

## Thames Clinic Article June/July 09

One of the biggest challenges that some clients at the Thames Clinic struggle with is that they may drink too much or use drugs but they aren't alcoholics or addicts; they're not that bad. The answer is quite simply, if you find yourself in a detox facility or a rehab, it stopped being bad quite some time ago and has moved into devastating. You see, addicts and alcoholics fool themselves very easily, and they take hostages.

There is a strong public face associated with addiction and it ranges from images of celebrities staggering out of night clubs, to dribbling wrecks being bundled into their car or house by well meaning friends. Somehow it has become cool to drink and use drugs to excessive levels and to wear the badge of addict, its not funny or glamorous so don't let the headlines mislead you; addiction kills, not just the individual, but the family and everyone else it touches. Families fall apart, children grow up too fast, employers put up with excuse after excuse for lateness, sick leave or missed deadlines and those touched by addiction have their lives changed forever; these are the hostages of addiction, the people around the individual who try to cope.

Alcohol and drugs are very good at making it acceptable to break personal values, every client who comes into treatment at the Thames Clinic brings with them a trail of destruction, their families are exhausted, angry and frustrated that a substance comes before anyone or anything else in life.

So who are alcoholics/addicts? We are all shocked when a news headline states that someone was killed by a drink driver, but how many of you can honestly say that you have always done the school run completely sober? Have never gone into work with a hangover and then gone on to drink later in the day to get rid of the effects. Haven't had a spliff during your 'smoking' break or a lunchtime drink that turned into an all day event? There are so many real life stories out there about how addictions destroy those they touch and yet that is not enough to make the addict/alcoholic stop.

The only way to deal with addictions effectively is to clinically and safely remove the individual from their drug of choice and to medically detox their body from the effects of withdrawal. However, that is only the tip of the iceberg, our job as therapists is to help each person to look at why they drink or use drugs, what that substance has become to them and who they have become as a result of their addiction as well as to look at the devastation they have caused. This is painful work and not everyone can face it; that is why people relapse. I have never come across anyone who changes for the better through addiction, they may believe they become more confident and outgoing but everyone around them cringes in embarrassment and wishes they would just stop fooling themselves.

If you need further information, please call the Thames Clinic on 020 7060 2861 or email me at [Wendy.powell@tppcc.org](mailto:Wendy.powell@tppcc.org)

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