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Season 01. Episode 03

Podcast Title: What's love got to do with it?

Welcome back to Busting Addiction and the myths that travel with it.

In this episode, I will discuss how the addicts'/alcoholics' loved ones – family and close friends – must change how they think about their loved one's addiction if they ever want to successfully arrest the disease, or at the very least, gain some peace of mind with a fresh perspective.

Even if you never get to the point of a real intervention – and there are other ways that the disease gets arrested –example: the addict gets sick and tired of being sick and tired and throws in the towel and accepts help, or the addict actually takes up the loving offer of a parent or spouse to go into treatment or to attend a recovery meeting - this episode will give you the insights you need to navigate your way through your current situation in a less scary, more rational, and emotionally steady way. And do something for yourself that may give you the peace you deserve.

The vast majority of interventions fail because the family hasn't been educated on how the addict really thinks, so the many different defenses, excuses, lies and denials may sound plausible to the family when the addict is just pulling off a con job – albeit unconsciously – to keep himself in business.

The symptoms of addiction are often disguised as life problems or circumstances that happen due to bad luck, or they are someone else's fault...you hear the "if only" story over and over. There are so many detours down the wrong paths, it's heartbreaking.

A family will try to convince their 27-year-old son to stop using heroin because they see it as deadly dangerous, but - get this – he moves out of town so that he can use all the drugs he wants without his family hassling him, or checking in on him. He just does not understand what they're so worried about, believe it or not.

The fact is that addicts and alcoholics who are in the sure grip of their disease have lost contact with their conscience and with their emotions – they do not know what is going on inside of them.

So it should be really obvious to you by now, in episode 3, that an addicted mind cannot come up with a solution to addiction – the solution must come from a source other than the addict – it must come from the family and/or from a professional who knows the game.

Now, we know that some families are led to believe that the problems that are actually caused by addiction, which takes on many disguises – should be treated first, before addiction is addressed. That there is a clinical reason why their daughter is out all night and sleeps all day – oh she's depressed or traumatized or has an anxiety disorder – or something.

And so they take her to a psychiatrist and he starts treating her for depression/anxiety disorder and prescribes Xanax, or an equivalent anti-anxiety medication which is highly addictive, if you are an addict to begin with, since it interacts with brain chemistry in the same way as do opiates.

Well, herein lies the rub on several counts:

One, the psychiatrist may not be a trained addictions clinician, so he or she doesn't ask the right questions to begin with, and could easily be fooled by the slick addict

patient into believing that there is something else causing the addict to do what she does. WHY?

Two, the addict will NEVER EVER disclose what is really going on – the full extent of her usage of drugs - because she is scared TO DEATH that she will be found out...she will deny deny deny to keep access to her drugs of choice. Remember, the addict is there because she's depressed, anxious and dysfunctional due to a mental disorder, and the family is looking for the "cause" of the addiction. Treat the cause, they think, and the addiction will be arrested. It's actually the other way around, and I'll explain in a moment.

Three, because of this thinking, her addiction will not be directly treated as addictive disease and/or alcoholism...which is the ONLY WAY that addiction CAN be treated successfully. Addiction as the primary disorder is hard for some people to swallow, but it's the only proven way to treat addiction.

Now, there are other disorders that run parallel with addictive disorder, and these patients are often termed as having a dual diagnosis, where say, bi-polar disorder interacts with drug addiction, but neither is the cause of the other.

Let me give you a simple example from my own experience.

At this point, about 26 years ago, after I was given the gift of desperation – although I surely didn't see it that way at the time – I'm sitting in group therapy, I have all these crazy symptoms, especially depression, anxiety, OCD and panic disorder, even though I haven't been drinking or doing drugs for several weeks, I asked my counselor, I plaintively beseeched my counselor: Margaret, what's *wrong* with me, and she said something that has stuck with me all these years: Bruno Junior, why don't you sober up first, and we'll figure out what's wrong with you!

Well, we figured out what was wrong with me: I was a full-blown addict alcoholic and I needed to A. stop taking ANY mind-altering substance as a start and B. keep doing the work that would ultimately free me of all those other crazy symptoms – deep depression, panic attacks, OCD, sex obsession, profound co-dependence, spending money I didn't have just to impress you, fueled by fear, desire and profound Denial of reality.

My treatment team, my psychiatrist/addictionologist (yes they exist) and my counselor concluded after about six months, after the symptoms of crazy subsided,

that virtually all compulsions, obsessions, paranoia, behavior were the *result* of my advanced alcoholism and drug addiction, and NOT the cause.

Treating the addiction as the primary disease was answer.

When I hit my bottom, I didn't really know what was going on inside of me, but I did buy that by addressing my disorder first, many if not all of those so-called problems would be resolved, and I would eventually grow to become an honest, authentic and kind person – the guy I really wanted to be all along.

But that took 18 months of counseling and a commitment to do the work which hasn't let up for over 26 years, and now the work is joy and the effort is effortless.

But let's get back to what you may be facing as your loved one races around avoiding the truth.

