

Addressing Addiction in the Family

Pastoral insights from Kurt Bruner, The Center for Strong Families

Does someone you love seem to be self-destructing in addictive behavior? Are you watching a spouse, son, or daughter abandon everything that was once important to them because of drugs, alcohol, sex, or some other stimulant? An addiction or dependence is commonly defined as “a recurring compulsion to do the same thing over and over, despite harmful consequences to health, mental state, or social life.” Are you seeing that trade-off in someone you care about—a compulsive pursuit regardless of the effects it has, especially on your relationship?

If you aren't seeing clear signs of addiction, are you noticing a gulf growing between you and this family member as their thoughts, time, and energy are consumed by some dominating activity?

What can you do to help?

STEP ONE: Assess the willingness to change

Has your loved one admitted a problem and shown interest in getting help? If they've given you any sign of wanting to deal with their problem, take that opportunity to get the best of Christian counsel and direction from those most familiar with the specific addiction he or she is indulging.

If instead you're dealing with denial, you most likely will need to plan an intervention—which is an orchestrated attempt by family and friends to motivate someone to get help for their problem. An intervention is especially necessary to help stabilize the situation—to begin shielding your home from the emotional, physical, and spiritual vulnerability of an out-of-control problem.

STEP TWO: Treat body, mind, and spirit

Sex addictions counselor Rob Jackson tells families that the addictive behaviors they see are just the tip of the iceberg. Efforts to modify behavior might seem effective in the short-term, but can re-appear or show up in a different sort of compulsion if underlying issues are not addressed.

Deuteronomy 6:5 says, “Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind.” So those struggling with addiction need to treat problems of the body, mind, and spirit—to go beneath the surface and deal with the thoughts, emotions, and spiritual conflicts driving those behaviors.

James 1:14 describes how dependence progresses from desire to enticement to sin and, ultimately, to death. The most effective approach to recovery is to reverse that progression—to restore a right relationship with God (Romans 8:1-15), to have a clean heart (Psalm 51), to have a renewed mind (Romans 12:2), and then as a result, to bear good fruits in behavior (Romans 6:7).

STEP THREE: Find hope in perseverance

God is able to redeem anyone and restore them to a life characterized by self-control (Titus 2:11-14). There is hope in persevering as a family through the struggles of recovery. Romans 5:3-4 says, “We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.”

Your prayers ultimately come down to asking that God's best will win out for this family member, remembering Jesus' words: “The thief comes only to steal, kill, and destroy, but I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.”
John 10:10

GOING FURTHER - Resources

(Available from Bellevue Christian Bookstore or Library)

Recommended Books:

A Hunger for Healing (by J. Keith Miller) is helpful to those dealing with addictive behaviors in themselves or someone they love.

Addictions: A Banquet in the Grave (by Edward T Welch) offers real hope and the promise of victory in Jesus to those struggling with an addiction.

Recommended Websites: ***TroubledWith.com*** includes material for parents dealing with substance abuse by their teens and addictions within their marriage.

GOING FURTHER – Church Support

Bellevue's Biblical Counseling Ministry strives to provide a biblical approach to problem solving and relationship resolution during all counseling. The goal is that individuals, couples, and families might grow in their relationships with the Lord and learn to apply biblical principles in their everyday walk and in interaction with others. The ultimate goal is Christ-likeness. For more information, call (901) 347-5830.

Bellevue's Care Groups offer support and guidance to those facing this life crisis and the daily challenges it brings. Groups are offered each semester to address the issues that face individuals, couples, and families. There is no fee to attend. Some groups have optional curriculum materials available for purchase. Childcare is provided for groups that meet on Wednesday evenings. You do not have to be a Bellevue member to attend. For more information about Care Groups, call (901) 347-5830.

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