



Newsletter

Dear Friends,

There are three outcomes when someone is involved with drugs and alcohol: insanity, death or recovery. There is no fourth outcome. Since I began running the Substance Abuse Group in 1996, I have seen far too much insanity and death, and not enough recovery.

Insanity is defined as doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results. Insanity takes the form of personality disorders such as Bi-polar Disorder, Borderline Personality Disorder, Narcissism, Oppositional Defiant Disorder, and more. Too often the mental disorder is a result of alcohol and drug abuse; therefore, the person entering treatment is often dual diagnosed with a substance disorder and a mental disorder.

Death often occurs prematurely due to the abuse to the body, early aging, and accidents. Sometimes death occurs at the hand of the abuser himself/herself; often from an overdose, whether accidental or purposeful, or suicide.

On September 14, 2010, my brother took his life in a most violent way. He was no stranger to John Barleycorn, but had abandoned that hard liquor for pills. A long life with tranquilizers and narcotics drove him further into the insanity.

My brother was such a quick-witted man; no matter what the subject was he could make anyone crack up with an off-the-wall comment. Prior to his death, when he was in the mental health unit, my sister went to visit him and asked when he thought he was getting out. His reply was "Sis, as soon as I can put the round peg in the round hole and the square peg in the square."

He was such a handsome guy. When he was well, his grooming was immaculate. Not a hair on his head was ever out of place. He was always showered and in clean clothing. Everything he owned, he polished and re-polished.

There wasn't anything he couldn't fix. "Mr. Tweak" was his nickname. If you had anything that needed to be repaired he was the man to fix it. He had an eye for color and could match colors to perfection. No one could paint a trim line like he could.

He had a tender love for animals, especially dogs. Any thought of abuse to any animal brought him to tears. He always had a dog by his side and talked to the animal like it was human. I know for a fact if it meant either he or the dog ate, the dog would win.

He also had an incredibly tender heart for children. Children would bring out the best in him, we would see a big smile on his face and he got right down to their level. Nothing delighted him more

than to take his two grandchildren to the store to get ice cream. He was such a proud grandpa.

Apparently the demons in his head were too much. We can never understand what happened that fateful day. However, he lost his way and couldn't seem to find a path back to sanity.

Suicide is such a traumatic event for the survivors to adjust to. It stays in your head for so long. You question every last interaction you had with the person, and feel guilty for not doing or saying more. You wonder if just one more phone call would have made a difference. A quote from one of my professional journals states: "I believe the person who commits suicide puts his psychological skeletons in the survivor's emotional closet—he sentences the survivors to deal with many negative feelings, and more, to become obsessed with thoughts regarding their own possible role in having precipitated the suicidal act or having failed to abort it. It can be a heavy load."

We have been left with a void and longing that never seems to leave. There are unanswered questions. There is anger, then incredible sadness that cuts deep into your heart. Shock, anger, guilt, rejection and despair seem to be the most prevalent emotions our family is dealing with; all normal reactions to a tragedy.

Accepting the full impact of my brother's decision to commit suicide has been an essential part of my own healing process. We grieve because we love. As long as we are bonded to each other in a caring and loving way, we will continue to grieve.

People at high risk of suicide may have any combination of these factors: compromised thinking, prior attempts, physical pain, emotional anguish, financial struggles, loss of hope, no goals, unable to see a future, helplessness, loneliness, a disconnect from God, a church family, and others, and most of all untreated depression. (Michael J. Baker 10/6/50—9/14/10)

I would like to end this newsletter on a good note. My daughter-in-law Lori, who was diagnosed with stage four breast cancer in January of 2008, is still cancer free and clear according to every routine medical test. She is even more beautiful than before the diagnosis; it has brought out an inner strength and beauty that is hard to miss. My grandsons have matured into very responsible teenage boys full of incredible energy and life. The movie "Living Proof" helped me to understand this disease. I suggest you rent it, because sadly enough someone in your life will be diagnosed with this disease. Information and education is vital to our peace of mind and our emotional availability to the loved ones dealing with cancer.

I passed the four-hour long state exam and will have my full L.P.C. in about six months. This has been a good journey. I have worked very hard, but it has been worth it. God is so good.

A most blessed Thanksgiving and Merry Christmas to all!

Educational Therapy offers not only grief counseling, couples counseling, anger management, substance abuse intervention, help with life transition challenges and more. My goal is to turn no one away who desires help.