

Drug Awareness Month, May 2021

1ST MAY

Youth and the Drug Syndrome

Education in health principles was never more needed than now. Notwithstanding the wonderful progress in so many relating to the comforts and conveniences of life, even to sanitary matters and to the treatment of disease, the decline

Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment. Ecclesiastes 11:9.

Satan was the first rebel in the universe, and ever since his expulsion from heaven he has been seeking to make every member of the human family an apostate from God, even as he is himself. He laid his plans to ruin man, and through the unlawful indulgence of appetite, led him to transgress the commandments of God. He tempted Adam and Eve to partake of the forbidden fruit, and so accomplished their fall, and their expulsion from Eden. How many say, "If I had been in Adam's place, I would never have transgressed on so simple a test." But you who make this boast have a grand opportunity of showing your strength of purpose, your fidelity to principle under trial.... Does God see no sin in your life? ...

On every side, Satan seeks to entice the youth into the path of perdition; and if he can once get their feet set in the way, he hurries them on in their downward course, leading them from one dissipation to another, until his victims lose their tenderness of conscience, and have no more the fear of God before their eyes. They exercise less and less self-restraint. They become addicted to the use of wine and alcohol, tobacco and opium, and go from one stage of debasement to another. They are slaves to appetite. Counsel which they once respected, they learn to despise. They put on swaggering airs, and boast of

liberty when they are the servants of corruption. They mean by liberty that they are slaves to selfishness, debased appetite, and licentiousness....

'Satan is determined to have the human race as his subjects, but Christ has paid an infinite price that man may be redeemed from the enemy, and that the moral image of God may be restored to the fallen race.... Fallen men may through Christ find access to the Father, may have grace to enable them to be overcomers through the merits of a crucified and risen Savior.' Temperance, 273, 274.

May we take this month's awareness to remind, reform and prevent on the dangers of drug use.

8TH MAY

BREAKING FREE

IN RECENT YEARS, MANY PEOPLE HAVE BROKEN FREE from political slavery. But there is another kind of slavery that can be just as bad, or worse, than political slavery. Alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs have enslaved millions.

Each time people take drugs, they need a little bit more the next time to have the same effect. This is why it is so difficult for addicted people to break away from the trap they find themselves in. Those who are trapped need support from family, church, and friends.

They also might need professional help. But most of all, they need the power of God working in their lives to give them the freedom promised in Christ the Lord

ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES (Proverbs 23:29–35)

In the Western world, wine, beer, and other alcoholic drinks have been connected with memorable events, happy times, holidays, and important business deals. There seems to be a clean and beautiful face to alcoholic drinks. They have become socially acceptable and almost "necessary" at certain times.

But, sadly, there is a dark side to alcohol that those who sell it do not want their customers to see and know.

The chemical makeup of alcohol causes the human body to treat it not as food but as poison. It is taken into the stomach and carried by the bloodstream to the brain, lungs, kidneys, and heart in just a few minutes. The liver becomes weakened from hours of breaking down alcohol and then trying to rid the body of the poison. If drinking alcohol is continued for a long time, the organs will wear out. And the person will suffer from serious illnesses.

Sadly, the results of drinking alcohol go beyond the drinker. Alcohol use comes with a terrible social cost. Half of all automobile and workplace accidents are the results of alcohol. Many crimes are done under the influence of alcohol. Public and private funds are used to provide health care for problems caused by alcohol. And, at home, the spouse and children of heavy drinkers are often victims of verbal and physical abuse. Alcohol and other drugs influence our ability to make the right choices. Under the influence of alcohol, people are likely to slip deeper into sin. Those trapped in any kind of drug abuse need to understand their problem and their need for help from God. Along with God's grace, they need the support of family or a caring church community. They also need to get treatment from professionals (if possible) who are trained to deal with these problems.

As Seventh-day Adventists, we take a very strong stand against alcohol use. Without judging or condemning them, with love and compassion, we need to help those struggling with this bondage.

15th MAY

SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN THE FAMILY

“Youth is the sowing time. It determines the character of the harvest, for this life and for the life to come.” —Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 101

Drug and alcohol addiction in the family is not normally a “preferred” topic in Seventh-day Adventist circles, particularly if it suggests addiction among its members. While addictions such as food, exercise, and work have become more acceptable admissions, substance abuse is “taboo.” We prefer to believe that substance abuse doesn’t happen in our church families; however, as a psychologist (Kiti Randall) who has had the privilege of providing various behavioral health training for the Adventist Church in more than 40 countries, I can assure you substance abuse is a struggle for many Adventist families.

In addition, given the recent surge of the misuse of prescription drugs and the enormous amount of money and support provided for legalization of illegal drugs, substance abuse is increasing.

Assisting families struggling with addiction should be a priority within the church, and part of our community outreach. We’ve seen the harmful effects of substance abuse in families, particularly among children, and we seek to advocate on behalf of children and offer interventions for them and their families.

Effects on Children

Approximately one in four children in the United States is exposed to alcoholism or drug addiction in the family. This incidence may be more in your community. This means that in your neighborhood, or among your children’s friends, one in four might be hiding their embarrassment, confusion, hurt, or shame about what’s going on at home. Substance abuse by parents can compromise children’s mental, emotional, and physical health, as parenting is inconsistent, chaotic, and unpredictable.

