

Beat: Health

Life with an Addict

Addictions other than to drugs

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USPA NEWS - Relationships certainly have their ups and downs, but the stress can be compounded when one has an addiction.

I live with an addict. When we met, I knew he smoked cigarettes and drank liquor. As a society, we seem to tolerate smokers, until the smoke or smell encroach on our personal space. I felt that way and also tolerated his drinking, as we were both social drinkers. It was when we discussed living together that I found about his marijuana use. He told me he only smoked it occasionally and it was that way for a while. There was a weekend that he was agitated by his ex-wife and every few hours he was having to take a hit. He basically spent the whole weekend high. I told him that I did not want to be with anyone who believes they cannot deal with life unless they are high. He made a big, grand gesture that led me to believe that he was trying to impress me. He gave what marijuana he had and his paraphernalia to a friend of his. He had his friend come to our house, so I would be there to witness it. I told him not to do it for me, but to do it for himself, because it was his choice. He has stayed away from weed, but lets me know when he is offered some and declines, I guess so I should be proud of him. I remind him that he did not quit for me, but for himself.

His addiction to nicotine is one he has had for 35 years. Last year he took the step to attempt to quit smoking cigarettes, by calling the state's help line. After speaking with him, they sent him nicotine gum for free. Again, I told him to do it for himself and not for me. Usually addicts will start another addiction while quitting another. This was the case for my man-friend. He started drinking alcohol every day during his smoking cessation. I was now dealing with an alcoholic who was trying to quit cigarettes. Whether it was a wise choice or not, I told him that I would rather live with a smoker than an alcoholic. He quit the nicotine gum, went back to his pack a day habit, and cut back on drinking to just Friday nights. Trying to be funny, he said "I am not a quitter. I never quit anything in my life and I am not about to start now."^[1]

Thinking the worst was behind us, he now has addictions that do not always come to people minds. He has now become addicted to shopping and buying scratch off lottery tickets. These habits are starting to become costly. He is not a hoarder with regard to the addictive shopping. He will see things that he thinks someone will like and "have"^[2] to get it for them. This may sound like him being nice and buying gifts for others, however, when he cannot pay the bills when they come, it becomes a negative pattern. The issue with the "scratch offs"^[3] has become the last straw. A while ago I got him a debit card that was tied to my bank account, so I could have him pick up things for me from the store after work, without having to come home and get my card. I had ignored times he used my card to get himself cigarettes, because he would pay me back on Friday. Well, one day I checked my bank balance and I had 21 cents in my account. He drained my account to buy lottery scratch off tickets.

He was spending more than \$200 a month on them. I told him we were done. I got my bank card from him and cut it up. I told him I couldn't trust him anymore. I was nipping it in the bud, before it would get worse. He needs help that I cannot give him. His addictions are changing, maybe not for the worse, but in ways I can no longer handle. I understand that everyone has issues they need to deal with and I was trying to be understanding, but lying to me and stealing from me is where I draw the line. The last time I had a man steal from me, it was for drugs. I will write about that in another article about life with an addict.

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