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Struggling With Addictions

By Annagail Lynes

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by: **Annagail Lynes**

What kind of bad habits do you struggle with? Most people think that when they come to Christ that their bad habits will magically disappear. And some church people act like if you have any bad habits in your life that you must not truly be saved, but that couldn't be further from the truth. Christians or not, we are all people, and people make mistakes. People have bad habits.

If you are anything like me, you have poured your heart out in counseling sessions with your church leaders, stood in prayer lines, repented and vowed to do better. And still found yourself giving into that temptation the next time it presented itself, leaving you asking, "What's wrong with me?"

Nothing. There is nothing wrong with you. The very fact that you are concerned about it is a good sign. It's the people who won't admit they have a problem that should worry.

Everyone, at one time or another, struggles with some type of bad habit or addiction. Maybe it's shopping too much, smoking, drinking alcohol, pornography, coffee, sweets, etc. People don't want others to know about their problems, so they hide them in the closet, hoping that no one will ever find out about their secret. When a problem is hidden in the dark, it will continue to haunt you. But once it is brought into the light, that is when you will be able to overcome it.

A bad habit or addiction is anything that robs you of your time with God, that you feel that you must hide, that hurts your health or the health of others or is against the Word of God.

It is important that we guard what we are feeding the gates of our heart-our eyes, ears and mouth. Looking at pornographic magazines or watching R-rated movies causes those images to enter our eye gates, and once there, our minds store those images for safe keeping. Then at the most awkward moments, it will replay those images. Maybe in your dreams, when you are praising God at church or when you are kissing your girlfriend.

Struggling With Addictions

Perhaps you don't watch anything objectionable. Instead your vice of choice is heavy-metal or rap music that talk about killing cops and degrading women. At first, you may just think the music has a nice beat, but after awhile, even though, you are not consciously listening to the lyrics, those words-the ones about murder, drugs and sex-will seep into your subconscious. You will find yourself getting into trouble because you have a shorter fuse than you used to. You will blur the line between right and wrong. You won't remember why having sex without a marriage license is sinful, why stealing and lying are immoral. All because you didn't guard what you let through your eye and ear gates.

How do you overcome the bad habits and addictions in your life?

1. Repent. I John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." If we didn't struggle with problems in life, there would be no reason to repent. However, we do, so we must ask God to forgive us for our wrongdoings. He is a gracious God who promises to forgive us when we repent. The mistake most of us make is in hiding

our sin from God. Somehow we think that we can hide it from the One who sees all and knows all. Run to God when you slip in your recovery. Run to Him when you sin because He is on your side. He is not sitting up in Heaven, waiting to pounce on you anytime you make a mistake. That is not who He is. God is love not hate.

2. Ask God For Help. In II Corinthians 12:9, God tell us "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." God's strength is made perfect in our weakness. Think about that for a moment. In our times of weakness, we can count on God to be strong for us. If we team up with God, we can conquer anything. Romans 8:37 promises that "we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

Philippians 4:13 states that "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Never be afraid to ask God for help because without Him, beating a bad habit is like digging yourself out of the bottom of the Grand Canyon. It's an uphill battle.

3. Make A Decision. I will-when said together, those two words can be the strongest words in the English language. Why? Because they denote choice. Even in the Garden of Eden, we find humans making their own choices. Eve could have chose not to talk to the serpent. She could have decided not to eat the fruit. Adam could have refused the fruit when Eve offered it to him.

Every day we make choices. Will I have the soup or the salad? Will I cheat at golf? Will I give back the extra change the cashier gave me? Every day we make up our minds to do the right thing or to do the wrong thing. But when faced with a choice, humans usually choose the wrong thing because it is easier to give into temptations than to say "no."

So, we must train ourselves to choose the right option. Whenever you have to choose between right and wrong, take a moment and determine which is the wrong option and which is the right. If you don't know, ask yourself what would happen if you picked a certain option. If it would result in someone being hurt or in something that is contrary to God's Word, it is the wrong choice.

