

OPINION: One addict's perspective on "Addiction is a choice, not a disease."

"I loved your article about addiction. The stigma saddens me. I'm a recovering addict and I know what it's like to be bound by the grips of addiction and using drugs against my own will. It's safe to say that some people will never understand and I'm grateful for that. I wouldn't wish addiction on my worst enemy. So I pray for them to be relieved of all their hate and negativity."

Recently my ten year old daughter used the word junkie. It broke my heart. It also inspired me to write this I don't know why I'm even sending it but I guess it was refreshing to see someone write something different about addiction. So thank you for that."

Dear Stigma,

My name is Coralee, and I am recovering addict. I'm one of those "junkies" you say horrible things about whenever someone talks about addiction.

I get that it's hard to forget what we did in active addiction, it's hard for us to forget as well, but let me ask you something: "What's the worst thing you've done?"

I know you won't tell me, but just think about it. That thing you regret that no one knows about. Well, what if it wasn't a secret? What if you were branded because of that thing you wish you could take back? That's sort of what it's like to be one of "US." Being an addict isn't the worst thing in the world, but you disagree.

Don't be mistaken – if I could take it all back I would.

“Poof!” It would be gone. But that’s impossible. I can’t even do as you do and pretend it never happened. In order for me to make sure I never make the same mistake, I have to work hard to make sure that I don’t. If I don’t put in the work, my disease will tell me it’s OK to have one drink, smoke one blunt, or shoot one bag, and my disease will now not resurface again and continue to progress and believe me it will.

Now you are probably saying “ADDICTION IS CHOICE, NOT A DISEASE!”, right? Yes, it does start with the choice. Just like all the choices you made in the past. You drink the same beer, smoked the same pot, maybe even sniff the same line that I did, but you were able to take it or leave it and just walk away. Myself, however? I was not so fortunate, and because I suffer from the disease of addiction (for which I might add there is no known cure) I will for the rest of my life either struggle to stay high or fight to stay clean.

We didn’t grow up wanting to be addicts. I wanted to be a songwriter actually. I never pretended my dolls were copping drugs or my trolls were dope sick. I never said “When I grow up I want to be a liar a cheat, homeless, and have my daughter taken away from me and be involved heavily with DCF. Nobody wants to suffer from the disease of addiction. Unfortunately there is no choice in the matter, we just do. We could have never predicted the havoc one bad choice could bring us. So don’t forget you made that same choice too. You were just lucky that it was me with the disease and not you.

If you are still doubting that addiction is a disease contact the CDC or the surgeon general – they classified it as one, but I bet you know more about it than they do, right? I hope and pray you never have to learn about addiction the hard way and find out someone you love suffers from the disease, but rest assured if they are we will welcome them into our community of recovery and help them, because we have a disease not a moral deficiency. We have found a new way to live. We want to keep it that way and help other addicts find the same

way.

So the next time you are going to go on another rant on social media condemning someone who is suffering, stop and think about that. You are hurting people. People who have the disease and the people who love them. You have no idea how many people on your friends list that might be, odds are it's more than a few, unfortunately. Some of which are suffering at this very moment. Why spread the hate and judgment? While you have the right to your own opinion, hurting people is wrong now matter how you look at it.

With nothing but LOVE,
Coralee DaCosta.