

The Joy of Relapse

How can relapse be a joy? Unfortunately for many it is exactly that. What is joy? It is a state of elation; happiness by definition. So then why would a relapse bring joy? Let's endeavor to dig deep into this mysterious fact. What we are addressing is people who are "members" of 12 Step Fellowships throwing away their recovery due to a relapse. Why on Earth would anyone who has achieved some recovery relapse? The most common answer has and will, unfortunately, continue to be, "I stopped going to meetings." Nonsense. Many of those people in actuality have never stopped going to meetings. They attended meetings drunk, under the influence of drugs, or just having relapsed prior to a meeting in which they are in attendance. So then how could they say they stopped going to meetings? Sounds ridiculous to me.

When someone who lives with an addiction decides to attend 12 Step meetings it is usually through a Rehabilitation Facility, Hospital, Legal System, friends or family, sometimes a spouse. Why are they attending? Most likely because they are under the false assumption that just attending meetings with others who formerly lived with the same addiction, they will get well themselves. Another silly notion really. Under that logic people who currently live with Cancer should hang out with people who are Cancer free to learn how to eliminate their Cancer. Similarly, obese people hanging with formerly obese people to lose weight. In all cases, people who desire to eliminate their ailment, or sickness, if it can be eliminated, they must change absolutely everything they think about how they live their lives; more importantly, they must change everything they believe about their illness.

It is important to note the use of the words ailment, sickness, and illness. We are talking about addictions which can be eliminated; not diseases which regardless of doing everything correctly can unfortunately still kill someone. Why are we addressing this? Simply because

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many erroneously believe addictions are a disease. That's right. ERRONEOUSLY. Diabetes is a disease. Multiple Sclerosis, ALS, Muscular Dystrophy are diseases. 12 Step programs will never cure them. Diabetes Type I can be medically managed, but never cured. The other 3 are the same with the latter 2 ending always in death. Almost all illnesses which have 12 Step Fellowships and Programs can be cured. CURED. That is why 12 Step programs are so effective. They cure addictions.

Back to the subject of relapse: joy. First, let's address the predecessor of relapse: recovery. In order to have a relapse there must be recovery. In this case we are talking about the elimination of engaging in the addiction, whether it be alcohol, drugs, other substances, or behaviors. In nearly all cases, people in early recovery are miserable. They are angry, sensitive, confused, and defiant. Once some recovery is experienced those feelings begin to abate, and life does not seem hopeless. They are welcomed, accepted, compliant, and hopeful. Everything is new. Life is being lived usually for the first time without the use of the addiction. A new perspective, a new group of friends, and a new attitude start to encompass their lives. People tell them they are doing great. They have more energy. They are joyful! How could they not be? They are no longer killing themselves on a daily basis. They are being celebrated for being alive. People applaud their little accomplishments of living as a responsible adult. In some cases, they are being given celebratory tokens or keychains every 30 days. At the very least they are given a coin or pin for the achievement of 90 days of recovery. Hurray! Keep coming back! We need you more then you need us! You are doing great!

Most of the time these people can be classified as 90-day wonders. They do the right thing with their lives for 90 days then some simple annoyance causes their old way of thinking to

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trigger their old way of behavior and poof! They relapse. Their day count starts all over again, they are given the opportunity to explain their relapse, they are given the “it’s ok”, and then the back patting begins again. Now, relapse is more common then permanent recovery by far unfortunately, but that doesn’t mean it’s ok, nor should it be celebrated, and given credence. Once again, the question becomes why did they relapse? It’s not like they don’t know the pain or consequences of relapse. In every case of relapse, the reason is they were not done. That’s right. Not done. There is a reservation that arose to cause the relapse. However, we are addressing the joy of relapse. If nothing is lost from the relapse, the relapse reinforces itself as the right decision. If the relapse does not cause lost friends, acquaintances, spouses, jobs, money, privileges, trust, status, or health, then it tells them “it’s ok”; your relapse was just fine, just start over. Ah joy! They got away with it.

Addicts are very sick people. Their minds are warped. They are not used to living life properly. There is usually tension, manipulation, lies, and negative attention. Unfortunately, the negative attention breeds positive attention. If someone is constantly sick and receiving the time and consideration of an entire room of people night after night why would they want to get well. That is boring. Calmness does not feel right. By definition calmness and serenity is not kinetic. Serenity, or peace of mind, doesn’t bring joy. Not for people who can’t assimilate peace of mind. They are only happy with chaos. They create it. It’s all about them. They can argue anything to show they were justified with their thoughts and behaviors; therefore, their beliefs never change and they continue to relapse to prove their existence. The most difficult part of that cycle is when someone who is well calls them to task in front of a room full of people and challenges their beliefs and their behaviors. They cry, and are immediately given support for

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their justified tears created by the ogre who is upsetting their apple cart, and actually trying to save their lives. Shame on that ogre. They were too honest and embarrassed them. Don't they know that facing the reality of addiction is hard and painful, and they need to be gentle with the relapser? Meanwhile the relapser is just going to use it as a justification for the next relapse. Unfortunately, there are way too many secondary conditions to addiction in 12 Step Fellowships. Massive cases of other mental illnesses are not addressed by members who have decades of recovery from the primary addiction of the Fellowship of the relapse.

Ultimately, someone with 20 to 40 years of true recovery, that is to say someone who is recovered, or cured, should never be discussing their life problems with someone with less than 10 years unless they are married to them. The only problems that should be discussed are the new in recovery problems. To often people with very little recovery think they can be disrespectful to old-timers, and dole out unsolicited and inexperienced advice. It is the equivalent of a rookie fire fighter telling an old veteran how to do it correctly. The joy of relapse is insane, and deadly. Sanity can be restored by God. The joy of living is what recovered people have. That joy does not include constant relapsing. It includes freedom from the bondage of self, and a gratitude of God granting them serenity and Grace. Grace can be achieved by changes beliefs. Changing beliefs require choices to endure temporary pain. Suffering is optional; pain is necessary. The joy of living requires temporary pain. That pain will pass; as will the joy of relapse. Do not encourage the joy of relapse. Be rigorously honest.