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Season 05. Episode 08

Podcast Title: What Does Success Look Like?

Hi, this is Bruno J. and welcome to Episode 8 of season 5 of my podcast Busting Addiction and its Myths. This episode is dedicated to answering the question: "What does success look like, and how do you get there?"

This podcast is sponsored by SafeHouse Rehab Thailand, the premiere drug and alcohol rehab dedicated to enhancing the art and science of recovery.

First, a plug for my sponsor who has given me the opportunity to help the families and loved ones of alcoholics and addicts better understand the nature of the disease and what they can and shouldn't do about it. We say in our podcast and blog that our primary goal is to help you make an informed decision at this critical stage of your life.

SafeHouse Rehab Thailand represents the *modern approach to recovery*, founded on Safety, which is why we absolutely outperform traditional rehabs when it comes to intake/detox, technology and aftercare.

To learn more, please visit www.safehouserehab.com or email us at info@safehouserehab.com. We would love to hear from you about our podcast or anything else that might be on your mind.

If your loved one is an active or recovering addict or alcoholic, you are likely struggling with answers to your many questions as to how to help get your loved clean and sober.

You might have even heard or read that you are essentially powerless over the trajectory of his or her disease and that news can be disheartening. It is also essentially true, with the rare exception of a successful intervention, but even that success is qualified by how sincerely the addict follows through on his commitment to a lifetime of recovery.

So, in answer to an oft-asked question, "What is your rehab's success rate", we ask you to pause and ask exactly what is meant by "success rate". First, most rehabs will quote a completion-of-treatment rate as a sign of success. Nothing really wrong with that so long as it is fairly and accurately reported. Most will report in the 90 percentiles anyway.

The success rate question is a trick question, as if the rehab is responsible for everything the addict does *after he leaves treatment*. A better question is: "What is the rehab doing to give the discharged client the advice, the tools and the follow-up care that will enable the client to embark on building and implementing his own recovery"? For example, our aftercare program, which we call We Care, includes a full kit of customised tools, such advance contact with 12-step groups in the client's hometown, scheduled follow-up

sessions using Zoom, Skype or other platforms, and advice for parents, among others.

The point is this: the client must assume personal responsibility for his sobriety program, must hold himself accountable. One of the 12 Spokes on our We Care Wheel of Recovery, for example, speaks to the need to avoid triggers such as your old using friends which "You will discover are, with rare exception, not really your friends, just using buddies."

What *is* the responsibility of the rehab is to give every client the best possible chance of getting clean and sober in short order, and in that short 30-60-90 day stay, learning how to stay clean and sober for life?

So, what do you think it takes to get and stay clean and sober for life?

Do you think it requires a vow to stay clean for the "rest of my life"?

Exactly the opposite. The *only way* to achieve a lifetime of sobriety is to do it one day at a time. This idea is not a silly cliché. This idea is actually rather sophisticated, as it reflects an existential truth, in that the future does not exist except as an idea.

Therefore, the burden of "forever" disappears and the only thing one needs to do is to stay clean and sober today, because "you only get today anyway." I tell the guys I sponsor in AA that "You can stay sober forever if you stay sober today. You know why? Because, buster, it's always today".

Eckart Tolle became world-famous over a simple idea: The Power of Now. Over and over he talks about the liberating power of the Now, about how being fully present is the greatest gift you can give the world, the ones you love, and yourself.

So, ultimately, being fully present in sober life is a most worthy goal and when it does take place, the recovering person will experience the full measure of joy and freedom she has sought all along.

Here is another Myth I want to bust: that the life of a recovering person is one of controlling his urges and being uptight and watchful, and so on. That one has to turn one's back on fun and that "I can't have any fun without getting high".

First, there is *no need to control anymore since the obsession to drink and use will have been lifted* (usually) early in the recovery process, and definitely within a few months, with rare exception.

