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## Relapse - It Happens (But it Doesn't Have to Be the End of the Road)

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### What do you do if your loved one relapses?

*"It's the same old story, the same old song and dance."*

-Steven Tyler/Aerosmith

The above bit of lyrics, from a song by Aerosmith is a good analogy for an addict that chooses to try some more *"controlled using"* (better known as relapse).

Unfortunately, Steven recently checked himself into a rehab center after twenty years of recovery from drugs and alcohol. Why? How does something like this happen?

Perhaps more importantly, the question can be: ***When this happens close to home, what can I do to help--as a concerned friend or loved one?***

*"Every strike brings me closer to the next home run."*

-Babe Ruth

### Understanding Relapse

Even after reading this, you may still have trouble trying to understand why a relapse may happen. I'm a recovering addict, it happened to me, and it's hard for me to completely understand as well. The truth is that a recovering addict may relapse several times. **The best thing to do is to try to remain hopeful**, and encourage the person to keep on fighting the battle, though you may feel anger, frustration, and disappointment.

Getting some support from others in the family, and from groups such as Al-Anon, will be helpful. And try to remember that the recovering person will feel these feelings as intensely as you do. Relapse is similar to a cancer that comes out of remission. It doesn't do any good to get mad at the cancer or the person. The same is true for the disease of addiction.

Instead, try to focus on the solution, which is to get your loved one sober and drug-free.

**Eventually, with the help of family and the right support, those in recovery will stop relapsing**, regardless if they've had one relapse or a dozen.

### Relapse Happens

Some who are reading this may have already observed several relapses. **You may be asking, when will it ever stop?** You can take comfort in knowing that a majority of people in recovery will have a few relapses. For a small minority, it could be much worse, and additional long-term treatment may be necessary.

A very good friend of mine works in the recovery field. Nick (not his real name) has abstained from drugs and alcohol for almost twenty years. His life is good, his marriage is solid, and he has a teenage son who is doing great. But years ago, I don't know of anyone who appeared to be more hopeless. I can only imagine what it must have been like for his family, going through relapse after relapse after relapse. Nick went through eight different treatment centers before he finally got it.

The day of his last relapse was very stressful for him. He was living in a halfway house at the time. Halfway houses usually have many rules and everyone is assigned different chores, such as cooking and cleaning. After lunch Nick skipped his cleanup assignment, walked two blocks, and bought a half-pint of vodka. Before the bottle was gone, he was on the phone buying crack. This crack binge lasted a few days and he soon had another warrant out for his arrest. He was offered the choice of going through another treatment program or returning to prison.

That was over twenty years ago. Since then, he has helped hundreds of other men, women, and their families battle this same addiction. Nick is now highly respected in his field, loves his work, and will continue to be an inspiration for countless others in the future. *He is just one more example to me of how **anyone can overcome addiction.***

This article is excerpted from Chapter 29 of Joe's book "Why Don't They JUST QUIT?"

Joe Herzanek, a man who battled his own demons of addiction over twenty-five years ago, says, "I know people can change. If I can do it, anyone can!"

A recovering person himself, Joe is the president and founder of Changing Lives Foundation and author of the new book "Why Don't They Just Quit?" As an addiction counselor in Colorado he has spent thirteen years working in the criminal justice system.

His passion for helping men and women struggling with addiction, as well as their family members and friends, inspire him to offer hope and solutions.

Joe offers words of encouragement: "Addiction is not a hopeless situation," he writes. "Addicts and alcoholics aren't crazy, and they can quit."

Joe and his wife Judy have three children, Jami, Jake, and Jessica, and enjoy the beautiful Colorado outdoors with their two Cairn Terriers, Lewis and Clark.

<http://www.whydonttheyjustquit.com>

<http://www.changinglivesfoundation.org>



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