

THE NETWORK

Nov-2011

METHADONE BY: TOM Q.

Methadone!!! What is it? What is it about this 3 syllable word that causes people react with such anger and borderline on hatred? At times, just mentioning the word in the wrong crowd can cause such a heated debate that people need to be calmed down before they come to blows. For the thousands of people who use this medication as a life-line to sobriety, there is no other way for them to attempt recovery, since they most likely exhausted all other avenues. On the flip-side, there are thousands of people who see it just as a "replacement" for heroin and many have seen their loved ones suffer and even die while on it.

For people like me, who use it to help, but not as our only tool for recovery, it's hard for us to see where the hatred comes from. As a consumer of the medication, I know that the deaths contributed to methadone are not merely methadone alone. 72% of all deaths in the united states that are supposedly caused by methadone overdose are actually poly-substance related (mixing methadone with other medications). Regrettably the medication methadone is getting the full blame for all of the deaths.

For every case that is considered a "methadone related death" there are hundreds of people who have come through their respected programs unharmed. Un-

fortunately, most people will never hear of these success stories because methadone did the job it was prescribed to do. Let's face it, unless it's a human interest story that someone is writing or that the local news is covering, it will NEVER be heard. Pain and heartache sell papers and have people tuning into the news programs to watch. No one knows about the success stories because the people who succeed have a tendency to move on with their lives. There is no big party, no news coverage, and no reporters scrambling to find out how these people got their lives back. They just move forward with their new lives and try to pay-it-forward as best they can. They don't sit around bashing what other people have decided to use to help them fight the disease of addiction.

Why is it that people who are so called "DRUG FREE" feel the need to criticize people who are suffering just as they are? Recovery can be a beautiful experience if it is done correctly. We need to be surrounded by positive people, people who won't judge, people who accept our choices. The "DRUG-FREE" people need to realize that we are all in this race together and we are all running toward the same finish line. Instead of passing judgment, it should be celebrated that we finally decided to start running the race in the first place.

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Special points of interest:

- Phila. Recovery Coalition & Yesha Ministries are sponsoring their 1st annual Thanksgiving Dinner on Nov.24th 11am-6pm....stop by PAC office for details
- NET STEPS is starting its annual TOY COLLECTION for the children of NET...PLEASE donate unwrapped gifts.

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METHADONE?

BY: TOM Q.

When someone finally comes to their senses and realize "these drugs are killing me", shouldn't we be accepting of them? The Big Book states that everyone is welcome when they enter N/A; the entrance fee that is required is OUR desire to stop using. And yet, time and time again we see that this isn't the case.

Methadone is no different than any other medication someone uses to make them feel better. We are told that there is a very fine line when it comes to taking methadone and considering yourself sober. The fact of the matter is that this isn't true, there isn't a fine line at all, the line is very defined. Methadone is a medication, which is a fact. Addiction is a brain disease, and this is also a fact. Common sense dictates that you treat a disease with medication. If you walked into a Doctor's office and were diagnosed with high blood pressure and you walked out of the office without a prescription, you would consider him negligent. Why is this such a foreign concept to grasp?

We, as methadone users suffer such public scrutiny that, at times, I feel like I'm doing something *illegal* by taking my prescribed medication. Recent reports in prominent newspapers have described methadone as a "KILLER DRUG" that is "WIDELY ABUSED AND DANGEROUS". The irony of the articles are, although they have no problem stating how dangerous methadone is if it is ABUSED, not one time in these articles do they state any of the BENEFITS of the medication.

For instance; How it helps save lives along with counseling, how it helps improve an addicts mood during a difficult time in their lives, or the obvious, how it takes away our withdrawal symptoms and our cravings. None of this is ever mentioned. We face discrimination on a **GLOBAL** scale and this is unfair no to mention dead wrong.

**WE FACE
DISCRIMINATION ON A
GLOBAL SCALE...**

The facts should be printed as well opinions. When methadone is used properly for helping an addict regain control of their life, the chances of overdose/death are almost nonexistent. The fact that methadone has become more widely available due to physicians prescribing it for pain relief and the fact that some States have relaxed their policies regarding clients take-home doses should be taken into consideration when talking about methadone fatalities. What most want you to believe is that this medication will "KILL YOU" or is "EVIL" even when it is taken properly. Is this the picture we are allowing them to paint of our choice of treatment?

