

Hooked On Recovery

January 13, 2006

Hot Chocolate High

I'm not sure how God works in your recovery, or in the recovery of someone you know, but I can tell you how God works in my recovery. God showed me through hot chocolate that my addictive tendencies have not disappeared. This latest bout really wasn't my fault. It was Pat's. She ordered a Dunkin' Donuts hot chocolate first.

I had recently given up caffeine for the fourteenth time. I usually go for several months without caffeine, but use my annual October fishing trip as an excuse to go back on it. I had worked through the typical withdrawal headaches and body pains. I was caffeine clean for several days at the time I found myself at a Dunkin' Donuts counter staring at the menu, quivering over the smell of fresh-brewed coffee. I didn't want to go back to the way it had been, downing about 88 ounces of black French Vanilla coffee every morning. I'd follow that with a Diet Coke at lunch. I also had a thing for Wild Cherry Diet Pepsi. But don't get me wrong, Diet Vanilla Coke was a close second. I'm not proud of this but, I've been known to do a Dew or two. Yet, after not sleeping for a period of about 4 straight months, I was sick and tired of being sick and tired. I hit rock bottom. I had to give up caffeine, again.

I stood quivering at the counter, trying to control my desire for a French Vanilla, and had decided to order ordering a decaf when Pat ordered a hot chocolate before me. That sounded awesome! Now I know, hot chocolate has caffeine in it, but not at the dosage level of what I had been using. I rationalized quickly and ordered one. The young lady behind the counter asked if would like it with whipped cream. Defenseless, I whimpered, "Yes". The first sip caught me off guard, it was heavenly! It was the best hot chocolate I have EVER had. I didn't just drink it, I experienced it. It thought it to be the creamiest, richest, elixir on the planet. I had never tasted hot chocolate like this before. It comforted me. It soothed me. I finished it and... I wanted another one. If one hot chocolate was this good, then 100 would be better. As most people in recovery would guess, I haven't had a hot chocolate as good as that first one. Trust me, I've had a few. Maybe a few dozen, in the last couple weeks. I've been chasing that original hot chocolate high since, never to achieve it. I even tried the Starbucks version and walked away dejected. It didn't even bother me that Matty Boy dumped it on the floor of the Buckland Hills mall. Because of this massive hot chocolate intake I've suffered physically. I'm using the last notch in all my belts. I find myself thinking of the HC at odd times. I craved one in the morning. I even left work one day to get one. I disguised my need by offering to get one for Yoly. Who can refuse the desire of a pregnant woman? At night I wondered how it all got so crazy? Who got me started on this hot chocolate run? Not me! It was all Pat's fault.

Just this past week, I may have hit my bottom. One never knows if you've truly hit bottom, all I need to do is pick up another hot chocolate and see where it leads me. The scene was not pretty. I was alone and headed on a long journey to New London for an evening meeting. I hadn't eaten dinner. I was hungry and instead of my usual fat and salt craving, I wanted something sweet. Dunkin' Donuts was calling. I turned in and hit the drive-through. I ordered a large hot chocolate with whipped cream. By now, the quantity I consumed had increased. My tolerance for the HC had increased. I needed more to achieve the same hot chocolate high. I checked my wallet to make sure I had enough funds. I did! I even had enough for a few Munchkins. Depleting my cash, I ordered a box of 25! Assorted! Pulling away from the window, shaking

with anticipation, I clipped the hot chocolate lid in place. I lifted the cup to my lips for that first sweet sip. Aaaaaaahhhh. Then the top of the Munchkin box popped open, and the first Munchkin met its death in my jaws. I killed all of them, but one, on the way to New London. That one escaped my grasp and fled to the floor mat. As I pulled in to my destination, the hot chocolate died too.

As I got out of the car, feeling larger than life, I noticed white Munchkin powder on my mustache. In fact, it was all over the seat next to me. My mind snapped back to the cocaine days and I resorted to old grooming techniques to rid myself of the tell tale evidence. Then it struck me, I hardly ever eat Munchkins. I realized that my hot chocolate use had led to the use of a harder substance – Munchkins. I had to do something quickly or this could escalate even more. What would be next? Pints of Ben and Jerry's ice cream? Ring Dings and Devil Dogs? Hard chocolate? I was scared. That very night I turned to people I trusted and confessed my Munchkin episode. I haven't had a Munchkin since. I've been trying now to give up hot chocolate as well. I must confess that I slipped. The other morning I had a double Swiss Miss right here in the office. I experienced another round of remorse, guilt and shame. However, with renewed resolve, I started anew a program of recovery. Today, I've been free from the HC for three days.

I can do this. I've proven to myself I can do it. I just need all of your help. One day at a time.

Hooked on Recovery is a biweekly message from CCAR Executive Director Phillip Valentine, person in recovery since 12/28/87, devoted husband, a father of five and just another surf fisherman. These thoughts, views and opinions reflect on his personal recovery and are not meant in any way to speak for the entire recovery community. He welcomes all your comments and suggestions on this column, email him at phillip@ccar.us. Visit the website at www.ccar.us to read the entire series.