

Introduction

1. JACS

www.jacstoronto.org

2. Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twerski, *Without a Job, Who am I?*, pg. 36

Sybil was admitted for heroin addiction. She was a registered nurse who had not worked for six years because of her addiction. The reason she came for help was that she had used up all her veins and had none left for injecting heroin. In the first interview, I noticed that she was wearing a locket. "Is that real gold?" I asked. When she answered in the affirmative, I asked, "How come you still have it and did not sell it to get heroin?"

"I'll never sell this," she said. "This was my mother's."

"Let me see it, please," I said. Sybil handed me the locket, and I took the scissors lying on the desk and made as though I was going to scratch the locket.

"What are you doing?" Sybil said.

I said, "Don't get upset. I'm just going to scratch it up a bit."

"But that's mine," Sybil said.

"I promise I'll give it back to you," I said.

"But I don't want it scratched up," Sybil said. "It is beautiful and very valuable to me."

I said, "So, if something is beautiful and very valuable, you don't let it get damaged, right?" I took Sybil's arms, which were marked by the unsightly tracks and scars of abscesses. "Can you read what that says?" I asked. "It says, 'I am not beautiful. I am not valuable.'"

Tearfully, Sybil said, "I never thought I was any good."

Sybil recovered from her drug addiction and became very active in helping other nurses with drug problems. She discovered that she had a desire to help others. Now Sybil knew who she was.

Defining Addiction

3. *What is Addiction?* Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (www.camh.ca)

[E]xperiencing enjoyment or going through withdrawal do not in themselves mean a person has an addiction.

Because the term "addiction" is commonly used in such a vague way, there have been many attempts to define it more clearly. One simple way of describing addiction is the presence of the 4 Cs:

- Craving
- loss of control of amount or frequency of use
- compulsion to use
- use despite consequences.

4. *What is Addiction?* Psychology Today (www.psychologytoday.com)

The word *addiction* is used in several different ways. One definition describes physical addiction. This is a biological state in which the body adapts to the presence of a drug so that drug no longer has the same effect, otherwise known as a tolerance. Another form of physical addiction is the phenomenon of overreaction by the brain to drugs (or to cues associated with the drugs). An alcoholic walking into a bar, for instance, will feel an extra pull to have a drink because of these cues.

However, most addictive behavior is not related to either physical tolerance or exposure to cues. People commonly use drugs, gamble, or shop compulsively in reaction to being stressed, whether or not they have a physical addiction. Since these psychologically based addictions are not based on drug or brain effects, they can account for why people frequently switch addictive actions from one drug to a completely different kind of drug, or even to a non-drug behavior. The focus of the addiction isn't what matters; it's the need to take action under certain kinds of stress. Treating this kind of addiction requires an understanding of how it works psychologically.

The Torah on Addiction

5. Deuteronomy 21:18-21

When a man has a son who is stubborn and rebellious, he does not listen to the voice of his father and the voice of his mother, and they rebuke him but he does not listen to them. His father and mother shall take him and bring him out to the elders of his city and the gate of his place. And they shall say to the elders of his city: This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious, he does not listen to our voice, he is gluttonous and a drunkard. And the entire population of the town shall stone him with stones, and he shall die, and you shall eradicate evil from your midst, and all Israel shall hear and fear.

6. Talmud, Sanhedrin 71a

Because this person ate a *tartimar* of meat and drank half a *log* of Italian wine, his father and mother will take him out to stone him?! Rather, it never was and it never will be. Why is it recorded? Learn it and receive reward.

7. Talmud, Sanhedrin 70a

He is only liable when he purchases cheap meat and eats it, and purchases cheap wine and drinks it.

8. Talmud, Sanhedrin 71a

If he steals from his parents and eats in his parents' property, then even though the money is available, he is afraid. If he steals from others and eats in others' property, then even though he is not afraid, it is not available. And certainly if he steals from others and eats in his parents' property, so that it is not available and he is afraid. [He is not liable] until he steals from his parents and eats in others' property, so that it is available and he is not afraid.

9. Talmud, Sanhedrin 72a

Because this person ate a *tartimar* of meat and drank half a *log* of Italian wine, the Torah says he should go to the court to be stoned?! Rather, the Torah realized the end of the stubborn and rebellious son's path. In the end, he will finish his parents' property and seek to feed his habit, and he won't find it. He will go out to a fork in the road and steal from people. The Torah said, "Let him die innocent, and not die guilty."

10. Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (20th century USA), Igrot Moshe Yoreh Deah 3:35

Further, he causes himself great desire, greater than the desire for food and similar desires for life necessities. Some such people cannot reduce and eliminate their desire. This is a serious prohibition, for [the Torah] states regarding the stubborn and rebellious child, regarding the exceptionally great desire he has for eating – even though it is for kosher food – and certainly to bring upon one's self an even greater desire, and for something which is not a necessity – this is prohibited...

11. Rabbi Ben Zion Mutzafi (21st century Israel), <http://www.doresh-tzion.co.il/QAShowAnswer.aspx?qaid=51351>

Question: What is the Torah's view of smoking soft drugs (hashish)?

Answer: Any addictive food, drink or substance is prohibited.

Judaism vs. Addiction

12. Talmud, Niddah 16b

[A malach] takes the [fertilized egg] and stands it before Gd and says, "Gd, what shall be with this drop? Powerful or weak, wise or foolish, wealthy or poor?" But he does not say "Wicked or righteous"...

13. Talmud, Shabbat 156a

One who is born under Mars will be a shedder of blood. Rav Ashi said: A blood-letter or thief, a butcher or *mohel*. Rabbah said: I was born under Mars! Abbaye said: The master also punishes and executes.