4. Find Someone To Talk To. James 5:16 advises us to "Confess your faults one to another that ye may be healed..." As I said before, when we leave things in the dark, they continue to have a hold over us. In order to stop this cycle, we must find someone to confess our habits and addictions to. Once it is out in the open, then you will begin to heal in that area of your life. Make sure to find someone you can trust to talk to. You don't want your sins to be broadcast all over your church, your neighborhood or your school. Instead go to your minister, youth pastor, parents, school counselor or a close friend.

Expose your bad habits and addictions to God's light, and you will be amazed at how quickly they will crumble under the heat.

Annagail Lynes is editor of VisionHope Magazine. She specializes in writing articles for young adults about dating, school, parents, peer pressure and other youth-related issues. Get your Free Sample Issue of VisionHope, plus free articles and free pen pal ads at

Recovery From Addictions, Part 2

By Margaret Paul, Ph.D.

(This is Part 2 of a 5-part series on addiction).

In Part 1 of this series of articles, I defined substance and process addictions, and described the four major false beliefs that underlie most addictions:

1. I can't handle my pain. 2. I am unworthy and unlovable. 3. Others are my source of love. 4. I can have control over how others feel about me and treat me.

This article addresses the first of these beliefs, and goes into the process of learning to manage your pain. Learning to manage pain is essential if you are going to move out of addictive behavior, since the intent of most addictive behavior is to avoid pain, coming from the belief that you cannot handle your pain.

Small children have few skills in managing pain. Parents are supposed to be there to help them with painful situations. Loving parents help children with pain by lovingly holding them, acknowledging their pain, hearing their pain, and soothing them in various ways, such "kissing it and making it better" when there is a cut or scrape, and being in compassion for difficult situations. Compassion toward a hurting child helps the child move through the pain and move on.

However, many adults had parents who, not only did not help them with their pain, but were the cause of the pain. When parents abandon children with physical, emotional, and sexual abuse or neglect, children are on their own regarding handling their pain. They are not receiving help and they have no role model for managing pain. When this is the case, addictions become the way to manage pain. Children learn early to eat, drink or take drugs to manage their pain. They learn early to numb out or act out with destructive or self-destructive behavior to avoid their pain. They may even learn to block out emotional pain by inflicting physical pain on themselves, such as cutting themselves.

Struggling With Addictions

In order to move beyond destructive and self-destructive behavior, you need to be in a process of developing a loving inner parent – a loving adult self – capable of giving your hurting inner child what he or she never received as you were growing up. The loving Adult is who we are when we are connected with a powerful spiritual source of love, strength and wisdom.

Your inner child is your feeling self. When you are experiencing the unbearable pain of rejection, loneliness, aloneness and abandonment and the unbearable terror of helplessness, it means that you are that child, with no inner adult to help you handle these terrible feelings. As an alone and terrified child, you will reach for whatever addiction has worked to sooth or block out the pain.

The reason the 12-Step programs have worked so well is because they help people to open to a spiritual source of strength. Without this source of strength, there is no way to manage the pain without the addictions.

We teach a Six-Step process, called Inner Bonding, which works very well along with the 12-Steps to help people in recovery from addictions. (See

for a free course). The key to

recovery is to create a loving and powerful inner adult self, capable of connecting with a spiritual

Source of love and compassion. The loving adult learns to bring to your hurting child all the love and compassion you didn't receive as a child.

Love and compassion are not feelings that are generated from within the body. These feelings are the essence of what God/Higher Power is. God is love, compassion, peace, truth and joy. When you open to learning about what is loving to yourself, with a personal source of spiritual Guidance, you will begin to be able to bring through the love and compassion that you need.

Love and compassion is what you need when you are hurting. Substance and process addictions do not fill the place within that needs love and compassion. Addictions merely block out the pain of the inner abandonment you feel when you are not giving yourself the love and compassion you need. The needed love and compassion is not going to come from another person. No matter how much you wish that someone could give to you what you didn't get as a child, it is not going to happen. You need to learn how to give it to yourself. When you do, you will be well on your way to recovery from your addictions.

Learning how to heal core shame and give yourself the love and compassion you need to recover from your addictions is the focus of the remaining articles in this series.

Margaret Paul, Ph.D., best-selling author of eight books, including "Do I Have To Give Up Me To Be Loved By You" and co-creator of the powerful Inner Bonding healing process. Learn Inner Bonding now! Visit her web site for a FREE Inner Bonding course:

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