

Our Recovery – Our Challenges – Out of The Shadows

Most people would assume that those of us with wealth, fame, or power could afford to do what it takes to stay clean and sober, but that is so often not the case. Our recovery rates are significantly lower than other alcoholic/addicts, and there are a multitude of reasons why these seeming privileges end up hindering sustained sobriety – and happiness.

The Personal

Back in 1995, I was sitting in the lecture hall at Hazelden, trying to figure out how to recover without losing everything and wondering why none of my many alcoholic relatives never quit – just went right on to disability and death. After about five days in treatment, it dawned on me that I might be part of my problem and so I reluctantly begin the very uncomfortable exploration as to how this could be. My journey began with breaking the “no talk rule”.

The Mafia like Code of Silence permeating wealthy family culture isolates us and prevents us from getting the support we need from each other and the helping community. To this end, the Alcoholic Family System and the Wealthy Family System are very similar. Given our high rates of dysfunction and deaths -with public figures the tip of the iceberg - it's time for us to come out of the shadows and talk about what it is really like growing up and living with wealth and prominence.

Failure to address these underlying drivers of addiction are a major cause for relapse. I first learned about the benefits of heart to heart conversations from the “Doughnuts” a self-directed support group for inheritors. I then used this experience to connect with several treatment peers with similar backgrounds, finding it very beneficial to open up. The problem, of course, is that the only really safe environment for this deep dive is with people from a similar background.

Others in the AA-therapy community hold deep resentments against the affluent and well-know and often look at us as targets for exploitation. And they simply do not understand our life experiences and challenges in living with money and often in the public eye. Given the difficulty in finding community, I am hoping this

site will help the reader look inward at areas that might be triggers for relapse or blocks to happiness.

As a community of recovering individuals and professionals with backgrounds in family businesses, wealth, and prominence, we are dedicated to educating, connecting with, and encouraging people living with addiction *and* significant resources, media visibility and status. If you are a substance abuser, family member, or concerned friend, you have come to the right place.

- **The Challenge: To recover with health and resources intact**
- **The Goal: Enjoying our money and life without alcohol or drugs**

Or as Joe Walsh says “You either figure out how to live with money and fame or you die”

Our reality: Our resources are killing us

This is what we know: Money and power are an integral part of our addiction, alcoholism, and family dysfunction. The advantages and privileges of wealth or fame support and feed our substance use. When using, these very resources distinguishing us from others are, in fact, part of our disease and, in essence, killing us.

- In many ways, we are like other addicts: We do whatever it takes to get our drug of choice; we can't imagine life without alcohol; we use drugs to cope with our emotions; etc.

But unlike other addicts, we can use our resources, position, and influence to obtain our drug, manipulate the world around us, and – most dangerously – isolate and shield us from our consequences. The end result – disability/death.

Money fuels the fire of addiction

The dangers are in our access to money, our lifestyle, our attitudes, and our family secrets. While these traits are present to some extent in most wealthy people, when addiction strikes, they can become toxic. They allow us to appear normal, while the obsession to drink or use continues to grow unabated. Unless examined and addressed, sustained recovery is almost unobtainable.

Barriers to recovery

In talking among ourselves, we've identified eight areas that are common barriers to recovery – barriers that keep us stuck in trying not to use rather moving on to the transformation of soul and spirit that is the foundation for sobriety.

Being special! Feeling unique, different, and superior.

I'm not like those other lowlife addicts. Are you too special to recover?

Lack of consequences: Using resources that enable us to deny our problem.

What problem? Talk to my lawyer!

Resentment and envy: Envy, perceived or real, hindering our recovery.

"If I had your money, I'd never be an alcoholic."

Cultural and social rules: Cultural rules encouraging our addictions and preventing us from asking for help.

What shows is what matters; keep it in the family.

Materialism: Putting money and possessions ahead of self-care and recovery.

Doing and having, rather than being.

Myth of the "American Dream": Expecting money and success to lead to happiness.

What's wrong with me that my lifestyle and toys don't make me happy?

Suppressed pain: Submerging the intolerable and denying our experiences.

Hey, it's not so bad.

Fame: The personal and family impact of being prominent/famous.

Reconciling what is real versus what is imagined.

See Future Posts for More Details.