Treatment should go beyond the four walls of your facility. A big part of treatment is giving back to other people in need. Each one of us should make it a personal mission to give back by educating those who are ignorant to methadone, tell them the truth. Show them that you're not embarrassed of how you regained control of your life. The future is ours now, we are clear headed and drug free and METHADONE helped get us here, be proud of it!!!

Pick each other up, NOT Put each other down.!!

There has been issues and situations here at the NET with people putting each other down and the spreading of the rumors has got to stop because, words bring resentments and then comes the fights. I would like to see us help each other out and pick each other up. We have to stop the situations before the arguments and the fights start. It is always the same few people outside fueling up the new gossip and steering up the pot to create a storm of lies and envy jealousy to turn everyone against each other. Try a simple good morning, or how are you today makes all the difference in some ones day because we never know what's going through some ones head on any giving day. Sometimes what we say can change the way some ones day is going weather they started their day off bad or the everyday life situations we deal with. I know that it helps me get through the day to hear a simple good morning or how you doing. We just have to watch the choice of words we use, because our choice of words can really destroy some ones mentally and emotionally even set them off or possibly use, so people lets pull each other up and help each other get through these tough times so we can all see another day sober and argument free among each other and not worry about the person you were just talking to was smiling in your face and not talking about you behind your back and taking what you just confided with that person about is all over the clinic now so let's just be there for each other because this is the only place some of us have to vent and dump are stuff off to live somewhat productive live so remember before you gossip think about how bad you can damage that person, and the fight it can start, show some consideration.

**Dare to reach out your hand into the darkness,
to pull another hand into the light. ~Norman B. Rice**

Neuroscientist connects his own addiction to workings of the brain

JOSEPH BREAN

In his new book, *Memoirs of an Addicted Brain*, a neuroscientist examines his former life on drugs. Marc Lewis, a native Torontonian and former U of T scientist, describes the role of brain chemicals — such as dopamine, which fuels cravings, and serotonin, which soothes overactive neurons — in the rise of addiction. Unusually, he illustrates the theory with episodes from his own life as an addict, now recovered, in which he graduated from boarding-school experiments in cough syrup, through liquor, marijuana and acid to heroin, opium, methamphetamines and whatever he could steal. He spoke with *National Post* reporter Joseph Brean:

You describe addiction as a process similar to learning. Do good learners make better addicts?

I wouldn't put it exactly like that. I don't think you have to be a particularly good learner or a knowledgeable person who seeks to understand things to become an addict.

In fact, maybe it's somewhat to the contrary.

It's learning, but it's corrupted learning.... It's very accelerated learning, and it's extremely narrow, because it's the same damn thing over and over again.

Why do you say the target of an addiction is half attainable?

If the thing is a sure bet, if you know you're going to get it, then the dopamine pump is not on very strong.

It becomes more matter of fact. It can happen in romance, or if you have Chinese food every night....

Dopamine's got an evolutionary function, and its function is to get you to strive for the thing that you want when it requires striving, when it requires pushing for it, grabbing for it, reaching, that's when dopamine operates at its peak.

But so many of the things people are addicted to are easily attainable, such as alcohol.

It's easily attainable because you can easily walk into a bar. It's not so easy in Ontario with the LCBO hours, but what also puts barriers between you and the object of pursuit is your own conscience, your own better judgment, your own attempts to control yourself.

All of those things make the space between you and it, and you have to overcome that space and say, "To hell with it, I really want it," and that's when the dopamine really drives you forward to attain the thing you want.

With street drugs, it can be even harder. Does that feed the anticipation?

Yes sir, very much so. When I was into that stuff, I spent so many seconds and minutes and hours and synapses working on how am I going to get it, where am I going to get it, how good is it going to be, how am I going to get the money.

All of those processes are steps toward the goal, and they're all fuelled by dopamine, by craving, by desire. That's why you stay on the path until you get it.

