

## CENTER FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING

### Addiction and Breaking Free

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**Definition:** Addiction is a **primary, chronic disease of brain** reward, motivation, memory and related circuitry. Dysfunction in these circuits leads to characteristic **biological, psychological, social, and spiritual manifestations**. This is reflected in an individual pathologically pursuing reward and/or relief by substance use and other behaviors.

**Definition of Temptation:** An enticement presented to lead one into sin against God; The enticement comes in various forms according to the lust of one's heart. " But each one is tempted(lured into a trap; to seek to be enticed into sin) when he is carried away( lured away by attraction ) and enticed (to be seduced) by his own(that which is distinctive to that person) lust (desire(s) that have become cravings that are unrestrained; coveting and craving something in the wrong way) " (James 1:13-14)

**"Lusts** of your heart are desires you believe you cannot do without being satisfied; You are willing to sin to obtain and sin when you do not obtain them; It could be a desire: (James 4:1-3)"

Addiction is characterized by inability to consistently abstain, impairment in behavioral control, cravings, diminished recognition of significant problems with one's behaviors and interpersonal relationships, and a dysfunctional emotional response.

Like other chronic diseases, addiction often involves cycles of relapse and remission. Without treatment or engagement in recovery activities, addiction is progressive and can result in disability or premature death. ([www.asam.org](http://www.asam.org))

Though addiction symptoms may vary depending upon the individual and the substance or behavior to which he or she has become addicted, the following are five general symptoms that may indicate a person has become addicted.

- **Tolerance** – The person needs increasingly greater amounts of the substance or behavior to feel the same rush or "high."
- **Withdrawal** – The person experiences physical or psychological pain when unable to use the substance or engage in the behavior.

- **Preoccupation** – Significant amount of time is spent planning, thinking about, or reflecting upon the substance abuse or behavior, along with a lack of interest in other activities that were previously the source of interest and pleasure.
- **Persistence** – continuing to engage in the substance abuse or behavior, even after having experienced significant negative consequences ( such as legal, relationship, work, financial)
- **Loss of Control** – An inability to stop or even limit the substance abuse or behavior

What this definition is stating is that addiction is a type of illness, but one that takes hold of a person in every of his life, not just physically. Due to this, noting the developmental aspects of the disease, it requires much more than simply stopping the substance. Because of the progressive nature of addiction, it affects every aspect of the person's life and so too, the process of recovery may very well go on throughout a lifetime. Typically there will be many attempts to control use, change substances or addictions, and failed attempts to recover ending in relapse, often with devastating consequences.

The scientific study of addiction and the treatment for it have progressed remarkably in the last century. It seems that every year more terminology and more treatment approaches are being used. Exciting new neurobiological discoveries and medical responses are constantly being developed to solve this problem. Like a mutating virus, various biological, psychosocial, and socio-cultural changes occur in humanity that continues to respond in turn.

The stages of addiction have been described in many ways. The simplest and easiest explanation is noted in these four stages:

1. **Early stage – living and abusing.** In this stage, the drinking and drug use may appear harmless to the individual. The ingestion of alcohol or drugs is perceived to occur without the experience of any serious, adverse consequence.
2. **Middle stage – living to abuse.** At some point the individual crosses the line from abuse into addiction. There is continued use of alcohol or any drugs in spite of problematic consequences.
3. **Late stage – abusing to live.** At this point in the progression of the addiction, the alcoholic/addict is using mind altering substances at all costs. They are using to feel normal. A very serious pathological relationship to a mind-altering substance has developed.
4. **Chronic stage** – Life threatening problems are evident. It can be fatal in many ways.

In much the same manner, many stages of addiction recovery have been proposed and in most clinical settings the 6 stages of change have been adopted. These include pre-contemplation,

contemplation, preparation, action, maintenance and relapse. But this four stage model, to me, more accurately describes this process in simpler, more definable terms.

1. **Awareness** – sometimes referred to as hitting bottom, but in truth many addicts are “enabled to death” and never will seem to hit bottom. The important thing that identifies this stage is that the person becomes aware that they have a problem.
2. **Ambivalence** – this term means that a person is aware of the problem, but uncertain and perhaps insufficiently motivated to do something about the problem. There may be many attempts and failures in this stage even as the consequences continue to progress.
3. **Commitment** – at this point the individual is aware that they need to place their sobriety and recovery above all else. They take the steps necessary to promote positive change in their life.
4. **Integration** – the person has adopted a way of living or lifestyle that directs their thinking and behavior. Always maintaining an awareness of the need to continue to practice honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness in continue to grow in self-actualization.

The addiction and the process of recovery are not defined in time frames that could be applied to everyone. There are people who die in the early stage of addiction and there are people who live the majority of their life in the integration stage of recovery. My observation is that the majority of people get stuck in the middle. They either die or are disabled in many different ways related to substance use, or get imprisoned (many times or for many years) as consequences of living and abusing drugs and alcohol (middle stage). Conversely, I see many who suffer the same fate in not progressing past the Ambivalence stage of recovery and continue to suffer in the disease in the same way. The key here lies in the individual being willing to do whatever is necessary to commit themselves to the recovery side of the fence instead of continuing to fall back into the disease. My hope is that every man, woman, and family can find the promise of Hope in their lives, sustain it in acting in Faith, and experience life and love as they were created for.