

Stop Punishing Yourself With Drugs and Alcohol, and Enjoy Life

I have never met anyone who was using drugs or drinking excessively who was truly enjoying life. Not only do these people make their own lives miserable, but they hurt those who love them. For example:

A young woman told me that as a child she was “miserable.” She explained how a counselor helped her when she was 11 years old. The counselor met with her for an hour and then called her mother into the office and said, “I know why your daughter is so miserable. Your daughter is miserable because she is living with an alcoholic.”

The mother became angry with the doctor and said she would never go to her office again. The daughter protested and the mother finally allowed her daughter to go back to the counselor, but the mother would never participate in counseling.

The woman told me that her mother, who still suffers from alcoholism, is now a grandmother but rarely sees her grandchildren. None of her children trust Grandma with their own children because of her drinking.

“Recreational” drugs can kill

Drugs and alcohol as a form of recreation, or as a solution to inner pain, never work. An example:

Several years ago I met a young couple that had one of the best restaurants in town. The husband was a wonderful chef. The wife was a superb hostess. The restaurant became popular and people had to call weeks in advance to reserve a table.

The restaurant is now gone, and so is their marriage. In the community that once adored them, they feel shame and embarrassment. That is what cocaine did to their lives. As these talented people became successful, they fooled themselves into thinking that drugs could be part of their recreation.

”Self-medicating” doesn’t work

Many people who use drugs and/or alcohol are very depressed. For some people, depression is at the core of their problem with drugs and/or alcohol. They “self-medicate”—using alcohol and/or drugs to treat their depression.

Some people have it even worse. Not only do they suffer from depression, but they also have an anxiety disorder. To feel anxious is to have a dreadful fear that something awful is going to happen.

The temporary relief they experience from drugs and alcohol is just that—temporary,

followed by more depression, more anxiety and more life problems.

Start enjoying life

Millions of Americans suffer with drug- and alcohol-related problems. Fortunately, there are many effective programs and treatment centers that can help. Here are some suggestions to help you get started on the road to recovery:

1. Schedule an appointment with a psychiatrist. A psychiatrist specializes in diagnosing and medically treating mental illness such as depression and anxiety. You need to know if a mental illness is behind your abuse of alcohol or drugs. If the answer is yes, your psychiatrist can then prescribe medication to treat the illness, and help alleviate the craving you experience for alcohol or drugs.

2. Find a counselor. This can be a psychologist or a social worker. Counseling will help you work on the way you feel about yourself. After years of using drugs and/or alcohol, you probably have strong negative feelings about yourself. You may even hate yourself or have feelings of self-loathing. These kinds of painful feelings are so awful that people may drink and use drugs to block them out. You need to respect yourself again, and counseling can help you reach this goal.

3. Get high on life by being a good person and by finding a passion. You will feel excited about life as you treat others with kindness and love and as you enjoy a special interest that you can't wait to do. It may take you a while to find your passion, but you can start instantly to be a nicer, kinder, friendlier person and touch the lives of others.

4. Start working out. You might join a gym, buy a bike or start walking and stretching. Physical activity will help your body be healthy, and it will generate energy and better feelings about yourself and about life.

5. Read inspiring stories of people who have overcome adversity and created new lives for themselves. You will realize that you are not alone and that many people have made comebacks. By making your own "comeback," you will be proud of yourself and also win the admiration and respect of others.

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