

Addictions, Casseroles and Grace

As a chaplain at Advocate Health Care's Addiction Treatment Program, I am often asked by patients and their loved ones, is an addiction really a disease? As a congregational rabbi, I am often asked, can someone in our community really have an addiction? The answers are yes and yes.

The disease of addiction, or a substance use disorder (the medical term) is a chronic illness that afflicts people of all ages, races, ethnicities, religions, denominations, creeds, and beliefs. The recent opioid epidemic has raised our individual and collective consciousness of addiction in faith communities.

Feelings of loneliness and shame are common among individuals with substance use disorders and their families and these feelings often work to isolate members of our communities from us. Sadly, there is often still stigma associated with having a substance use disorder. A mother of one of our emerging adult patients once said to me, "If my son had cancer, my community would have made casseroles and offered support—no one makes you a casserole when your child has a substance use disorder."

Of course, this doesn't mean we can treat the opioid crisis with casseroles. Rather, it is a call to people of faith to remember that God's loving grace is for everyone, especially for those impacted by scary and deadly diseases like substance use disorders.

There are potential behavioral, physical, and/or psychological symptoms associated with an opioid use disorder. Peace of mind and help begin with an assessment by a qualified counselor. You can schedule a confidential assessment at the Advocate Addiction Treatment Program by calling 847-795-3921. If you, or someone you love, has or might have problems with opioids, alcohol, or any drugs please seek help. You are not alone.

Prayer: May the Source of All Blessing guide the suffering into the hands of those partnered to provide care.

Rabbi Rob Jury
Chaplain



Experience of Divine Presence Helps Kids Kick Addiction

The positive effects of spirituality on health can be difficult to measure. But a new study finds that teens who encountered a "divine presence," during treatment for substance abuse had a greater likelihood of kicking the habit, showed better social behavior and became less self-centered.

Researchers at The University of Akron, Case Western Reserve University and Baylor University, looked at the spiritual habits of nearly 200 substance-dependent kids ages 14-18 who were in a court-ordered treatment program at a residential facility in Ohio. Most of the teens were marijuana-dependent.

The Ohio facility uses the 12-step recovery program of Alcoholics Anonymous, along with cognitive and motivational therapies. Researchers made a point to clarify that "spiritual experiences," were not bound to any particular religious beliefs.

Study co-author, Dr. Matthew T. Lee, professor and chair of sociology at The University of Akron, said the positive impact of spirituality on addiction was tangible.

"The key message is that changes in spiritual experiences are associated with better outcomes, including lower toxicology, reduced self-centeredness, and higher levels of helping others," Lee said.

It's always nice when the science confirms what we have long known to be true in our faith settings. God's presence is real and transforming!

