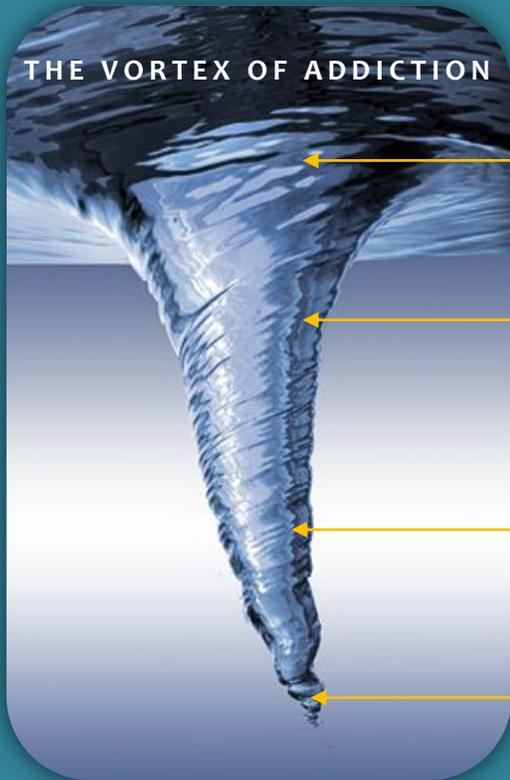
*When I tried to stop drinking or a least slow down, I could...but, only for a short time. Then, the craving would come back and I would be drinking as much as before. And, when I wasn't drinking, I was thinking about drinking.*

*I must have known I had a problem because I began to hide how often and how much I drank. I would lie and attempt to cover my tracks.*

*Addicted? I guess I am.*

*The Change Companies | 2002*

# Where Are You?



Information on the Stages of Addiction excerpted from The Canyon Treatment Center website.

If you have come to the New Heart Healing and Recovery Chemical Dependency Group, you have likely realized that you are struggling with your ability to control the use of your “drug of choice.”

Begin your journey of healing and recovery by identifying where you think you are tonight in coping with your use of your chemical.

## Early Stage: Preoccupation

Characterized by constant cravings. An overwhelming urge to use the drug of choice preoccupies the user despite other responsibilities and relationships.

## Mid Stage: Binging | Intoxication

The “drug of choice” is introduced into the body more frequently. Larger amounts of the drug are necessary to experience the same high. Prolonged exposure leads to desensitization and the risk of possible overdose.

## Late Stage: Withdrawal | Negative Affects

Anytime the “drug of choice” is not present, withdrawal symptoms occur causing tremendous suffering. All conventional activities cease to have meaning.

## Death

Sadly, death occurs in the life of an alcohol or drug user due to liver, heart, kidney or pancreas failure. In addition, many die from overdose, suicide; or, from auto, water or fire accidents.



How is using alcohol and | or drugs like the vortex displayed above? \_\_\_\_\_

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What “stage” would you say you find yourself in tonight? \_\_\_\_\_

Why did you choose the stage you selected? What’s going on in your life right now that causes you to believe you are in the stage you chose? \_\_\_\_\_

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Look at the “Vortex of Addiction” again. How important is it for you to begin your journey of healing and recovery? Is your healing and recovery important to anyone else? Who?

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# Seven Signs of Chemical Dependency



## Tolerance

You need to take an increasing amount of the substance to achieve the desired effect.

Have you experienced this symptom?  Yes  No

## Withdrawal

You feel sick if you stop using, or attempt to cut-back on the amount of your “drug of choice” you are using.

Have you experienced withdrawal?  Yes  No



## Time

You invest large amounts of time finding and acquiring your drug of choice, using and recuperating from its use.

Are you spending too much time with your drug of choice?  
 No  Probably  Definitely

## Loss of Control

You ingest more of your drug of choice than you intended; or use your drug of choice longer than you intended.

Have you ever felt like you have lost control?  Yes  No



I have seen his ways, but I will heal him | Isaiah 57.18



## Loss of Activities

You no longer participate in the social or recreational activities that once occupied your life.

Are you participating in fewer activities now than you did before you starting using?  Yes  I Don't Think So

## Negative Consequences

You continue to use your "drug of choice" even in the face of some very negative consequences.