So, the lesson here is: if you suspect your loved one is using depression, say, or a broken heart, or anxiety or stress of life as the reason that they are doing drugs and/or getting drunk, and you know better, or you have recently come to understand that it may be a con job to avoid the real reason for these quote problems, get your lovely daughter to an addictions specialist and see what the professional has to say.

He may prescribe something non-addictive but whatever he prescribes would be done in the context of an addiction. We are making a HUGE assumption that A your loved is OK with going to an addictions specialist –remember that the professional is well versed in teasing out the truth (you could, on the other hand, just say you are taking her to a psychiatrist without revealing what kind) and B that your loved one addict will be reasonably honest with the professional...remind your loved one that everything said during the visit is 100% confidential.

The last thing you need is to have a doctor who isn't trained in addictions inadvertently fooled by her patient (who may not know what is really happening anyway) into prescribing an addictive drug which could only ever make things way more complicated. And worsen the slide.

I see this happen a lot. Addicts come into treatment addicted to their original drugs of choice AND become addicted to whatever their naïve doc prescribed for them. And now, the addict is milking that source for all it's worth!

You have to remember that addicts and alcoholics have physically damaged brains. The longer they stay active in their addiction, the more degraded their brains become. What's even scarier is that the longer an addict abuses drugs, or the longer the alcoholic drinks vast quantities of alcohol – the greater the odds that some of the brain damage becomes irreversible.

All of this is backed up by research done by the NIAA, the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, and by several universities, including UC San Diego and Brown University.

For these long-term addicts/alcoholics I just spoke of, recovery of 100% of their mental capacities is no longer possible.

And the long-term effects of addiction on young brains are even more profound than the effects on older brains.

The decision-making ability of an active addict's brain is so degraded, there is little sense of the consequences that come with bad, insane decisions. Compound that with the tendencies of a teenage brain which is heedless to consequences because it's impulsive and immature to begin with, and you're set up for a life-long struggle with reality.

It doesn't have to be that way. Not on your life, or more importantly, not on the life of the addict or alcoholic you love.

That's where we come in. We're here to help you make an informed decision on what you should be doing and should not be doing for your loved who struggles with addictive disorder. And how to change your thinking about addiction so that you no longer have to carry the burden of shame, or resentment, or fear or all of the above, and you begin to approach your loved one as a sick person who needs treatment, not punishment, yet you become wise enough to stop enabling your loved one so that they begin to experience consequences.

You begin to deploy the power of your love in new and healthier ways.

If you would like to learn more, just ask us any question on any topic related to your loved one's story, and we will do everything possible to help.

Email us at info@safehouserehab.com, or visit us at safehouserehab.com for the full story and a phone number you can call depending on what part of the world you're calling from.

At Safehouse Rehab Thailand, we offer clients a life-changing experience in the perfect environment for recovery. Intensive, inpatient treatment for the modern challenges of addiction. Away from those triggers, away from using friends and drinking buddies, away from a lifestyle that's stealing your and your loved one's health, money and sanity. A warm and welcoming sanctuary that is a safe place to start life anew.

Compare us to upscale treatment centers in the US and elsewhere which go from \$25,000 US to \$50,000 US a month, and you will be amazed.

Let's go back to the way an addict who is actively using thinks. Heedless to crazy risk. Self-centered in the extreme – by the way: that could be a topic for a whole episode.

Let me give you an example from my own life: I drove my turbocharged coupe in the middle of the night through upstate New York at 100 miles an hour plus, with my 11-year old daughter asleep in the back, in the middle of winter when there was black ice on the highway, while I was stoned and maybe drunk too. I know I was stoned.

Imagine what could have happened. I was heedless to the consequences, a menace to society, and how could I claim to love my daughter while I was endangering her life as I did? All that risk for a short term indulgence!

Active addicts make bad decisions even when they aren't high. Their brains are still degraded.

Do not expect your addict to think like a normal person.

Back when I was living with my lovely and sexy addict girlfriend, she would occasionally say something that would make a whole lot of sense. (I was sober by now.) I would think Oh she's coming around. Then I realized after she went back to her addled ways that what appeared to be a return to sanity was pure coincidence and it really meant nothing but false hope. And I really really loved this woman, but her addict brain had been changed, and would not even begin to recover unless

and until she put the drugs and beer down and started the long slow process of recovering the ability to think and act sanely. And to understand what love really is: not just a feeling, but selfless, honest action without the expectation of reward.

That story isn't over, and I do wish her the best, but I decided a long time ago I was through dancing with the devil, if you will.

What did we learn in this episode?

1. Addiction must be treated as the primary disorder, as the cause of mental and behavioral problems, and not as the result
2. Addicts/alcoholics, when they aren't ready to quit, are very slick and will do anything to protect their ability to use or drink, including lie to professionals.
3. If you decide to seeking professional help, find a professional who is trained in addictive disorder...someone who is an AODA (Alcohol or Drug Addiction) psychiatrist or counselor.
4. You'll no longer be puzzled by the irrational, unpredictable and irresponsible behavior of your addict when you realized that he or she is operating with a damaged brain which is simply incapable of making good decisions.
5. The family and loved one of an addict needs to change the way they think about addiction before they are ready to intervene in any way that has any chance of success.

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