Mental disorders like depression not uncommon in people battling addictions

By Plain Dealer guest columnist
April 28, 2010, 3:00PM

Question: I abused heroin for 5 years, and have been clean for over 3 and a half years. I go to meetings, eat right, work-out, etc. My problem is that I have incredible bouts of depression and anger. I constantly feel threatened by my addiction, like it’s always right behind me. I’m tired of feeling low and like I’m in mourning. Is this going to go away eventually, or am I stuck with these feelings as a result of my actions?

Answer: Thank you for sharing your story and congratulations on your sobriety. You mentioned bouts of depression and anger. It is possible that you may also be suffering from clinical depression (also called Major Depression) or from another mood or anxiety disorder (such as Bipolar Disorder or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder).

It is quite common for individuals with addiction to also have a co-occurring mental disorder, which is commonly known as "dual diagnosis." Because it has been so long (3.5 years) since you last used, it is very likely that there is something else going on besides just recovering from addiction.

My recommendation would be that you consider getting a mental health evaluation by a psychiatrist, preferably one who is knowledgeable about addiction.
You also mentioned feeling constantly threatened by your addiction. I anticipate that this feeling will eventually fade away as your recovery continues.

At the same time, it is important to "remain vigilant" about the potential for relapse because in some sense, you are exactly correct -- your disease is, in fact, "trying to kill you". To the extent that you can take care of your physical, mental, and spiritual health, you are much more likely to stay sober for an extended period of time.

In short, you are NOT "stuck with these feelings". There is great hope for further growth, healing, and recovery.

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Posted by seded
April 28, 2010, 3:45PM

Have you done the steps? Have you got a sponcer? Have you prayed? The program works if you work it.
Amen!

seded. you moron. I am an expert. DO NOT discourage anyone from seeing a good doctor! As human beings made of flesh and blood, there is always the possibility of other issues influenced by physiology being part of the problem too.

Your obviously amateur advice, may well keep this man from actually enjoying his life!!!! DO NOT speak of matters you DO NOT understand.

Moran? No reason for that. I've seen the results from you DR. Feelgoods. Most of the time you do more harm than good with your drug pushing. I think I understand a little more than you. God Bless!!
Unless you have actually been there, YOU are NOT a EXPERT on ANYTHING!!

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Seded, clearly you are uneducated. I have 14 of the years of the experience to which you allude. You are an utterly dangerous fool for peddling the "advice" you gave that poor man earlier. Both the writer of this article and me are not referring to a drug pusher. We are referring to educated physicians who know more about your physiological composition than you ever will. You need to be very careful of the matters on which you speak. Go ask YOUR sponsor about this very fact of recovery...do not speak of things you know nothing about.

So if you want to, go ahead and ruin other people's lives due to your ignorance. But sooner or later you will have to go before God. You have been warned you are being an idiot, so you'll have no excuse when God asks you "what the heck were you thinking!". You'll have to admit that you weren't thinking.

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Dr.Feelgood go back to the sports blog where you no nothing at all either. At least when I meet god I will have clean hands Will you?

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like china our pool of organ donors

Inappropriate comment? Alert us.
Folks,

I debated commenting on this but will do so in the hopes that even one person with these problems can have their eyes cleared to seek the help they need if they read it. That is part of my responsibility for the great gift I've been given.

If you are battling these kinds of addictions within AA or NA along with depression or some other medical condition and someone in those rooms gives you advice against seeing your psychiatrist or therapist and taking PRESCRIBED medicine, you need to do two things:

1) Go back and read the book - it clearly states that you should seek help for these problems from QUALIFIED professionals
2) Stop taking advice from that person. They are working a program that is different from what is in the book. If that person is sponsoring you, FIND A NEW SPONSOR IMMEDIATELY!

The key to taking any prescription medicine is to take 'as directed' by your physician, and it's okay to ask someone you trust (preferably a family member) to dispense it accordingly to remove any doubt, particularly if you're new to the program.