

# It's never too late to get help with an addiction

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By: **Phillip Martin**, The Republican Eagle

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A person who has been through the hell of addiction but overcomes it to go on to lead an ordinary life just isn't as exciting a story—even though each one is a small miracle.

Programs aimed at the prevention of alcoholism and addictions are great, and can make a difference. But preventing someone you love from the trap of addiction feels impossible to many.

Ask any parent who has had their own struggles and then watches as their child falls victim to addiction despite all the education and protection in the world.

No one ever sets out to become an addict. Yet too often through a combination of genetic predisposition, emotional factors, and their background or community, many people find they are unable to quit on their own.

The fact is that people can and do recover from the illness of chemical dependency. There is no cure, but they can achieve a lifetime of sobriety, or continue to have longer and longer periods of it. Any amount of time not using drugs and alcohol helps the mind and body to heal from the damage these chemicals do.

Long before there were treatment programs, many people were helped to recover through Alcoholics Anonymous. There are now countless 12-step programs where people help each other in their struggles with the chemicals that human beings use to change the way they feel. There are also numerous treatment programs, and professionals who keep working at finding more effective ways to treat this disease.

Addiction and alcoholism don't play out in a vacuum either. They affect numerous others who care about the addict—family, friends, coworkers. There is help available for them in community Al-Anon meetings and family programs in treatment centers to help heal from the damage caused, whether the addict recovers or not. Often loved ones feel they are alone in their struggle.

But after attending a meeting they find out their struggle is the same as others, no matter what the addiction is.

The most important message is that there is hope for those suffering from alcoholism and addiction.

In most communities there are many AA and other meetings that cost nothing to attend. Assessments are available from professionals to help determine if there is a problem, and referrals can be made to many different programs. Most insurance now pays for treatment. There is also help available through state funds for those who are income eligible and not able to afford treatment.

What it takes is to first see there is a problem--to admit how bad things have gotten. Next you need to reach out and ask for help. It starts with wanting a better life, and taking action to achieve that goal.

It's not easy. In fact it will probably be the hardest thing you ever do. But from those first steps, every day and in every way things can get better and better.

Resources for information and help:

- Goodhue County Chemical Health Initiative: [www.chi-goodhue.org](http://www.chi-goodhue.org)
- Alcoholism or addiction: [www.Alcoholism.about.com](http://www.Alcoholism.about.com) or [www.Addictions.about.com](http://www.Addictions.about.com)
- Alcoholics Anonymous: [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org)
- Cocaine Anonymous: [www.ca.org](http://www.ca.org)
- Narcotics Anonymous: [www.na.org](http://www.na.org)
- Al-Anon meetings: 1-888-4AL-ANON or [www.al-anon.alateen.org](http://www.al-anon.alateen.org)
- Celebrate Recovery (religion-centered support groups): [www.celebraterecovery.com](http://www.celebraterecovery.com)