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NEUROSCIENTIST / BRAIN (continued from Pg#4)

You compare the “delusional grandiosity” of the marijuana high to teenage thinking. You also say that, evolutionarily, that kind of thinking benefits teenagers, but perhaps not adults. Is addiction a failure to grow up?

In some ways. One of the ironies is that marijuana, which they call a gateway drug, is not addictive in the normal sense. It just isn't.... The delusional, grandiose, “What I'm thinking is really important, relevant, magnificent and profound,” that teenage thing, yeah, it happens with pot, but when you get into the harder drugs, like the opiates, heroin, methamphetamine, it's not quite the same.

You're going deeper now. It's not just about how wonderful your thinking is, it's about a rock-bottom desire for a certain kind of feeling.

People say they are psychologically addicted to pot, but they also talk about being addicted to chocolate. Where is the line between addiction as glib metaphor and as physical reality?

Even hard drugs, like heroin and methamphetamine, you're both physically and psychologically addicted, and I think the psychological addiction is the worst part, because a lot of people quit — I quit many times — but why do you go back to it? It's because you really want it. That's psychological.

So yeah, with pot, with booze, or pornography or cheesecake, you can have that psychological addiction.... But the hard drugs are speaking directly, chemically, to brain regions that are in charge of motivation.

In the book, you say drugs speak to the brain in its own language. But you also describe what it feels like to be high, and sometimes it sounds rapturous. Do you miss some of those moments?

Not really. I haven't done this stuff for 30 years.... But if this stuff wasn't incredibly attractive and pleasurable, people wouldn't go back to it again and again.... But as time goes on, those good feelings become integrated with, juxtaposed with, and overcome by all the bad things — the fear of going without, the self-disgust, all the things you have to do to get it.

Are those high feelings revealed as fake or false in the fullness of time?

No, they're real. We get some of those feelings to some degree from our normal interactions in the world. I mean, when you're in love with somebody, and they put their arms around you and you feel like you've come home, there are opioids bouncing around in your system, so that's real.

And when you take a needle full of heroin, you get that times 500. It's still real. It's just very intense. But is it fake? In a way it is, but you can never say that real experience is fake. It really feels that way.

You describe boarding school anti-Semitism as a major factor in the growth of your addiction. How does personal psychological history play into addiction?

People talk about genetic predispositions to addiction, but there's not a lot of agreement on how powerful they are. That kind of research is really tricky, so how do you become an addictive personality?

I think a lot of it has to do with early development, and it has to do with things that happen to you: trauma, or things that make you feel empty, or angry at yourself, or inadequate and dysfunctional, feeling there are gaps and holes in yourself. And then, it so happens that those things get filled up with things, whether it's food, drugs, booze or video games. Then you learn that that's the way to take care of these needs. And then you become addictive.

STRESS

BY: Max F.

Even though we get sober, we are still human beings who experience a ton of stress. In fact, it has been my observation that the stress in my life has actually increased somewhat ever since I got sober. Learning how to deal with the stressors of life is a skill that I desperately want to acquire. Some people can deal with stress with ease, and very little ever bothers them. Other people can't take even a little bit of stress without breaking down either mentally, physically or emotionally. I am like the latter of the two; I can't deal with stress for the life of me. So what do I do?

I was taught by counselors and clients alike that stress can be a huge trigger for depression, and even relapse. Stress can ruin my day, my relationships, my sanity and my sobriety. It has been my mission to find ways to deal with stressful things and times in life, so that I can stop suffering. Personally I don't think life is fair all the time. I mean, we try our best to do the right things, and we still get messed with. For example, just when it seems like when we break even with money, pay off all our debts, bills, and etcetera, some catastrophe always seems to happen that puts us behind again. It doesn't necessarily have to be money; it could be relationship issues, emotional baggage, or even our treatment goals. It's a very harsh realization, but stressful things and events never end.

