

Have You Been Stung By the Stigma of Addiction?

June 15th, 2011

The following is a guest post by Cathy Taughinbaugh, founder of the blog, [TreatmentTalk](#) on Lisa Frederiksen's Addiction & Recovery Blog, [Breakingthecycles.com](#).



Have you felt the stigma of addiction? When I first started writing this blog [[TreatmentTalk.org](#)], I wanted to be anonymous and hide behind some generic description of my purpose. As time went on and I learned more about blogging, I began to reveal more of myself.

I put my first and last name on the blog. I added a picture of myself. I wrote posts about my family's story. I then began to tell others about the blog. This is when the stigma hit me. It reminded me of a record when the music screeches to a stop.

My family and close friends all know my story, but it's when I feel the need to reveal my past to a new friend or acquaintance that it becomes difficult and I feel discomfort.

For me, this is still the tough part of going public. The thought goes through my mind; What will they think of me? Will they think I am a bad parent? What will they think of my children?

I'm still working on getting past my feelings about the stigma of addiction. It's been an evolving process that most likely will continue in some degree throughout my life.

I remind myself to pay close attention to the words of support. I remind myself that not one person has said I was a bad parent.

I've had compliments on the blog. Some like my writing, some like the way the blog looks. I've gotten ideas for future posts. I've been told how lucky other parents dealing with addiction are that I am writing the blog. These may be just kind words or they may be sincere thoughts, but nevertheless I have felt supported.

"I'm writing a blog about addiction!!" doesn't have quite the same ring to it as some of the successful blogs out there that talk about making your life better or changing your habits. I don't feel as free to announce Treatment Talk to the world.

What I realized is that my theme is really the same as so many other blogs. Yes, there is a more specific audience, but it too is about living a better life, making better choices, following your heart and paying attention to the proven facts.

When we choose a healthy lifestyle for ourselves, we influence those around us by our example. When we remember to let go of trying to control others, we allow them to be responsible for their own lives.

I know writing this blog is where I belong because my heart is in it and there is something inside that is driving me forward. I love thinking up new posts for Treatment Talk, and I feel that I have made the right choice for me.

Let's think for a moment about the stigma of addiction and how it is holding all of us back. There is the social and legal discrimination against people with addictions because of the stigma.

Many people just don't think of it as a disease, but still consider it a character flaw or weakness without a cure. This explains why addicts and their families hide the disease.

Although understanding a disease that you have not experienced can be difficult, it's important to try, and break the stereotypes. Medical research has revealed that addiction is a physical, chronic disease much like diabetes or high blood pressure.

You wouldn't dream of judging someone with one of those medical conditions. When people stop thinking about addiction as a character flaw, more people will be able to get help.

When you are a victim of a stigma, you may begin to internalize the hate, which then changes to feeling the emotion of shame.

Here are some thoughts on rising above the stigma of addiction.

- Let go of the fear, and whenever possible reveal your true self.
- Find your strength and know that you can do something about addiction.
- Become visible in your stand on recovery, or any other cause that you support.
- Let go of living your life to meet the expectations of others.
- Be proactive regarding the reality that addiction is a disease, not a character weakness.
- Be an advocate for an individual or family with an addiction problem.
- Love yourself first, so that you can pass that love on freely to others.

Addiction is the invisible disease. It is understandable when your job is on the line, that you need to be careful about revealing your past. That being said, consider that addiction will only come to the forefront of concern when we stand up and say that we have had enough of watching too many lives destroyed by this disease. In whatever way you can, let your voice be heard.

We are all finally free when we choose to be authentic and be true to who we really are.

Cathy Taughinbaugh is a former teacher and mother of a crystal meth addict who has been in recovery for over 5 years. She writes on addiction, recovery and treatment at TreatmentTalk.org.

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