Have you experienced negative consequences as a result of using?  Definitely  I am experiencing those consequences now  No



## Attempts to Stop

You want to stop. You try to stop. You attempt to cut down on your use of your drug of choice, but you cannot.

Have you ever tried to stop or cut back on your use?  Many Times  No



What do your responses to the Seven Signs of Chemical Dependency tell you about your dependence on alcohol and | or drugs? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



Process with your group your personal story. Select one (1) or two (2) of the Seven Signs of Chemical Dependency listed above and give an example of how that sign has impacted your life.

Portions of the above material have been excerpted from *Chemical Dependency, The Change Companies, 2002*

# The Tree of Chemical Dependency

## THE FRUIT | PHYSICAL, BEHAVIORAL AND RELATIONAL PROBLEMS

The fruit – normal and expected results - of chemical dependency is cirrhosis of the liver, heart disease, cancer, lung disease, and malnutrition. Behavior deteriorates into lying, failure to maintain commitments, irresponsible spending, and isolation.

## THE TRUNK | CHEMICAL DEPENDENCY

Chemical dependency is progressive: growing stronger and more powerful over time.

## ROOTS | CORE ISSUES

Unresolved “core issues” such as shame, guilt, unforgiveness, rejection, and the effects of abuse. Core issues often drive the desire to “self-medicate” and thereby relieve the pain.



Process with your group the following:

- In the early stages of recovery, many alcohol and drug users will attempt to correct the offensive behavior in an effort to become better husbands|wives, employees, or friends. In effect, they attempt to “trim the negative fruit” off of their lives. How successful is “trimming?”
- Have you attempted to correct offensive behavior?
  - How successful have you been in that effort?
  - What problems have you identified in achieving lasting success in that effort?



Look at the “Tree of Chemical Dependency” again. Identify the following:

- Do you have unresolved “core issues?” What are those issues? \_\_\_\_\_
- If you desired to remove this tree permanently, what piece of this tree would be absolutely essential for you to address? Why? \_\_\_\_\_

# Brain Chemistry

Scientists now know that addiction is the result of key changes in the brain.

## DOPAMINE: THE PLEASURE PATHWAY

All drugs of abuse affect the dopamine pathway in the brain.

Dopamine is a kind of neurotransmitter - a chemical produced by nerve cells that process and transmit information in the brain. The dopamine neurotransmitter's job is to produce feelings of pleasure so this pathway is commonly known as the "pleasure pathway."

"What happens when people develop a substance use disorder is that they tax the ability of their dopamine system to keep up," says Dr. Kathleen Brady, an addiction researcher at the Medical University of South Carolina. "The amount of dopamine we have in our brain is limited by the substances that the brain uses to make dopamine. And if we release it too often, we get into a situation where the brain has less dopamine. What that means is that an individual who has depleted their dopamine source in their brain has a difficult time feeling pleasure from even the normal events that would make someone happy - a mother seeing her child, or having a good meal."

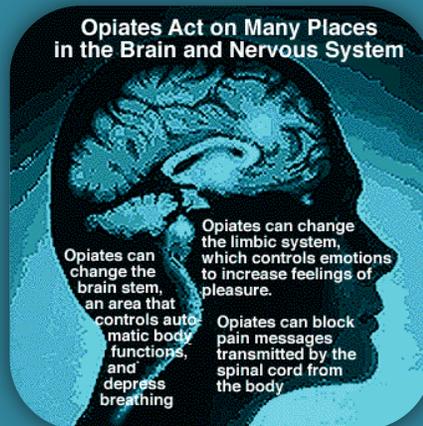
## CHANGES IN THE BRAIN'S STRESS SYSTEM

Alcohol and drugs can profoundly affect different neurological circuits. Prolonged excessive alcohol use, for example, is believed to cause pervasive alterations in the brain's stress and anti-stress systems. These changes, in and of themselves, may lead to additional compulsive drinking.

*National Institute on Alcohol and Alcoholism | National Institute on Drug Abuse  
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation*



SPECT BRAIN SCANS



He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.  
Psalm 147.3 (NIV)

## CHANGES IN THE BRAIN CENTERS FOR PLEASURE, MOTIVATION, EMOTION AND MEMORY

Drugs of abuse affect the parts of the brain that control pleasure, motivation, emotion, and memory. These changes can lead to drug addiction.