Now that we accept that stress is a definite part of our lives, we must learn how to prevent, control and arrest stress so that it doesn't hurt us nearly as much. Stress can be caused for a number of reasons. Some of the main reasons why recovering people get stressed out on a daily basis are that many recovering people are overcommitted, overworked with kids, family, employment or school, malnourished from proper nutrition and emotional health, as well as undereducated in how to deal with real-life issues. The list can go on and on, and differs from person to person. The one thing that all humans have in common is that we all vulnerable to the toxic nature of stress. I have researched the following simple techniques to help combat everyday stressors, so that we may drastically reduce the suffering that most of us do on a daily basis.

Step One: Understanding your stress. By completely knowing what stresses you out, you can start to cope with your problems. Take a minute to write down all the things that stress you out, starting with the major stressors. For example, if your lack of money seems to be the biggest stressor in your life, write down why you think this is, and write down some small practical steps that can help you fix the situation. The key to battling your stress is to be highly organized and realistic about it. Be honest with yourself, and be confident that you CAN solve your problems.

Step Two: Change your thinking about stress. I think one of the reasons stress can be so debilitating is because we always make the situation worse than it actually is. As addicts, we tend to amplify our stress levels by thinking that

we can't handle it. In reality, as addicts, we are cunning, resourceful, and manipulative, so why not manipulate the way we think about stress? Next time a stressful situation or event comes about, think to yourself "I can handle this." And your stress may be cut in half!

Step Three: Chip away at stress. Stress is an unavoidable part of life. So instead of trying to run away from it, or blow it off, we should face it head on, and chip away at our problems one at a time. Writing down steps to chip away at stress can be highly effective. By keeping an organized plan or strategy to defeat the stress can help you focus on the task at hand instead of feeling overwhelmed and lost. You have to be in control of stress instead of having stress control you. This is the only way to take back your life. It takes a little bit of practice, but once you get this technique down, stress doesn't have a snowball's chance in hell.

Step Four: Stay relaxed and focused at all costs. If at any time you are feeling like you can't defeat stress, or if you're getting overrun by the toxicity of stress, it may be time for a relaxation technique or two in order to keep it together. There are many techniques to relax; my favorite is a deep breathing concentration technique that can re-vamp your entire point of view. What you do is give yourself 5 minutes of alone time where you can take deep breaths and reflect on how uniquely strong you actually are. Do this or whatever relaxation techniques that work for you as many times as needed in order to reiterate the fact that you WILL beat the stress. Stress can literally beat you up if you let it. By relaxing and reinforcing your strength, you can effectively fight back at any situation, no matter how stressful.

Following and practicing these techniques can seriously reduce the damage that stress can cause us everyday. Nobody is immune to stress. Personally, I would like to be the type of person that can handle any situation without worrying about the stress that comes with them. From my personal experience in practicing these steps for a short time, I have realized that they definitely help. By practicing these simple techniques, keeping organized, and level-headed, we can eliminate the frequency of stressful occurrences by a significant number. Another key to cutting down stress would be to keep confident and brave in the face of stress. Battling stress is very much a battle of wits, and by possessing these skills, we can outsmart, outmaneuver and outdo the stressful situations that we all face. I can tell you that the feeling that erupts after defeating a stressful situation is extremely gratifying. These steps will help us all to recover more peacefully and will guide us to tranquility for the remainder of our wonderful lives!

Meet Junkie...

BY: Brian Twilley

I've been cursed with an addiction & he lives within me...

He wanted to introduce himself, so please everybody...Meet Junkie

When he's active & alive all he wants to do is have fun and play...

He don't give me no say, cause all he wants is me to surrender & obey

Now I find myself living the life of drugs & crime.

It doesn't matter to him, he's smiling and laughing cause I'm the one that's doing time...

I wake up in my cell and think to myself, "I can't live life like this no more"...

I stand up and without thinking, my knees hit the floor and I pray to the lord...

I tilt my bald head towards the sky, and all I do is smile...

Thanks to GOD and Net Steps, cause honestly it's really been a while...

It's time to take my old and negative ways and abandon them on a shelf...

Cause now it's all about me, recovery and good health...

Now I'm on the road of recovery and the finer things...

Real recovering addicts do the right things.

Don't know where to start?

