

## USE RELATED HELP WISELY

There are other kinds of help which may apply to you. Some kinds of “help” turn out to be simply dangerous nonsense. But certain helping resources may be of life-or-death importance to you; for example, medical help in the physical crises of your addiction and your recovery. You should be cautious how you use these latter resources, however, because they can harm you as well as help you. Be on the alert for these various kinds of help. Use them wisely when they apply, and avoid them carefully when they are pitfalls. Watch out for these things:

*Advice from ignorant well-wishers:* When you are in the kind of deep trouble that addiction causes, you will never lack for people who want to tell you how to straighten out your life. Their intentions are often admirable, but most of them do not know the first thing about recovery from addiction. These are the friends and relatives who often feel downright obligated to impart some words of advice and comfort. Their theme is usually something like this: “Cheer up. Things are bound to get better. You just have to pull yourself together.”

Counsels of optimism for addicts are always dangerous. Mere sentimental talk reinforces the lying self-will, the “I’ll-take-care-of-it-myself” mentality which wants to push doggedly on through endless personal tragedies and wrecked relationships on its road to insanity and death. Real recovery, when it comes, is born out of a very different view of the situation, a view which searches out, not the pleasant or the cheerful, but the *true* state of affairs. And in this view, things are even worse than you thought they were. You and your life are out of control. Your position is indeed hopeless — unless you can bring about a radical turning away from self-will to the higher power of God for help. If you do not see the actual, terrible hopelessness with unblinking vision, you will never have the heart to turn to God with the necessary sincerity. The unvarnished truth is not a threat or a burden but a priceless aid; it is the only bridge across the chasm.

*Psychotherapy:* At some point in your addictive career, one or another form of psychotherapy may be recommended to you as a way that can solve your problem. The evidence is against it. The record is clear: an addict is as well off without psychotherapy as with it. This is the conclusion of repeated scientific studies within the field itself. (See page 80.) Psychotherapy is not among the more successful recovery resources for addicts, and it is a dangerous thing for any addict to get involved in even after he is well on the road to recovery, because it can lead to relapses in those who try to use it as a substitute for the real recovery resources. Conventional religion, philosophy, various kinds of pop psychology, mystical and metaphysical kicks — all of these things likewise can be relapse producers when used as substitutes for the real recovery resources.

*Doctors:* Medical help is a problem. It may save your life. At the same time, wrong medical attention has harmed many addicts, and it may harm you. It is a foolish addict who forgets this. Get the medical help you need, *but get it from a doctor who knows enough about addiction to know the following:* (a) that he, as a doctor of physical medicine, cannot supply special help for your spiritual illness of addiction but only for its physical complications, and (b) that addicts should not be given mood-changing medicines (central nervous system depressants or stimulants, hypnotics, anodynes, or narcotics) except under strictly emergency conditions, and then only with the utmost care and really responsible follow-up to insure that the drugs are properly limited and properly withdrawn and that they do not cause readdiction. *Any time you take these drugs, you are risking readdiction.* As a matter of fact, some doctors do give mood-changing drugs to both active addicts and recovered addicts without anything like proper care. You have to be alert to this problem any time you see a doctor. It is your right *and your responsibility* to insist that, as an addict, you are not dangerously or harmfully medicated.

Run — do not walk — away from any doctor who wants to “manage” you by putting you on methadone, Thorazine, Librium, Zoloft, Valium, or any other mood-altering drug, for an extended period of time. Some of these drugs are sometimes useful during the first few days of acute withdrawal. All of them absolutely bar you from sane, sober, responsible membership in the

human race when used continually as tension relievers, depression relievers, anxiety relievers, or props for daily living.

Do not expect too much from doctors, even very good doctors. Doctors can treat physical problems accompanying addiction, but they and their art can do nothing for addiction itself, the uncontrollable urge to return to the addictive substance. On the record, one thing can overcome that urge: a new relationship with the truth and with God.

The doctor is not ultimately responsible for your health. *You are*. You are not a child or an animal but an adult human being, and both you and your doctor ought to remember that. Cooperate with your doctor, and in every way possible help him to help you. At the same time, remember that he is not your father, your mother, your keeper, or your priest; and he is not God. A confused authority-starved society has thrust these roles upon mere medical men, but you should take care to stay out of that act. As an addict, you cannot afford to get involved in any such games, because you cannot stand the wrong directions and disillusionment that come of it. When you go to a doctor you must have faith in him, but it should be a reasonable faith. Faith that is erected upon pseudoscientific illusions and deceptions will not stand the shock of reality and eventually is worse than no faith at all.

One of the chief obstacles — perhaps *the* chief obstacle — to real recovery from addiction today is the increasing muscle of the professionals. (See section II.) These folks often mean well and sometimes do well, but they are burdened by the most serious kind of factual and conceptual errors, and they are full of a recently acquired and largely unwarranted self-confidence. As an addict, you should try to remember this obvious truth: the professionals do not have the keys to recovery, and they often do not know or will not admit where the keys really are. The professionals may help you in certain ways, or they may harm you. You may need professional help, but in using it be on your guard. Never forget where the real power is. It is your life and your sanity that are at stake.

The real power for recovery from addiction lies in the *principles* which alone produce recovery, the principles of surrender to God and to the truth, cleansing and amendment of life, and helping others. These principles are the Answer you must find if you want to live. The various amateur movements which work with these principles are where you will find real recovery help, and they are normally indispensable. In a really abnormal situation — that is, if for some serious and valid reason you cannot relate to one of the movements — it is possible to recover by working directly with the principles. That is the position that the founders of the recovery movements were in. And others have done it too, at need. Thousands of alcoholics, for example — the so-called “loners” who live in remote places or on ships at sea or in like circumstances — have recovered merely by reading the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* and putting its principles into practice. It is possible by starting with a knowledge of the principles and the company of two or three fellow addicts who also are seeking real help to start a group which will lead not only to your own recovery but perhaps also to the formation of other successful recovery groups.

The Answer is greater than the movements; the principles are greater than the personalities — but still, you cannot do an end run around the movements. Many a “smart” addict has tried this maneuver and ended up on his butt. If you *can* get in touch with one of the existing Answer-bearing movements, and you choose to avoid it out of laziness, self-centeredness, timidity, or some mere prejudice, you probably will spoil your chances for recovery. A new group of your own is a good resource only if you really cannot make contact with the presently working groups. Recovery is usually easier and safer in an established, proven group than in a new and untried group. Nevertheless, when they are necessary, the new groups work.

The Answer is available. It is up to you to relate to it.