## CHANGES IN THE BRAIN STRUCTURE

Using drugs repeatedly over time changes brain structure and function in fundamental and long-lasting ways that can persist long after a person stops using them.

Different types of drugs affect the brain in different ways, altering different aspects of the brain chemistry. However, with prolonged abstinence, some of the brain changes caused by specific drugs (e.g., methamphetamine) may be reversible, which is one reason why treatment is essential.



SPECT BRAIN SCAN  
METHAMPHETAMINE USER

National Institute on Alcohol and Alcoholism | National Institute on Drug Abuse  
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation



- Is this information on the effect of alcohol and drug abuse on the brain new to you? \_\_ Yes \_\_ No
- How has this information affected your attitude toward your use of alcohol and drugs? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

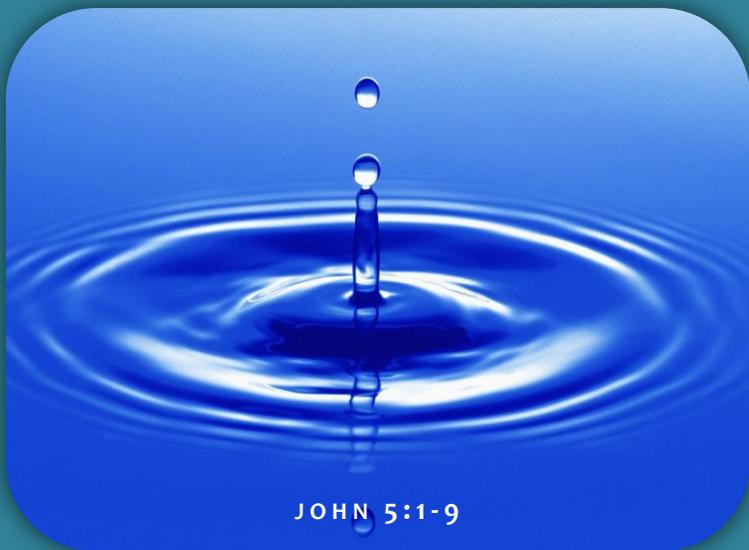


Process the following with your group:

- Have you noticed changes in your mood, your memory, or your motivation since you started using alcohol or drugs? What changes?
- Do you believe there are decisions you need to make tonight as a result of this information? What decisions?

O LORD my God, I called to you for help and you healed me.  
Psalm 30 . 2 (NIV)

# A Pool, a Man, and a Question



JOHN 5:1-9

Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for a feast of the Jews. <sup>2</sup> Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. <sup>3</sup> Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed.

<sup>5</sup> One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. <sup>6</sup> When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, **“Do you want to get well?”**

<sup>7</sup> “Sir,” the invalid replied, “I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.”

<sup>8</sup> Then Jesus said to him, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.” <sup>9</sup> At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.

*Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits  
who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases  
Psalm 103: 2-3 (NIV)*

POWERLESSNESS

A DECISION POINT

JESUS

THE WORD OF THE LORD

FAITH

POWER

FREEDOM



Process with your group:

- Verse 3

In what way(s) do you think “the pool culture” is like the Recovery Movement today?

- Verses 5 and 6  
Why did Jesus ask the man a question that seemed to have an obvious answer?
- Verse 7  
Seems as though the man was a genuine victim: was he a victim?
- Verses 8 and 9  
What two actions do you notice in these two verses? How important are these two actions to our healing and recovery? Why?

# the Truth and the Issue

Then, you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free  
John 8:32

## THE TRUTH



Stop and think about the truth you discovered as you processed through this material. Record what you believe is the truth about:

- Your Chemical Dependency

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- Jesus' Word and Your Faith

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## THE ISSUE



Stop and think about the issues that are keeping you from walking free of the control your "drug of choice" has over you. Write down as many issues as you can identify:

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### TAKE THE FIRST STEP RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW

1. Make the Decision Now to Stop Drinking and Drugging
2. Commit Your Life to Jesus Christ

<sup>8</sup> But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: <sup>9</sup> That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup> For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. <sup>11</sup> As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." | Romans 10:8-11 (NIV)



A large white rectangular area with horizontal ruling lines, intended for writing or taking notes.

