

Journey To



LIFE

"You have shown me the path of life."
Psalms 16:11



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Editorial Perspective As a Person Thinks

The wise man Solomon, in an old English translation of Proverbs 23:7, tells us that how a person thinks in their "heart" determines who they are. What we say and do begins with how we think. Ralph Waldo Emerson, well-known American philosopher of the 1800's made the following observation: "Sow a thought and you reap an action; sow an act and you reap a habit; sow a habit and you reap a character; sow a character and you reap a destiny." How true! One of the primary purposes of Adventist Recovery Ministries and *The Journey to Wholeness* is to help men and women develop Christ-like characters and be ready for Christ's return.

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With the feature article in this issue of the *Journey to Life*, written by Arlene R. Taylor, PhD. In "Besotted Brain Blunders," she makes it clear that the brain can only do, what it thinks are the brain to a "pot of chemical stew" and a "pharmacy." "As chef, you self-medicate through what you ingest. As pharmacist, you alter brain chemistry through behaviors or thoughts that release brain chemicals that change the way you feel." Her inclusion of the "list of the top twelve foods ranked in order of most problematic in terms of addictive-like behavior," will be very helpful as we near the end of another year with its many festivities which usually include one or more of these foods. Our next issue of the *Journey to Life*, will feature a follow-up article by Dr. Taylor, "Busting Bad Behaviors."

The great, good news is that Jesus Christ is able to empower us to be free of all the negative, destructive habits that keep us from living Christ-centered lives that are filled with love, joy and peace.

Ray Nelson, MDiv, MSPH
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ARMin Mission and Vision

Our Mission:

Promote healing and freedom from harmful practices by providing resources and training to facilitate recovery.

Our Vision:

Healthy people growing in a relationship with Christ by using principles of God's Word and choosing healthful practices aimed at finding freedom from harmful habits and addictive behaviors.

Potential Objectives/Goals:

- Promote healing (individually and corporately) utilizing the healthy, balanced principles of God's Word
- Provide resources to churches and individuals in order to raise awareness and educate regarding the root of dysfunctions that create disunity within individuals, families, churches and communities through unresolved trials, troubles and tragedies
- Train individuals to facilitate ongoing support groups and mentoring in a safe, nurturing environment

We believe that as we heal from life's trials, troubles and tragedies, we become inspired and committed to reach out to others as a result of gratitude for our personal healing; to care for others because our lives are so enriched by Christ's forgiveness; and the blessing of the freedom we have experienced due to His unending grace and mercy.

The Healing Value of the 12 STEPS

Step 10—

“Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.”

Biblical Comparison

“For I say through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.”

—Romans 12:3 NKJV

Steps to Christ

The Work and the Life

Upcoming Events

September

National Recovery Month (September 1-30)

For more information:

SAMHSAInfo@samhsa.hhs.gov

877-726-4727 Toll Free

www.recoverymonth.gov/

Health and Human Services Live Stream

(September 27)

Time: 1:00 – 2:00 pm, EDT

Live from Washington D.C., the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services will convene national leaders and experts to talk about the opioid epidemic and other addictions to raise awareness, encourage compassion, reinforce the role of community and families in long-term recovery and prevention, and make a call to action. View at <https://www.hhs.gov/live>.

October

Mental Illness Awareness Week (October 1-7)

National Alliance on Mental Illness (800) 950-6264

Helpline

info@nami.org | www.nami.org

Webinar: Hope in Action (October 18, 2017)

Time: 12noon – 1:00 pm EDT

Based on an understanding of the opioid crisis developed through previous partnership webinars (recordings below), this webinar will review the six different strategies outlined in the Partnership Center's Practical Toolkit which faith leaders and your community can use to support prevention efforts, reduce risk, and provide support to those in and seeking recovery. Register at <https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/7484761963617294339>.



12 STEPS to Recovery STEP #10

Normally, when one needs their alignment checked, they drive down to the nearest Midas or favorite auto garage. You wait a little while, pay the normal fixed price for your alignment, and then you're off and running. After that day you tend not to think about your alignment for, well, who knows how long.

What about your life's alignment? In the 12-step recovery process, if you're ready to work step 10, then you should be proud of yourself. Give yourself a pat on the back for you've just completed one of the more tedious but important parts of the 12 step program. To be perfectly honest with you, probably one of the most important steps of your life are steps 8 and 9.

