

## Breaking the Addiction Cycle Takes Time

In active addiction, top priority is given to the drug. To break the addiction cycle this priority must be redirected to recovery. Recovery encompasses far more than abstinence from drugs. It is establishing a new relationship with one's higher power and oneself. Anything that fails to support sobriety, personal "well-being" and growth must be identified and surrendered. This takes place over a period of time, as each recovering person develops increasing personal awareness, skills and resources.

Drugs cannot create a positive, purposeful life; only recovery can do this. The work to let go of compulsions forces us to become more fully alive. It's a frightening process as each element we tried to deaden, rises up in our gut and nightmare memories flood our minds. The task of healing and recovering a life based in love and faith means fully facing the hate and fear within us. We need support to do this. We need the strength of every part of us that's healthy, we need others who are nurturing, challenging, insightful and who walk the path of integrity. We also need daily communion and commitment to our higher power.

Addicts live for drugs. We must discover what we are living for in recovery. What are our deepest dreams, what talents do we have, what kind of bonds do we wish to form with others and what kind of internal and external environments best serve our recovery? We have to stop relying solely on our minds for guidance. Our minds have a "committee" of unhealthy ideas and defenses that can lead us backward instead of forward. We must ask our hearts what is right for us and ask our souls for a vision to guide us here.

Generally, damaging ideas about self begin before drug use, and using serves as a temporary respite from harsh internal dialog. As addiction progresses, so does personal hate and shame. Sobriety stops the destructive acting out on one level and allows the addict to examine other areas where the same dynamic exists. All destructive thinking and behaviors must be rooted out and transformed. Otherwise, life is survival rather than fulfillment.

When we disrupt our habitual thinking and behavior long enough to pay attention to the parts inside us and in our life that perpetuate familiar pain, we can begin to change these parts. When we allow ourselves time to relax and enjoy that which is fulfilling to us in recovery, we will hear solutions for pain. When we pay attention to love and identify it inside ourselves, we infuse our lives with new energy. Energy that comes from habit, defensiveness, fear, or neediness, scatters us in all directions. Energy that comes from what we most love in our lives and ourselves is a magnet for fulfillment.

Whether we are in the midst of sorrow or solution, remaining open to our experience and using all of our tools of self-care enables us to grow spiritually and psychologically. We no longer damage others or ourselves; we let go of all destructive crutches; confront hatred and fear; sit quietly to discover who we truly are; listen to the dreams in our heart; and take healthy risks to reach new goals. This commitment to ourselves allows us to give more fully to others and they to us. We belong to a life that nurtures the greatest gifts within all of us and there can be nothing more fulfilling.