



# SafeHouse

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Season 01. Episode 08

## Podcast Title: I'm all I think about

This episode deals with the extreme self-centeredness of the addict/alcoholic and all its manifestations, including irresponsible and violent behavior.

There is a funny little saying in recovery circles that sounds like this: I'm not much, but I'm all I think about.

Why this saying never fails to provoke a chuckle is because, in recovery, we are reminded that we experienced a crushing of our self-esteem when we were out there using, yet our thoughts invariably centered around what we and only we needed to survive – and most of the time it was about: where and how to get and stay high, or drunk, or both.

I think it's time I talk about the one MAJOR quality that every, yes, every active addict or alcoholic possess, and that is, without fail: extreme self-centeredness. Some would call it narcissism, and I don't because narcissism sounds like it's incurable, while there is major relief from self-centeredness in the process of recovery.

So don't be too surprised when your loved one addict does the most selfish things you can imagine, things that when she was quote normal, i e, not using, she would never do, or say. You have to remember that she is now operating with brain damage...and that is what the scientific community calls it – and that the compulsive nature of the disease is such that even with the very best of intentions, she will violate her values and do some astonishing, dishonest and selfish things.

This is because your loved one addict has lost the power of choice. Lost the power to choose not to use, or lie or steal or hurt you. It often feels like there is a sociopath in the house...lying through her teeth with a cute smile on her face. Or crying with dramatic self-pity that “no one understands me”...

I've seen it all, or at least I think I've seen it all. I was the house coordinator at a sober living house awhile back, and I did see all kinds of abnormal behavior, from a young woman drinking mouthwash for the alcohol, to another young woman who pretended to be clean, until we caught her running to her car in the garage to get handfuls of speed pills all throughout the day, and at night. We had a terrific Viet Nam veteran who moved back to Mexico, found a bride, then straying from his recovery program, relapsed with heroin and ended up shooting and killing his wife and himself. Motive unclear. Reason for incident: relapse back into completely self-centered thinking and behavior.

I have more stories like the one you just heard that I could share, but I think I've made my point: selfishness, self-centeredness, sociopathic behavior can take all forms, including but certainly not limited to extreme violence.

The tragedy of the episode I just recounted is that the man took his innocent wife with him when he departed this earth.

As I've stated before: this disorder claims your sanity, your money and occasionally life itself.

You CAN and should do something, before it's too late, before the addiction inflicts even more brain damage on its victims. YES...I used the victim word because even though it may start as a recreational game, for addicts and alcoholics it becomes an involuntary compulsion after not too long.

They can't stop and stay stopped on their own, even when they want to.

It doesn't have to be that way. Not at all. Not on your life.

That's where we come in. Just contact us at [info@safehouserehab.com](mailto:info@safehouserehab.com), and we will answer any, we mean any, question you could ever have about you can indeed help your loved one whether he or she is an addict, an alcoholic or you're just not sure. If you choose to leave your phone number, we will call you when it's convenient for you. Or just go to our new web site [safehouserehab.com](http://safehouserehab.com) and call the LOCAL number associated with your country. Local call. Easy.

Bottom line, we want you to be able to make an informed decision at this important and stressful time in your life. If you chose to speak with us further, please know that, bottom line:

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Let's talk about the sociopathic person the addict becomes as their disease progresses...and it *always* progresses, pulling the addict inexorably down, further down.

Addicts lose their sense of empathy, because, since they are so focused on getting high – getting their next hit – they lose sight, in their compulsion, of the feelings of other people who are more than likely suffering some of the consequences unleashed by the addict's selfish behavior.

The addict wants his next high, come what may. It may be early in his addictive career, so he may not look to get high every day, but he will for sure be high come the weekend or any holiday. He may have even been assessed and called a "high-functioning addict"...which is what the shrink called me year or so before my life went to absolute hell due to all the chemicals I put into my system.

What is the addict chasing? I have heard this one many times, and I can relate to this sentiment which says: I will never get the same great high as I got the FIRST TIME I tried...you name it: in my case it was marijuana and hashish.

The addict is chasing that great, incomparable almost innocent high he got when he first took that magical hit.

What is the addict doing? By now he is stuffing his feelings...applying a strong anesthetic to feelings he does not want to experience, like fear, anger, sadness, hurt. It's about escaping both the external reality like a job loss, and it is also about escaping internal realities especially his feelings, and his thoughts, too.

His judgment is severely impaired because his brain is damaged; he has no clue about consequences. Pay attention to this one: His judgment is impaired, even when he isn't drinking or using drugs; it's irrational at best and, and yet the addict is at his most clever when explaining why he's changing jobs, needs a new apartment or broke up with his girlfriend.

Your loved one, the addict, the alcoholic, is unable (and unwilling) to take true responsibility for his actions and will blame something or someone else for his troubles. It is never, ever, his fault, for that is too much for his fragile ego to bear.

He is thin-skinned, can't handle well-intentioned criticism, and yet seems y arrogant. He also wants to control conversations, and only seems happy when and only when things go *exactly* his way.

He or she, the active addict, in the chokehold of the disorder, can be described as "an egomaniac with an inferiority complex"

I know what that feels like and what it looks like. I was that guy 26 plus years ago. I speak not only from the literature, from my recovery meetings and friends in recovery, but also from the personal experience of the self-imposed hell I was living in.