When we speak of life's alignment, we speak of aligning your will with God's will. Working step 10 will benefit you tremendously when it comes to the wonderful feat of accepting God's will as your own. Step 10 says to promptly admit when you are wrong, not promptly justify or promptly sweep it under the rug. Promptly admit it! One may ask, "Well, who do I admit it to?"

You have already won half the battle by simply recognizing the wrong. You've already admitted the wrong to yourself, now it's time to admit it to your Heavenly Father. One might say, "Well the Lord knows and sees all, so why should I have to admit my wrongs to the Lord?"

When I say admit to God your wrongs, what I really mean is ask Him for forgiveness. There is nothing you can offer God to appease Him for your wrong doing and sin. What God wants is repentance. King David writes, "For you do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; you are not pleased with burnt offering. Psalm 51:16. Understanding your sin and wrong doing and how it makes God the Father feel, is the first step of reconciliation and promptly aligning His will with yours. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise." Psalm 51:17. And we also know that "God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." 1 Sam 16:7

On the *Journey to Wholeness* we're using the 12 steps of recovery to overcome obsessions, compulsions, and addictions. It is said that if you work step 1 through 9 and apply step 10 on a daily basis, God will remove these obsessions, compulsions, and addictions. We hear the term, "one day at a time," in 12 step programs all over the world, and you may also hear something else called a "daily reprieve". This daily reprieve is contingent on the maintenance of your spiritual condition. So when it comes to looking for that daily reprieve from the aforementioned obsession, compulsion, or addiction,

then promptly admit your wrong and ask God for forgiveness. By doing so, you develop and strengthen your relationship with your Creator and align your will with His, which is good, acceptable, and perfect. Sounds like a pretty good contingency plan to me that everyone should try.

"Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is: that which is good acceptable, and perfect." Romans 12:2!

*Michael W. Voegele, Co-Director
Adventist Recovery Ministries, Killeen, Texas*

I'm Not Defective!

I want to claim and say today
I'm not defective in God's way

You see I've always felt not good enough
And done some pretty negative stuff
I've been a good actor and fooled a lot
I've lied and cheated and didn't
To dig myself my own deep grave get caught
All my addictions and fears I've saved

My grave of self-hate and deep ugliness
Destructive and sick and such a mess

But within God's beautiful trees and fresh air
I made a discovery of God's love and care
A treasure, a gift, a beautiful discovery
To trust my God in Adventist Recovery

12 baby steps I'll walk towards Him
Towards my Lord who died for my sin
I'll learn to surrender myself free today
My wounded heart feels God turn and say,
"You're not defective, I love you always!"

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Besotted Brain Blunders

The pair sat in my office: AJ, slumped in an overstuffed chair, his wife BJ (they were definitely into acronyms) rigid on a stool.

After introductions, I asked what they wanted to discuss. AJ looked at BJ. She looked back at him.

“AJ has a disease,” BJ said finally. “It’s ruining our lives.”

“And BJ enables my disease,” AJ retorted.

“In a couple of sentences,” I said to AJ, “tell me the issue.”

Clearing his throat, AJ looked out the window, tried to squirm but his 350 pounds packed his chair to overflowing. Finally he said, “At one time or another during our 25 years of marriage I have been addicted to sex, tobacco, booze, television—and now food. I eat all the time. It’s escalated from an avocation to a vocation. I just want to feel better.”

“Of course you do,” I replied. “The brain itself wants to feel better. The problem comes when you and your brain develop strategies to feel better quickly rather than creating and maintaining a healthy lifestyle: physically, emotionally, mentally, spiritually, sexually, socially, and you name it. The strategies can quickly escalate into addictive behaviors as the brain learns to go for the fast dopamine thrill. Problem is that each thrill lasts only for a short time.” AJ nodded.

I looked at BJ. “Please explain the enabling issue,” I said.

BJ sighed dramatically. “What am I supposed to do? AJ snacks continually, eats a quart of ice cream every night, complains bitterly if fridge and freezer are not stocked with all his favorites... It’s easier to keep them stocked than listen to him whine—and then he blames me. Whines and blames. I do not understand the brain and addiction.”

“Whining is just anger squeezing out through a very small opening,” I replied. “Blaming is an attempt to displace some of the discomfort you feel onto someone else. It provides a momentary illusion of feeling better, although it never solves anything.”