14. Rabbi Moses Maimonides (12th century Egypt), Mishneh Torah, Laws of Repentance 5:1-3

Each person is given permission to incline himself to a good path and be righteous, or to incline himself to a bad path and be wicked... And this is great principle, a pillar of Torah and mitzvot, as Deuteronomy 30:15 says, "See, I have placed before You today life" and Deuteronomy 11:26 says, "See, I place before you today," meaning permission is in your hand, and one can do as he chooses within the field of human endeavour, whether good or bad...

15. Rabbi Reuven Bulka, *An Analysis of the Viability of Frankl's Logotherapeutic System as a Secular Theory*, pp. 5-6
Freedom, to Frankl, demands no special proof. It belongs "to the immediate data of his experience." Freud once said: *Try and subject a number of very strongly differentiated human beings to the same amount of starvation. With the increase of the imperative need for food, all individual differences will be blotted out, and, in their place, we shall see the uniform expression of the one unsatisfied instinct.*

The concentration camps, in Frankl's view, proved Freud wrong. The camps proved that man cannot be reduced to a function of heredity and environment, for at the same time that some inmates degenerated into the innate camp bestiality, others exhibited the virtues of saintliness. A third variable, found only in the spiritual animal, man, is the decisive factor in human behaviour, choice or decision. "Man ultimately decides for himself."

16. Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twerski, Dr. Ursula Schwartz, Positive Parenting, pg. 307

A number of years ago, a campaign was started in the United States, "Just say no to drugs." Research psychologists questioned young people about their attitude towards this, and were surprised to find 13 and 14-year old youngsters responding, "Why? What else is there?" It should be obvious that all preventive efforts to curb the drug epidemic will be futile unless we can provide young people with a reasonable and understandable answer to the question, "Why? What else is there?"

What do we do?

17. Steps 1, 4 and 5

We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.

We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

We admitted to G-d, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

18. Rabbi Moses Maimonides (12th century Egypt), Mishneh Torah, Laws of Repentance 1:1

Regarding every biblical mitzvah, commandment as well as prohibition: When one violates any of them, whether intentionally or in error, and he performs teshuvah and returns from his sin, he is obligated to admit it before Gd. It is written, "When a man or woman performs... And they shall admit the sin they performed." This is verbal admission, and this verbal admission fulfills a commandment.

19. Steps 8 and 9

We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

20. Rabbi Moses Maimonides (12th century Egypt), Mishneh Torah, Laws of Repentance 2:9

Social transgressions, like wounding another, cursing him, stealing from him and the like, are never forgiven until he gives the other what he owes, and he appeases him.

21. Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook (20th century Israel), Orot haTeshuvah 10:6

For every sin against Gd, spiritual repentance immediately restores that joy of salvation of spiritual light. But for social sin, the soul cannot become whole until the sins are actively repaired.

22. Step 4

We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

23. Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twerski, *Addictive Thinking*, pg. 13

Alan, a recovering alcoholic, was oblivious to the effects of his drinking, in spite of what people said to him. Since he drank only beer, he was certain he did not have an alcohol problem. Eventually Alan became physically sick and could no longer deny that something was wrong. He concluded that by drinking half a case of beer daily, he was consuming too much fluid. So he switched to scotch and soda. When the physical symptoms got worse, he faulted the soda and switched to whiskey and water. As his symptoms got even worse, he eliminated the water.

24. Talmud, Sotah 3a

A person does not transgress unless a spirit of insanity enters him.

25. Steps 2, 3, 6 and 7

We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of G-d as we understood Him.

We were entirely ready to have G-d remove all these defects of character.

We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

26. Talmud, Berachot 33b

All is in the hands of Heaven, other than awe of Heaven.

27. Rabbi Zvi Hirsh Kaidanover, 18th century Vilna, Kav haYashar 5

This is good for every Jew, to earn merit and provide merit for others. Certainly, one must pray for the wicked of the generation to repent, as is seen (Berachot 10a) that Beruriah, wife of Rabbi Meir, said, "It is written, 'May sins end,' not 'May sinners end.'" Therefore, I will arrange for each man and woman to say this prayer in the blessing of, "Return us, our Father, to Your Torah, and bring us close, our King, to Your service."

He should say: May it be Your will, HaShem, our Gd and Gd of our ancestors, that You tunnel beneath Your throne of honour for the repentance of so-and-so and all who violate Your command. May their heart be reversed to perform Your will wholeheartedly, for Your right hand is extended to receive those who return. And return us with complete repentance before You. Blessed are You, Gd, who desires repentance.

28. Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook (20th century Israel), Orot haTeshuvah 7:5

Because one's thoughts are bound to holiness and to the desire for teshuvah, one should not fear at all. Certainly, HaShem will prepare all of the paths via which complete teshuvah – illuminating all of the dark spaces with the light of its life – is acquired.

There is hope

29. Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twerski, *Addictive Thinking*, pg. 117

Because recovery is a growth process, relapse is an interruption of that growth. But relapse does not mean going back to square one. Yet almost without exception, that is what the relapser is likely to think. After two years or twelve years of recovery, a person who relapses may feel back at rock bottom. This conclusion is mistaken, however, and can negatively affect recovery from a relapse. Many people who relapse think, "What's the use? I've tried and it doesn't work. I might as well give up the fight."

30. Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler (20th century England), Michtav meiEliyahu IV pg. 276

When they experiment to produce a flower with a new appearance, they sometimes plant great fields and the entire thing is ruined, but if even one flower succeeds then they rejoice in their success. When someone who does not understand this sees it, he looks at the great amount that goes to waste and wonders to himself, "What are they doing here? They lose so many plants and all of the expense of raising them in order to get only one plant, and they call this 'success'?" But one who understands knows that this flower stands out for its quality, and is worth all of the expenses of acquiring it, and even an expenditure of a thousandfold more to acquire it would still be a great success.