I said to my counselor back then: Margaret dear, recovery is really damn hard . She replied: how was your life in the last year of your addiction? Answer: it was a nightmare of depression, anxiety, OCD, and even a dose of dissociative personality disorder. Fired from my job, no money, boy , now THAT was crazy hard.

I ended up answering my own question: my recovery gave me a real shot at a good future. My continued using would (not may) end up destroying any chance of a decent future. I would have to continue lowering my sights, and here I was with an MBA from Loyola University...not Ivy League, but well-respected nonetheless.

My using and drinking for over 20 years brought me to the gates of insanity and death. It wasn't until I threw in the towel, surrendered to reality, surrendered my

old sick way of thinking, and embraced a new way of thinking and being with all my heart, that a genuine, long-term recovery could begin. I was given what some call “the gift of desperation”. Didn’t see it as a gift at the time, but I did start to understand it that way, in time.

Well, I do believe there is no hope for a better past, but we CAN look at our past selves with more compassion. Our horrible, self-centered actions are explained by our addiction, but they are not excused, either. We still have to own up to what we did to the people we do it to, to make direct amends but not to expect forgiveness. To live a grown up life, to hold ourselves accountable without condemning ourselves, either.

On that theme, addicts and alcoholics are notorious for their overspending due to complete and utter irresponsible attitudes toward money as a means to impress you...it’s called BIG SHOTISM, a practice of one and all if they are drinking and using. Using unsecured debt aka credit cards along with excessive borrowing ends with bankruptcy.

This behavior is also called “being a money drunk” which is the topic of the book called Money Drunk Money Sober by Mark Bryan and Julie Cameron. Check it out. It’s an easy and enjoyable, insightful read.

Then you have probably the most damaging and sneaky addiction: the addiction to gambling.

When an addict checks into a treatment center, he will be asked about many behaviors, about the substances he was using, whether he was working, owned a home. Was he solvent, married etc etc

The treatment specialists also focus on other addictions that may present a threat to the addict’s and his family’s well-being: GAMBLING.

Gambling has the potential to lose the family home just like that. Or it might be a penny-ante type of gambling that in time will get bigger and more exciting.

Gambling is fueled by greed, status-seeking and adrenaline. Gambling addiction is much more likely to be present among addicts and alcoholics, but there are people addicted just to gambling, or so they themselves admit. I simply shudder at the thought of playing for the value of the family home in one game of poker.

Then again, I was gambling with my life as an addict, right? So who is to judge, I ask you.

There is a 12-step program for almost any type of addiction or for people affected by addiction, including alcoholism.

There is the grandfather of them all: alcoholics anonymous, founded by Bill Wilson and Dr. Bob Smith in 1935, now with an estimated 2 million members worldwide.

This was followed by Al Anon, for the families of alcoholics, founded by Lois Wilson, Bill's wife, in 1951

Then the 12 step program began to mushroom and now there are about 32 different 12-step groups operating today.

- OA...overeaters anonymous
- GA, gamblers anonymous
- CA, cocaine anonymous
- NA narcotics anonymous
- CODA codependents anonymous

Here's how I personally feel about 12 step programs.

Nowhere do they claim to be the only answer, in fact, the founders encouraged people who didn't feel that a 12-step program was for them, at least "get help somewhere."

They encourage people who need help to seek professional help whether or not they are in a 12-step program.

They encourage people to go out there and give back to society and not isolate themselves from humanity or reality.

There are no dues or fees for being a member. All funds needed for rent (of a church basement or a meeting room) are collected by the voluntary contributions. Typical amount that a member will throw in the basket is still only \$1.00 or \$2.00 max.

There are closed meetings to protect the anonymity of members because the stigma is still there, and there are open, speaker meetings that allow any member of the public to see what is going on and to hear true to life stories.

If you suspect AA is a cult a, go ahead and attend a closed meeting and just say I think I have a drinking problem and you will be welcome.

AA is a registered, not for profit 501C3 corporation with its books open to the public and publishes reports on income and expenses, and a balance sheet annually. Check out aa.org if you would like to know more.

There is no permanent president; instead the General Service Board's 21 Trustees each representing an area of service to the fellowship and limited in term, elect a Chairperson from their ranks. There are currently 14 alcoholic and 7 non-alcoholic trustees, elected from the bottom up, and they are seen in this light: "our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern." So much for it being a cult.

So, what we learned in this episode #9 is:

1. Addicts are self-centered in the extreme, and will violate every value they once held dear. These violations include behavior that is violent and physically dangerous.
2. They are always chasing that ultimate high, like the one they had the first time, and this urge has them seeking out even more potent drugs in higher dosages.
3. Do not expect rational thinking from an active addict, even when he or she is not using or drinking. This is not surprising since they are misguided by a damaged brain.
4. Addicts are more likely than most to also be money drunks, using borrowed money to impress, buy drugs and fuel their lifestyle so long as the money lasts. No sense of accountability.
5. A gambling addiction is also more likely to live among addicts and it is one of the most dangerous, non-violent offenders because it could mean the loss of the family home overnight.
6. AA and the other 30 plus 12-step programs are altruistic, open, democratic fellowships and the last thing from a cult you could ever imagine.

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