“So what are my options?” AJ asked, a belligerent tone creeping into his voice. “Bariatric surgery for stomach stapling?”

“That is an option,” I replied, “but it’s a drastic surgery and the problem begins in your brain, not in your stomach, so many gain back what they lost. That’s the problem with a besotted brain: the biggest cure for one addictive behavior is another one. You may want to evaluate your self-medication habits.”

AJ shrugging. “Guess it’s in my genes. Addictions run through our generational family like water through the Grand Canyon.”

“That sounds like an excuse,” I replied. “Your brain can only do what it thinks it can do and you are the one who tells it what it can do. Yes, genetic and epigenetic inheritances do play a part, but estimates are that seventy percent of how well and how long you live is in your own hands. If your brain believes there is no problem with your lifestyle, it will continue to prompt you to do whatever makes you feel better right now, giving little if any thought to how it will impact your future health and longevity.”

“And self-medication?” asked AJ, changing the subject. “I do not do drugs!”

“What is your definition of a drug?”

The brain can use almost anything as a ‘drug’ as long as it releases dopamine and makes you feel better. Metaphorically think of your brain, not as a pot of gold (although it is likely the ultimate pot of gold), but rather as both a pot of chemical stew and as

a pharmacy. As chef, you self-medicate through what you ingest. As pharmacist, you alter brain chemistry

Ranked in order of most problematic in terms of addictive-like behavior, the top twelve foods were:

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------|
| 1. Pizza | 7. Cheeseburgers |
| 2. Chocolate | 8. Cake |
| 3. Chips | 9. Sodas |
| 4. Cookies | 10. Dairy cheese |
| 5. Ice cream | 11. Bacon |
| 6. French fries | 12. Chicken |

—University of Michigan Study using the Yale Food Addiction Scale

continued on page 4

Resources

Journey to Wholeness:



A series that can be used in support groups or small groups as a resource to facilitate recovery

of breaking away from harmful practices and strengthening an intimate relationship with God in the Journey to an abundant life. Facilitator guides and participant guides can be purchased in our online store at www.AdventistRecovery.org

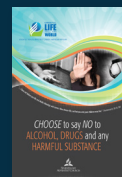
Journey to Life Newsletter:



This bi-monthly newsletter is available in English, Spanish, and soon in French as well. Print a free

pdf copy, download, or register to subscribe and receive it via email at www.AdventistRecovery.org

Choose Full Life Resources:



These are posters, calendars/bookmarks, booklets that can be used to share with others 10

Ways to Choose a Full Life embarking on a Journey to Recovery. For more information and to place an order please go to www.NADHealthMinistry.org and check out the online store. The Choose Full Life theme song is also available for download.

Unhooked:



This is a 28 part series produced by ARMin and Hope Channel,

highlighting different type of addictive behaviors, real stories, and experts comments on effective treatment. The ultimate goal is to bring hope for recovery in Christ. You can watch the series weekly Hope Channel or direct TV channel 368. The complete DVD with all episodes will be available for purchase in October. For previous episodes and more information go to: www.hopetv.org/unhooked or www.adventistrecovery.org



Featured Article *continued from page 3*

through behaviors or thoughts that release brain chemicals that change the way you feel.” I handed each a list of the top twelve foods ranked in order of most problematic in terms of addictive-like behavior.

“Lord have mercy!” AJ groaned. “I love all of those. Eat most of ‘em every day!”

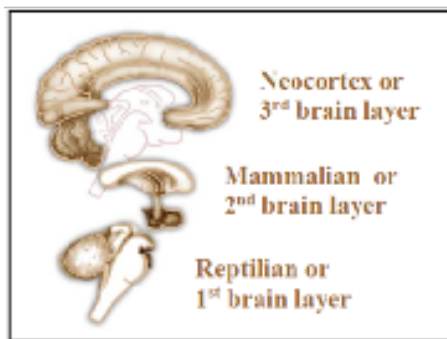
“That’s why I say you’ve got a ‘disease,’” BJ said emphatically. “A disease changes your brain, right?”

“Sometimes a disease changes your brain,” I replied. “Sometimes what goes on in your brain contributes to the development of disease. Either way it’s not the highway to high-level-healthiness.”

“But . . .” began AJ, but BJ interrupted. “He’s been involved with so many addictive behaviors and been to so many programs—they’re all so different—that we’re totally confused.”