Further, children living in these environments are often subject to physical, emotional, and psychological trauma, making them at risk for long-term consequences. There is a strong relationship between child abuse and neglect and parental addiction. Substance abuse is reported as an underlying factor in at least 70 percent of child abuse/neglect cases. Substance-using parents often neglect the physical and/or emotional needs of their children. Abuse and neglect can have long-lasting consequences in terms of both brain development and mental health, making this a serious concern for children.

Long-term Consequences

The long-term impact of growing up in a substance-abuse environment is also substantial. Children model the behavior of their parents. Children may be *predisposed* by their family environment and genetics to become alcoholics or addicts, but they are not *predestined*. If we identify and appropriately intervene on behalf of children, the cycle can be broken. Research is demonstrating that *attachment* (a significant connected relationship) may be key to breaking the multigenerational cycle of addiction and abuse. Teaching and modeling healthy patterns of relationships can change unhealthy family patterns. The importance of attachment is core to biblical teaching. We were created as relational beings, and our primary occupation on earth is to have a relationship with God and fellow humans. As such, it's clear that healthy relationships are vital in changing trajectories for children and families struggling with substance abuse.

We must face the struggles of families with addiction in our church and communities. By educating ourselves and offering healthy relationships, each of us can make a difference for these children and families.

22ND MAY

Prescription Drugs

A "silent epidemic," side effects from the use of prescription drugs rank third in the leading causes of death in the United States today, right behind heart disease and cancer according to research. The incidence may not be well documented in some regions, but the magnitude of the problem is big and ever so growing. What we are not talking about here are illegal drugs that our countries spend millions of dollars "warring" against. Rather, it is the pharmaceutical drugs, appropriately prescribed (according to modern medicine), that are resulting in over a hundred thousand deaths per year. We have even heard of famous people losing their lives due to abuse of prescription medications.

Prescription drug abuse is the use of a prescription medication in a way not intended by the prescribing doctor. Prescription drug abuse or problematic use includes everything from taking a friend's prescription painkiller for your backache to snorting or injecting ground-up pills to get high. The ease of buying drugs over the counter without a prescription has also added to the problem. Although it's dangerous to take a prescription medication without a prescription, abusing such medications is the fastest growing type of drug abuse in the United States, outpacing marijuana abuse two to one, according to some studies.

Drug abuse may become ongoing and compulsive, despite the negative consequences.

An increasing problem, prescription drug abuse can affect all age groups, including teens. The prescription drugs most often abused include opioid painkillers, anti-anxiety medications, sedatives and stimulants.

Most commonly abused prescription drugs are:

- **Opioids** used to treat pain. Examples include Morphine and Codeine. Most abused drug with codeine is Benlyn cough syrup in Zambia, especially noticed in the minibus drivers and their conductors.
- **Anti-anxiety medications and sedatives**, such as diazepam (Valium),
- **Stimulants**, e.g. Ritalin used for convulsions

People who take prescription drugs without their doctors' approval face many risks:

- They don't have information about dosage, side effects, or other risks of use. One common side effect of these abuses include one developing Kidney damage when taking some of these drugs, e.g., Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs such as Brufen.
- The medication may interact with another drug they take.
- Taking the medication may be dangerous because of a condition they have, such as asthma or heart disease

- Many of the abused drugs, including painkillers, such as Vicodin, Xanax, Valium, and Ritalin, are potentially addictive

Spirit of Prophecy does give a stern warning.

*'A practice that is laying the foundation of a vast amount of disease and of even more serious evils, is the free use of poisonous drugs. When attacked by disease, many will not take the trouble to search out the causes of their illness. Their chief anxiety is to rid themselves of pain and inconvenience. So they resort to patent nostrums, of whose real properties they know little, or they apply to a physician for some remedy to counteract the result of their misdoing, but with no thought of making a change in their unhealthful habits. If immediate benefit is not realized, another medicine is tried, and then another. Thus the evil continues. **Ministry of Healing 126, 82.4***

*'The sad result- By the use of poisonous drugs, many bring upon themselves lifelong illnesses, and many lives are lost that might be saved by the use of natural methods of healing. The poisons contained in many so-called remedies create habits and appetites that mean ruin to both soul and body. Many of the popular nostrums called patent medicines, and even some of the drugs dispensed by physicians, act a part in laying the foundation of the liquor habit, the opium habit, the morphine habit, that are a terrible curse to society.' **Ministry of Healing 126, 83.2***

Lessons learnt:

1. Adopt health lifestyles to reduce risk of falling ill and needing to see a physician
2. Avoid exposing the body to injurious substances, either internally or externally.
3. When ill health comes, we strive to allow body to heal naturally, modify habits that could have caused the illness and by using harmless natural therapies, e.g., if one has headache, common cause would be dehydration, so drink plenty water and take rest instead of taking a Panadol.

4. When illness persists and physician prescribes medication, get as much information about the drug and stick to the prescribed dosage and duration of treatment. Avoid over the counter medications, and avoid prolonged use of addictive drugs.
5. And most importantly, we fully rely on the guidance of the Holy Spirit to help us navigate these very perilous times that we are living in.

GOD BLESS YOU ALL.

Dr. Mwate Mwambazi Mweene

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