Some call that a miracle. Some see it as an awakening to the truth that drinking and using are a violation of one's innermost self. However you wish to explain that, every sober person who has practiced the principals of recovery, usually in the context of a 12-step program, will always report to you that they don't even think about using or have any desire to use alcohol or drugs 99% of the time.

There is a difference between having the thought and *having the thought turn into a craving*.

The recovering people I know, those with years of sobriety, report that they (as do I) have thoughts once in a while like: "Gee that beer looks nice and cold". But the craving to actually act on the thought is most rare. I have had those thoughts a few times a year (and dreams of drinking, the meaning of which I will discuss at some point), but only once in 27 years have, I had a serious desire. Which took about 30 seconds to pass after I thought about the consequences and asked for help from on high. I knew better.

Does that remind you of the saying that "Ye shall know the truth and it shall set you free"?

One of the promises in sobriety is that " We shall know a new freedom and a new happiness".

Imagine a program of discipline promising freedom. That is one of the most contrary ideas I had ever heard. One never equates discipline with freedom but if we do what we are asked to do, then we are freed of the obsession to drink and use. Guaranteed. Which is why it is stated as a promise.

One never equates victory with surrender, either. Such are the paradoxes. It is ultimately only by surrendering our will to fight this on our own, through the admission of our powerlessness, that we will achieve victory over alcohol and drugs, if only one day at a time.

You can challenge these concepts all you like, of course. I only report my observations and the common experience of those who have recovered their sanity and rightful place in society.

What are the hidden gems in all of this?

What were the few things that sparked a revolution in achieving success in sobering up alcoholics? Please understand that AA does not claim to have all the answers. It is brilliant in its own way; we only say: "This is what happened to us; would you care to join us"?

It can be summed up in three short sentences. (The parens are mine.)

1. Trust God. (Or any higher power of your understanding.)
2. Clean house. (Get honest, make your amends.)
3. Help others. (This is absolutely the key to long-term sobriety.)

Allow me to explain why #3 is so important, critical in fact.

One of the defining characteristics of addicts is their extreme self-centeredness. If all you ever think about is where to get the next hit or high or drink, there is not too much room for anyone else, is there? If you are consumed by meeting your own needs above

anyone else's, do you even give the other person's needs a thought? If you are given to lie, to cheat, to steal in order to get what you want, then what good does it do to be held accountable? It is always someone else's fault, right?

The essential realisation that needs to happen is that true sobriety can only come from character development. Through a transformation from a selfish state of being to a selfless persona. That is the obvious but also hidden-in-plain view truth of the whole thing. It is rarely ever seen that way by outside observers.

Quite a different story on the inside of what we call "The rooms of AA".

There are two main purposes to an AA meeting. It's so simple. "To stay sober and to *help another alcoholic achieve sobriety*".

For without the second, we cannot have the first. For someone was there when I came staggering in, and now it is my turn to pay back the gift that was freely given me, to do righteous work, maybe even save a life, imagine that.

I shall have more to say about a truly joyous and inspired life of sobriety in the next episode of my podcast.

In the meantime, this is what I covered today:

1. A success rate for a rehab is a misnomer because almost all success in staying clean and sober relies on the client's owning his or her own recovery after treatment.
2. We at SafeHouse recognise the responsibility we have for giving our clients the best possible chance of long-term success; that's why we provide all clients with a suite of customised tools and assistance through our We Care aftercare program.

3. "One day at a time" speaks to a deep truth. It means that we can achieve victory over addiction for the long term, but we can only do it one day at a time. It keeps us focused on the only day that matters today.
4. There are paradoxes we never thought about before recovery. That there is *victory in surrender* when we were always taught to fight, that there is *liberation in discipline* when we thought that discipline meant constraint.
5. Helping other addicts and alcoholics get and stay clean and sober is what we call "The magnificent reality of our fellowship". In so doing, we overcome the intrinsic selfishness that characterised us as sick people, undergoing an essential healing experience, nonetheless.