“Almost anything can turn into an addictive behavior and while the boundary parameters may vary, the basic recovery strategies are very similar,” I explained, “because addictive behaviors all trigger the Brain Reward System or BRS.”

Getting out a model, I explained the triune brain with its three basic brain layers along with an easy way to remember each in order. Look at your left wrist. It represents the reptilian or 1st brain layer—which contains repetitive routines that often kick in automatically unless you make a different choice. It processes primarily the present tense (right here, right now). Form your left hand into a fist. That represents the mammalian or 2nd brain layer—which contains major functions related to the BRS. It processes both the present and past. Cup your other hand over your fist and picture that as the neocortex or 3rd brain layer—which contains the function of conscious thought and can process present, past, and future tense.



When the brain wants to feel better, it tends to look for some person, place, substance, or thing to trigger the release of dopamine, the feel-better chemical, 50% of which is in your brain and the rest in your gut. When it begins to feel better, the BRS pays attention. The next time the brain wants to feel better, the BRS pushes

you to do whatever released dopamine last time. Before very long, you can develop a very strong habit that can move on to an addictive behavior. It’s not that it is absolutely impossible to control an addictive behavior, but eventually the behavior that triggers the BRS becomes so strong that most people just give up trying. Even the anticipation of doing something that makes your brain feel better can trigger the release of dopamine.

“Oh my goodness,” BJ and AJ said in unison and AJ continued. “How come no one ever explained it like this before? I get it! I feel bad; my BRS pushes me to do what made me feel better last time; I do the behavior and feel better. Next time I feel bad, the cycle repeats. Wow!”

“This is now the age of the brain,” I replied. “Some of this wasn’t even known until quite recently. Addictive behaviors are complex, and yet at their core the process is relatively simple. No need to make it more complicated than necessary.”

BJ looked at her watch. “So next week we’re talking about . . . what?”

“Busting Bad Behaviors,” I said. They left actually smiling.

*Arlene R. Taylor PhD
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Realizations Inc*

[Editor’s note: This is the Part One of Dr. Taylor’s two-part series on the addicted brain. Part Two will appear in the November-December issue of the Journey to Life]

NEWS
Columbia Union

The Bladensburg Seventh-day Adventist Church in Bowie, MD launched its *Journey to Life* program on September 30, 2017. Contact them at <http://www.bladensburgsda.org/> or RandRblades@gmail.com for more information on meeting dates and times.



SEND US YOUR NEWS

Recovery related news, pictures (protect anonymity of individuals in meetings) and upcoming recovery and awareness events can be sent for future newsletters. Please send these to Ray Nelson, *Journey to Life* Editor – adventistrecovery@gmail.com and/or Angeline David, Adventist Recovery Ministries Director – health@nadadventist.org.

Director’s Message



Having worked as a dietitian, I have seen how eating disorders and “food addictions” affect an individual and their family. Although the medical community does not classify food addictions as a clinical diagnosis, the fact remains that food is often used as a coping tool. And certain foods do have addictive properties on their own accord.

As foods enter the digestive system, they stimulate production of the hormone dopamine in the brain. The dopamine works on our brain cells to give us pleasurable feelings, which are not necessarily bad in and of themselves. But this is part of what drives addiction to a substance or behavior. When we excessively use the substance or behavior in order to produce greater degrees of these “highs,” we become dependent and potentially addicted. And the results can be catastrophic. We are learning that foods that are higher in fats, salt, or refined sugars seem to have a greater affect. These often come in the form of processed foods. On the other hand, whole grains, fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables, beans and legumes, and nuts and seeds appear to not have these tendencies. You don’t often hear of someone who just can’t stop eating broccoli!

Food is necessary for survival, unlike most other addictive substances. But how often do we just “give in” to certain foods even though we know they are taking us where we don’t want to go? No one likes to feel powerless. If you struggle with harmful eating patterns, I encourage you to find a dietitian who understand addictions and the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Find an accountability partner, or attend a Journey to Wholeness group. Clean out your pantry and avoid those aisles in the grocery store with the risky foods/drinks. And take it one step at a time, one bite at a time, towards a life of fullness, freshness, and freedom.

God created us with the wonderful ability to enjoy a delicious and satisfying meal. Find your fulfillment in the goodness He wants you to have, in the ways He wants you to have it.

...I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. John 10:10, NIV

Angeline B. David

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