Family efforts, support can conquer addiction issues: a NetWellness column

By Plain Dealer guest columnist
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Question: My sister, 43 has had a problem with addiction to vicodin. She got in trouble about 5 yrs ago for forging prescriptions and had outpatient therapy. Currently she’s using. Although I’m not sure what, I suspect crack or meth. She has lost everything including voluntarily giving up her children as she has no interest in them at all. She thinks we don’t know she is using drugs. If asked, she denies that she is using.

As a very concerned family, is there anything we can do? We feel helpless. She lives in a motel at times. I live in another state but recently saw her, and she looks terrible. Apparently she will disappear for several days at a time. She has admitted to prostitution to get drugs. I know that she has to want to change or things will never get better, but is there anything we can do? Her boys (18 and 14) are really hurting and angry. They are with other family members now. Thanks for your help. Any information would be appreciated.

Answer: A very difficult and painful situation ... and sadly NOT rare. Also thankfully not rare, so many others have been through somewhat similar situations and have sort of "blazed some trails".

I would suggest several possible resources to help you and the family at this juncture.

- There is a little book, written by Ron Rogers and Scott McMillan
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This week's NetWellness column is authored by Dr. Ted Parran, a clinical associate professor at Case Western Reserve University's School of Medicine.

- For more information, visit the Addiction and Substance Abuse health topic.
- Sign up for the NetWellness Monthly Newsletter.
- Read previous NetWellness columns.

This is difficult to do, but a good model is actually found at 12-step meetings. They are exceptionally good at demonstrating unwavering positive regard for the humanity of the soul and voicing hope for the future ... while showing intolerance for any behaviors associated with continued using of the addictive substance.

Incidentally, it does sound like her current addictive behaviors are most consistent with active addiction to one of the more potent stimulant drugs -- methamphetamine or cocaine ... especially in the smokeable form known as crack. Be that as it may, addiction treatment is just as effective for people addicted to stimulants as it is for people with alcohol or other drug problems.

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I will pick up these two books and take it from there.