



S.T.A.T. Sobriety Services
(Start Treating Addiction Today)

Do You Have the Disease of Addiction?

If you are an alcoholic or a drug addict, it is very important you eventually come to this conclusion yourself. We who work in the addiction profession often refer to it as the only self-diagnosed disease. I can tell you that you are an alcoholic “until the cows come home”, but unless you believe it, you will not seek help. I hope the following will help you decide whether or not you have this disease.

An important indicator of addiction is whether or not you continue to drink or use despite negative consequences. These consequences can involve the following:

- Marital or relationship problems
- Work problems
- Health problems
- Legal problems
- Dishonesty
- Emotional turmoil
- Emotional absence or neglect of children
- Giving up hobbies or recreational activities
- Financial difficulties
- Acting against your personal morals
- Social isolation
- Poor hygiene
- Becoming irresponsible
- Breaking promises

Non-addicted people will look at all these bad things happening, realize they are hurting themselves or others, and simply stop using. Addicts and alcoholics will look at such consequences, make a decision to stop using, and eventually return to use despite the consequences.

Failed attempts at quitting use are also strong indicators of addiction. Most addicts who eventually seek outside help have had repeated attempts at quitting. Often they have some success at remaining off their drug of choice for extended periods of time. Such apparent success is often mistaken for non-addiction. They say to themselves, “See, I have proven that I am not an addict because I have remained off drugs for ‘x’ amount of time.” Having mistakenly proven non-addiction to themselves, they return to use and create more consequences. Others have very little success at quitting for any significant period of time. Such people may actually be better off because they recognize the need for help sooner and get busy seeking ways to recover.

Another strong indicator of addiction is using more than you intended. Almost every time I used drugs or alcohol, I intended to use an amount that would result in minimal consequences. I failed almost every time at sticking to such a plan. Despite having proven repeatedly that I could not limit my use, I was surprised every time I failed. Once I began using, the phenomenon of craving kicked in and I was

utterly powerless over continued use. Therefore, I firmly believe complete abstinence can be the only successful way to be relieved of addiction.

What Kind of an Alcoholic or Addict are You?

To continue our discussion of whether or not you are an alcoholic and/or addict, it is important for you to know there are many different types of alcoholics and addicts. Are you the type who drinks or uses all day, every day, and/or must do so to avoid withdrawal symptoms and stay well? To most, this is the stereotypical alcoholic. Some such alcoholics end up unemployed and homeless. However, some alcoholics of this type are able to keep their jobs and family. They often fool themselves into believing they are not alcoholics because they compare themselves to “gutter drunks.” But they are very much alcoholics because alcohol has control over their lives.

Are you an alcoholic/addict who is in denial because you only drink at night after work to unwind? You appear to have the ability to abstain during the day, but are compelled to drink every night. Not every person who does this is alcoholic, but if you have some of the consequences mentioned previously and you do not (or cannot) stop this pattern, you are certainly an alcoholic. You might also compare yourself to the gutter drunk, which keeps you sick until you face the truth about your condition.

Are you a person who uses only on weekends, but you use enough to result in negative consequences? Despite such consequences, the disease will also have you believe that you are not alcoholic because you don't drink every day or because you are able to hang onto your family or job.

Finally, are you a “periodic” or “binge” drinker who can go weeks, or even months without drinking? You have periodic sprees in which you binge for days or weeks and have many consequences. It is particularly difficult for you to come to terms with your addiction because, every time you stop using after a binge, you view such temporary success as evidence of non-addiction – especially if you compare yourself to the gutter drunk.

I hope this discussion on the types of addiction prevents you from being fooled about your drinking or using. No matter what your pattern, if you continue to drink or use despite negative consequences, you are most assuredly addicted. If you have come to the conclusion that you are, in fact, addicted to drugs or alcohol, I implore you to seek out help – it will not go away on its own.

God Bless,

Bob

(Excerpts taken from Bob's EVVY award-winning book, *Enough Already!: A Guide to Recovery from Alcohol and Drug Addiction*. [Available at amazon.com])

Sober since 1988 and working in recovery for over 20 years, Bob operates an addiction private practice, provides consulting services to treatment programs, is an accomplished speaker, and teaches in the Alcohol and Drug Studies Program at Loyola Marymount University Extension. He is also Past President of the California Association of Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Counselors (CAADAC) and author of the EVVY Award-winning book: *Enough Already!: A Guide to Recovery from Alcohol and Drug Addiction* (www.bobtyler.net).