

## **Chapter 32-Addictions: Alcohol, Drugs, and Food**

This chapter is based upon knowledge that I gained while working with individuals who have experienced addictions to alcohol, drugs, or food. It will explain how these addictions can affect not only the individual person, but also the interpersonal relationships that he or she has with others as well. For more information on these topics, please see “My Recovery Journal” by Serenity Support Services, Inc. (1991), any of the mental health literature offered by Parley International (1991), or information provided through “THE BIG BOOK ONLINE FOURTH EDITION” (2006), or the website at “www.aa.org.”

While this book does not focus on traditional forms of control--or what are commonly referred to as Obsessive Compulsive Disorders (OCD)--I thought that I would take one chapter to define these forms and discuss their affects. According to Arthur S. Reber (Professor of Psychology at Brooklyn College) in the Penguin Dictionary of Psychology-Third Edition (2001), OCD is defined as “A subclass of anxiety disorders with two essential characteristics: recurrent and persistent thoughts, ideas and feelings; and repetitive, ritualized behaviors.” My goal here is to present the concept without sounding technical or preachy; there are plenty of technical journals for that. What is unique about this book is that it discusses the way people try to control others (versus a substance), how this can affect their lives, and how they may be allowing themselves to be controlled by another human being or things around them.

When OCD is discussed in a traditional sense, it almost exclusively involves substances such as alcohol, drugs, cigarettes, or food. The individual is usually referred to as an alcoholic, a drug addict, a chain smoker or a compulsive over-eater. Not all

substance abusers will try to control a partner in addition to his or her feelings. Some individuals may only be concerned with the latter. They may withdraw from other people. My goal is to explain how and why it happens--not to place blame upon anyone who is experiencing any form of addiction.

Those engaging in substance abuse to control their own feelings will often lead to controlling others. This chapter is sort of a “heads-up” warning for any person who may unsuspectingly get caught in the “control-trap” by an individual who appears to require help. Often, people with alcohol or drug addictions are viewed by unsuspecting and caring family or friends as victims. Those who try to help may in some cases wind up being controlled or abused by that person as well. This is not to suggest that these people are naive. There is almost always a certain amount of risk involved whenever a person attempts to help another person. While there is nothing wrong with reaching out, it’s important to avoid being used, controlled, or abused yourself. This chapter is intended to help individuals in that regard.

Let’s take a moment to discuss how OCDs create a powerful need for control and how this can prevent positive personal relationships with other human beings.

According to Reber (2001), an obsession is defined as “any idea that haunts, hovers, and constantly invades one’s consciousness.” From my experience, an “obsession” is a thought or set of thoughts, anything you say to yourself, self-talk. That thought, if not recognized, can multiply very quickly. Self-talk is what you say to yourself during the times that you are awake, at work, in your car, at play, or just about anywhere. Self-talk has a very powerful effect on the way you think, feel, and ultimately act. Whether positive or negative, self-talk affects how you function from minute to

minute, the decisions you make, and whether the decisions affect you personally or others around you. Many individuals who experience substance abuse either have a lot of anxiety or may feel that while on a substance they are invincible. Anger and depression are also common feelings. The thing to remember about anger is that in most cases, it is a secondary emotion. Usually the individual is experiencing some form of frustration, hurt, or disappointment first.

Self-talk may be positive, such as “I am intelligent,” or “I am good looking,” or “I know that I’m doing what is right for me.” Or it can be extremely negative, such as “I am unattractive,” “I am stupid,” or “People really don’t like me.” Despite substance abuse destroying the lives of great talents like John Belushi and Chris Farley, “Saturday Night Live” once did a skit on self-talk and even though the skit was reportedly funny, afterwards it became difficult for people to take the concept seriously. In reality, self-talk can and does have an extremely powerful effect in terms of how a person feels and ultimately behaves.

People who experience substance abuse often say very negative things to themselves on a regular basis. They may also try to control other people in order to get the substance. If they can afford a substance anytime they want it, they often just withdraw or leave other people alone. A point to remember: just because a person is experiencing some form of substance abuse does not give him or her the right to control others in an unhealthy, unnatural, or abusive way. At times substance abusers are extremely opinionated and degrading towards their partners, particularly what they think a woman is, what she should be, and how they think she should act. This chapter is written to help women and men avoid this sort of unnatural, abusive, disrespectful, and

controlling treatment.