By: Jose H. DeLeon



After mediating last night I put some Yanni on the stereo, lit up two small candles and a cigarette before sitting back in my well worn out comfortable recliner chair. I sat back in the chair and began to think about all the negative emotions and thoughts that I had just before deciding to try the only type of treatment that I haven't attempted throughout my years of addiction, methadone. One of the feelings that I had felt prior to coming into treatment was a very dark haunting sense of emptiness that memory serves as an ongoing reminder of why I had come to this point in treatment and in my life. You know the feeling, the one where you think about killing yourself because you can't seem to stop getting high no matter what you try or what you do. I was tired of going to numer-

ous detoxes whether they were "ghetto" or "country clubs" I would leave them doing the same shit within a two week period if not sooner. I was tired of putting my mother through false hopes and telling her how things were going to be different this time. I was tired of shedding tears when I relapsed knowing that I just broke another promise that I had made to my only daughter. I was just tired of failing and really not understanding why. In order for it not to happen again I knew that many things had to be put into motion by me, I had to turn this key to open the door to my new life. I looked back at what I did to get to this point and thought about the three steps, or areas, that I had to apply to myself regardless of any situations that were going on and they were the following. One, I had to stop using all forms of drugs no matter what situation may arise. I would not fool myself into taking anything that would defeat my purpose of entering into treatment. Second, I had to stop blaming others for the decisions that I was making that produced negative results. I had to begin to take personal responsibility for all of my actions and not just for the ones with positive results. I knew that this process wouldn't be easy but I knew that I could do it and be successful at it. I have fully committed myself to this treatment process and was not going to pick and choose what I would, or would not, do. If I knew everything I would not have come here asking for help, would you? I am willing to do all that is helpful and necessary for me to be clean and sober as well as evolve into a real adult. I don't know everything but I do know that the more I learn the better off I will be. Third, I had to begin to work on my behaviors and attitudes. I knew that working on my attitudes and behaviors was going to be an ongoing process and I needed to get started as soon as I could. A part of me wanted to push this part back another week but I knew that if I didn't start now that I would never start. I could simply try to keep acting "cool" in front of the really "cool" people that seem to know everything yet aren't doing anything positive for themselves, or I can finally grow up and get clean and sober. Changing the way that I act, talk, and respond to other people and situations that may arise was a task that I couldn't avoid once I got to this third stage. Behaviors and attitudes is what will keep many people going in circles while blaming the world for everything in their lives if they don't work on these two areas.

RECOVERY... BY Leeann Kacon

Recovery is teaching us to think a situation through to the end before we act. In the past, we often reacted first and thought later. Unable to wait out the pain, we tried to "fix" our problems by artificial means: drugs, alcohol, food, sex, and excitement. Our only goal was to escape and get relief from the ups and downs of life. Rushing from one situation to another, we seldom slowed down enough to relax and really think through the consequences of our actions.

Now, we're learning to solve problems instead of escaping from them. Learning to sit still with discomfort, knowing it will eventually pass, has given us real personal power in our day-to-day living. What a wonderful freedom to no longer be driven by the demons of obsession and compulsion, but instead to experience our feelings as friends instead of enemies. When we allow ourselves to sit with such friends, open to what they can teach us, we will never be alone. Just like water life flows through the channels that offer least resistance. If our mind is closed, life continues to flow through the channels that we already have. We continue to get more of the same and begin to wonder if anything will ever change for us. Be a Student not a follower.

FYI
CHRISTMAS IS COMING...!!!

We will once again be setting up boxes around the facility to collect toys for the children of NET. We are asking for unwrapped gifts... Many of our friends here at NET need help around the Holidays and it is the perfect time for us to GIVE BACK and help someone in need... THANK YOU

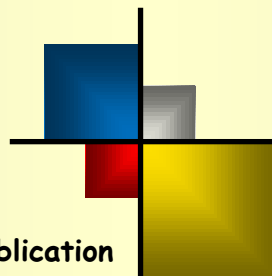
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NET-STEPS

2205 Bridge Street

Philadelphia, PA 19137

Phone: 215-743-6150



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