

## **Hooked On Recovery**

June 10, 2005

*Cunning, baffling, powerful*

*Remember that we deal with alcohol, cunning, baffling, powerful! Without help it is too much for us. But there is One who has all power that One is God. May you find Him now!" --Alcoholics Anonymous, pg 58,-59.*

I can not forget where I came from. I can not forget what it was like to be in the pit of addiction, to be stuck in that mire. That's called keeping it green. By keeping it green I reconnect with the pain and reinforce the behavior that will keep me from going back there. I must remember how warped my thinking had become. For example, I remember that my personal mantra was "I'll quit tomorrow". I'd be on one of those long painful runs of using daily all day punctuated by nosebleeds and seizures. Finally, it would become too much to bear and tomorrow would come. I'd quit. I'd quit for one day. And by quitting for one day I convinced myself that I really didn't have a problem because you see, I quit for a day. Now that's some warped thinking. After I got into recovery and began to work in a treatment center, I had to show a video that was titled strangely enough, "I'll Quit Tomorrow". And here I was thinking that I was unique.

Addiction is cunning. It is insidious. It is patient. Another treatment video I liked was about the "sleeping tiger". I'm not sure if I have remembered it exactly, but my recollection is that the tiger, i.e. my addiction, goes to sleep when I stop feeding it. But while my recovery goes on, the tiger sleeps and it grows. So, if I pick up again, not only does my addiction pick up where it left off it will soon be even worse. I still have to tiptoe around that tiger.

To this day I can't figure out why I did some of the things I did. It's baffling. Twenty years ago, I was sitting pretty. I was working as the Head Professional at a public golf course, married, a homeowner and a child on the way. I threw it all away because of cocaine. Does that make sense? The Big Book, and I'm paraphrasing, talks about alcoholics having an incredible knack for knowing the exact wrong time to get drunk. In the movie "The Boost", James Woods has an opportunity to finally get back on track and ends up getting high and blowing it. We are masters of personal sabotage and that's baffling. I certainly can relate.

I have no better way of illustrating the power of the disease than through Jason's story. Jason is just 19 years old and grew up surrounded by recovery. His mom is particularly active in a 12-step program. Jason had some trouble at 16 but got back on his feet and had one and a half years of recovery. Being 19 and being in recovery is no bargain, there are not a lot of peers to hang around with. The latest episode started with Jason going to concerts and his nostrils catching the wafting aroma of burnt marijuana. Soon he was smoking it. Then he started with his drug of choice - oxycontin. Then after pawning all his electronic gismos, the price of the OC became beyond his reach. Street heroin is much cheaper. He ended up in Hartford buying dope. Seven weeks after first smoking pot, he lay on his bed distraught, friendless, lonely, dope sick and desperate. His loving parents got him into the Caron Foundation, one of the best treatment facilities in the world. And everyone lived happily ever after... not.

Jason left AMA (Against Medical Advice) just 9 days into his stay. His counselors skillfully held a mirror to him, his peers in the facility shared with him, his mother pleaded with him, his father threatened him. He left anyway. And as he was on the road walking away from recovery,

counselors on their way home stopped and tried to get him to go back. But Jason said he couldn't go back. As he sat in the back seat of a car he shouldn't have been in, Jason realized, in a moment of clarity, that the decisions he had been making weren't too good. "Why did I leave? Why?"

Jason, addiction is cunning, baffling and powerful and it wins a good percentage of the time. That's why. You were safe in treatment and your addiction screamed "LEAVE!" while your recovery whispered "stay". When your body was hit with an all consuming craving your addiction agreed, "go ahead and use, you'll feel better" while recovery said "go to your counselor, talk to someone, pray". When you were confronted with your condition, addiction consoled, "you're not so bad" while recovery beckoned "there is a better way". You were in one of the best treatment facilities in the world and they couldn't hold you. Addiction beat you.

Jason's experience scares me. But for the grace of God there go I. I'm also pissed off that addiction won another battle. I wish there was a way I could just pound the addiction out of him. I wish there was a way he could have reinforced his defenses. But mostly, mostly I'm scared that addiction might win more than a battle, it might claim another life. Yet, there's more to it than just my visceral reaction.

What does Jason's experience say about our treatment system as a whole? What does the treatment system say to Jason's parents? What options do they have now? They did everything right, yet as soon as Jason left his odds of recovery went way, way down. I'm scared for them. Can you imagine bringing your kid to a hospital for any other serious health condition, then watching him or her walk out and being helpless to do anything about it?

Now, Jason still has options: some of them good, most of them not. I'm asking you to join Jason's parents, myself and others in prayer for him. Pray for divine intervention. Pray that Jason be released from the cunning, baffling and powerful grip of addiction. Pray that he listens to the quiet promise of recovery. Pray for recovery to win, to win one more soul. What other option do we have?

*Note: As of this writing Jason has 14 days clean and seems to be working a program of recovery. Keep praying.*

*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 one more in a long line of surf fishermen. 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](mailto:phillip@ccar.us). Visit the website at [www.ccar.us](http://www.ccar.us) to read the entire series.