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Season 02. Episode 08

## Tony Sounds Off.

We are closing in on an audience of a thousand regular listeners on our Busting Addiction and Its Myths podcast, so it is exceptionally gratifying to realize that our podcast seems to be helping people who have an addict or an alcoholic whom they love dearly, but whose behaviour is causing great distress. The cause of which is difficult to understand, but that comes a little easier when you get some insight into how an addict or alcoholic who is active in their addiction actually thinks. And what he or she is up against when it comes to getting and staying clean and sober.

I want to bring back my dear young genius friend Tony who'll give you a really great run down and insights on what to watch for if your loved does get to the point of accepting help and entering treatment or tries sincerely to make the U turn and get onto a healthy path of life.

I keep emphasizing that active addicts and alcoholics are operating with damaged brains. The scientific evidence for that is a slam dunk, overwhelming in the extreme.

So when we introduce the concept of recovery, we have to realize that a critical part of it is complete abstinence, along with good nutrition and fitness to allow the brain to re-wire neural pathways that may have been destroyed by the chemicals that do damage to the human brain.

So, this is a serious business, understanding what kind of damage the substances, including alcohol, do to the human brain.

A little sidebar here: 26 plus years ago when I got clean and sober – for good I hope – I'm sitting in group therapy with my counsellor Margaret, and I was whining to her and I asked, "Margaret, why am I so depressed all the time?" I'll never forget her answer. She said, in no uncertain terms: "Young man, you've been taking a depressant called alcohol every day for 25 years, and you sit there wondering why you're so depressed all the time".

So that was my entry into recovery, one day, one lesson at a time.

I firmly believe that families and loved ones of alcoholics/addicts need to know a lot more than they currently know about the process of recovery. There are many out there who have in their family an addict or alcoholic in recovery, or who've watched their loved one relapse, that is, go back out there, or you're just curious about what really goes on in recovery.

Because, as normal people, that is, as non-addicts, it's hard to understand what goes on and what to watch for, so Tony, as a young man with several solid years of clean and sober living under his belt, will explain things to our audience. By the way, I love his perspective as only he can express it.

So I ask Tony: "Maybe you can start with that incident you shared with me about that very moment when a counsellor put his arm around you and said: 'Maybe this option could be right for you'. The teacher appeared because the pupil was ready. Do I have that right"?

Tony responds: "That moment came during my third try at recovery. It was my second time at that particular treatment centre, and my mom had already spent 50,000 British Pounds (BP), and I wasn't getting anywhere. That was the same place where the police had dropped me off in handcuffs a few months earlier. I had a tendency to get violent. Really violent. The last time, I was already starting to get serious about not drinking and I held on for a few months before I started again. The time before that, if you had approached me and even hinted that I needed help, I would have said FU FU and FU. So, yes, I was ready to give a long-term treatment option here in Thailand a serious try. So far, so good. I'm 30 now and I've been clean and sober for four plus years.

So, let's say you've left treatment and now you are in the real world, so to speak, so let's talk the dangers of relapse.

The things a family should watch for as signs of a relapse on the way are subtle at first because they are just warning signs and then stage two is when a relapse has actually happened but the addict in your house is trying to not get found out.

It is very rare that an addict will just come out and admit it has happened because even though he does feel bad about it, he still thinks that he was the one who lost control when in fact he never had it. 'How could I be so stupid?', he asks, as if it's a matter of intelligence.

I try to explain to him that he is still in the grip of a powerful disease over which he has no control, that what he did is explained by having the disorder work its ways, but it doesn't ultimately take him off the hook, either.

Sometimes that straightens him out, and he will ask: 'I want what you have; how do I get that'?

I say to him that if he's standing at the turning point, then he needs to be ready to surrender his old ways of thinking and begin to believe in a bigger and better idea than the one which says that he is in charge. Because if he were, 'you wouldn't be here, would you?'

Then I hear the but but but, as if there's another option, which there is, of course. I say: 'Keep doing what you're doing, and you'll keep getting what you've been getting: heartache and loss. Shame and self-contempt. And it gets worse'.

Then he says to me (I just love this part): 'How did you know?' which always prompts a chuckle. He thinks I can read his mind. I don't disabuse him of the idea".

I then ask Tony: "What is the essential attitude that a recovering person needs to have to stay clean and sober"?

Tony's take: "If you are serious about your recovery, you cannot have any lurking notion that you could one day drink safely. You have to do this one day at a time, so you do not have to be sober forever, just not drink today. Why? Because it's always today. You have to try to live in the answer, not in the problem.

But that's just the start. Surrender your old ideas that you are the captain of your ship, because the damn thing ended up on the rocks. Accept new suggestions: I heartily recommend that if you don't go into treatment which is your best bet, you join AA, get a sponsor, learn how to meditate and to pray, yes.

You will be amazed. You will find victory in surrender and liberation from the obsession with alcohol, drugs and wanton sex when you practice the loving discipline of the 12

steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. It has worked like magic for me and I bet it will work for you, too”.

I thank Tony for sharing his experience, strength and hope with us.

What did we learn today?

1. It took Tony at least three tries before he threw in the towel and sincerely asked for help. He’s one of the lucky ones, as his mom was behind him all the way. Most alcoholics don’t sober up. A hard truth.
2. Relapse happens not because alcoholics are stupid. They happen because alcoholics don’t understand the power of this disorder.
3. To have any chance at recovering, alcoholics need to surrender their old way of thinking and begin to believe in a bigger and better idea than the one that says: “I’m in command here.”
4. Accept that if you don’t drink today, you will achieve permanent sobriety, because it’s always today.
5. Come join us on a journey where you will find freedom from drugs and alcohol in the loving principles of Alcoholics Anonymous.

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