

PERSPECTIVES ON HEALING

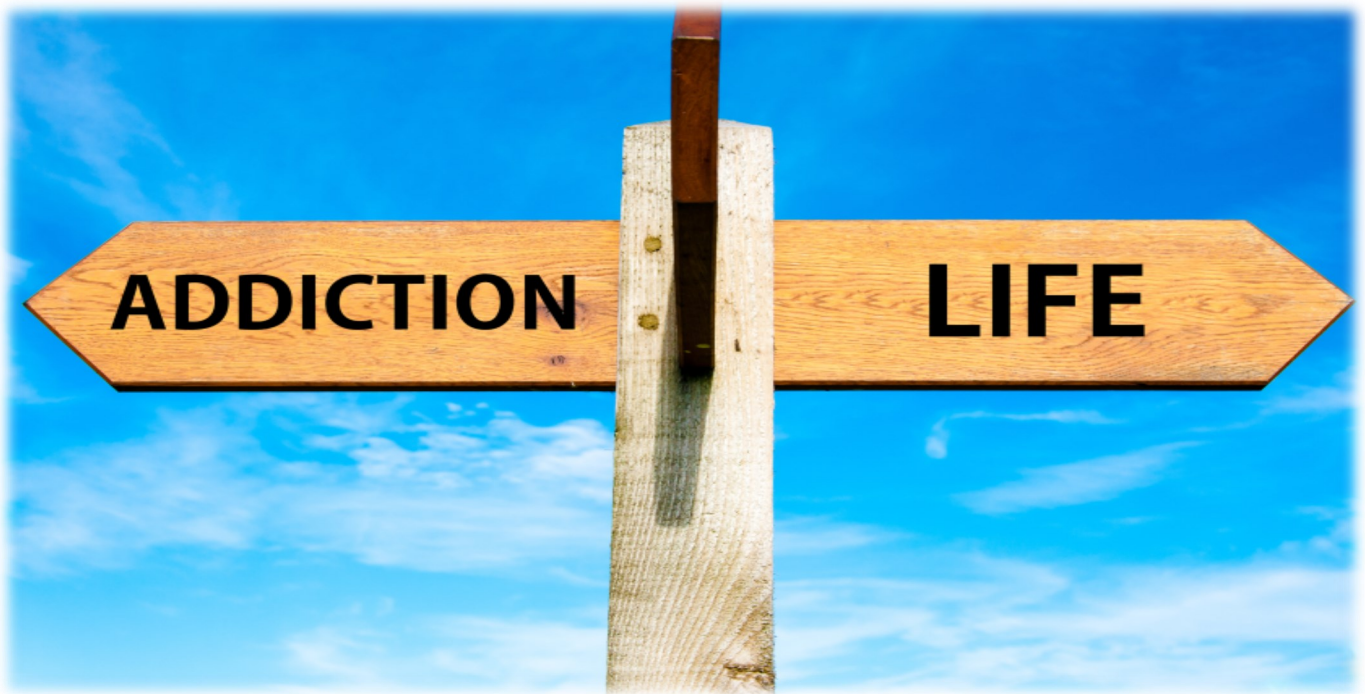


Perspectives of Troy Counseling Centers - Trauma and Grief Department

Fall 2016 Edition

Trauma and Substance Abuse

Understanding the Connection



Trauma multiplies the possibility of developing an addiction.

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An addiction multiplies the probability that trauma will be experienced.

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Perspectives can help. You need not walk alone.

Perspectives of Troy Counseling Centers
(248) 244-8644 or (586) 268-6712
Visit our website: perspectivesoftroy.com

Trauma and Substance Abuse

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Have you ever taken that extra glass of wine at a party or drank one more beer before the night ends because of unpleasant emotions? It could be that you're self medicating. Self medication theory suggests individuals begin to use alcohol or drugs as a way to manage stress. The theory explains that exposure to emotionally threatening or perceived emotionally threatening situations may cause a flood of emotions. This flood of intense emotions is felt as "too much to handle" and so we look to numb our feelings. The numbing agent whether it be alcohol, marijuana, cocaine or other substances becomes a coping tool for stressful situations.

Often not recognized is that substance abuse weakens an individual's ability to cope with stressful situations. Think of Henry who began drinking at age 16 to "fit in" with his friends. Social awkwardness is a commonly reported feeling among teens. Drinking becomes a typical social interaction for Henry as he attends parties and makes new friends. Henry begins to find that he is less nervous and laughs a bit easier when he has had a couple of beers. He notices that people seem to respond to him more positively and therefore thinks others must like him better when he drinks. The result is that Henry develops social anxiety because he never learns how to effectively manage social situations. Rather, he has been numbing himself instead of developing meaningful ways to manage his world. In other words, alcohol can stop emotional growth of an adolescent.

Therapy is designed to help Henry find healthy and effective ways to manage and minimize his social anxiety and eliminate his addiction. Through therapy, Henry can develop positive self esteem which in turn will allow him to enter social situations with natural confidence.

"Sources estimate that 25 to 75 percent of people who survive abuse and/or violent trauma develop issues related to alcohol abuse."

"Accidents, illness or natural disasters translate to between 10 to 33 percent of survivors reporting alcohol abuse."

"A diagnosis of PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) increases the risk of developing alcohol abuse."

"Male and female sexual abuse survivors experience a higher rate of alcohol and drug use disorders compared to those who have not survived such abuse."

Source: www.recovery.org

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***The caring professionals at
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Why Does Addiction Follow Trauma?

1. Memories can feel intensely dangerous after a traumatic event. It feels better to forget.
2. The traumatic images seem to filter through our minds day and night. An addiction allows us to soften these intrusions.
3. The surge of adrenalin that comes with destructive behaviors produces endorphins - the body's natural feel-good hormones.
4. Addictive behaviors can feel powerful - a key emotion that is absent after a traumatic event.
5. A traumatic event can make subsequent events seem unmanageable. Addictive behaviors provide a false sense of control.
6. Trauma can leave you feeling hopeless and broken. Addiction may be what we think we deserve. The worse you behave, the more it can feel like you're living in alignment with who you truly are.
7. Trauma redefines who we are and where we fit in the world. Old friends "won't understand." Addiction can provide a new community and a false sense of belonging.



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Trauma and Addiction

- “One in five adolescents between the ages of 12-17 engages in illicit use of drugs/alcohol.”
- “One in four children in the U.S. experience at least one traumatic event before age 16.”
- “Youth who abuse substances may be less able to cope with a traumatic event.”
- “Up to 59% of young people with PTSD develop a substance abuse problem.”
- “The effects of chronic trauma tend to be cumulative, because each event serves as a reminder of the prior trauma and reinforces its negative impact. “

Source: *National Child Traumatic Stress Network*



Call for more information
about our services!

Perspectives of Troy Counseling Centers

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