

Scott Blair: Does your addiction affect your loved ones? This is Stay Happily Married, episode number 306.

Announcer: Welcome to Stay Happily Married, your source for weekly updates on the latest tips and advice to build a happy and healthy marriage.

Scott Blair: I'm Scott Blair, and I'm your host today. Welcome to the show. Does your addiction affect your loved ones? As the awareness of mental health issues has been expanded, the acceptance of addiction as a disease has also increased. When people talk about addiction, most assume drug or alcohol addiction, however, there are many more types that are common; exercise addiction, food addiction, computer addiction, and gambling are all common forms of addiction in today's society. When someone is addicted to something, they have an impaired control over the behavior. They become preoccupied with the behavior and continue to engage in the behavior despite the negative consequences. Not only can addiction be harmful to one's self, but it can be detrimental to your family and friends. How does addiction impact a relationship? What can we do to reverse some of the unfavorable effects of addiction in a relationship? Earning her Master's Degree in mental health counseling from Walden University, Melissa Enoch-Deberry is founder and owner of Trinity Counseling Services LLC in Charlotte, North Carolina. Following college Melissa has volunteered with a nonprofit organization, Fighting Back, a grant-funded program designed to combat societal ills in lower socioeconomic neighborhoods in Mecklenburg County. She is currently a licensed clinical addiction specialist and furthering her education to become a licensed professional counselor. Welcome to the show, Melissa, I'm so glad that you could join us today.

Melissa Enoch-Deberry: I'm glad to be here.

Scott Blair: Well, Melissa, you're here today to increase knowledge of the stages of addiction and process of recovery as it affects the individual and couples. So what problems do you see that couples are experiencing in their relationships when addiction begins to take over?

Melissa Enoch-Deberry: Well, it's been said that individuals who are addicted to chemicals or who will eventually become addicted they're often married. Sometimes they marry first and then start down the road towards addiction, and in some cases family members are suddenly faced with the unwelcome addiction or another addictive disorder. The addict begins to use drugs compulsively while they're single and then they get married. Sometimes they may choose a spouse that might be another addict, a marriage of convenience that brings with it a using partner, an additional source of chemicals and sometimes money for drugs. Or in some individuals in a marriage with full knowledge of the spouse's addiction with the hopes that maybe he is an addict because of his or her behavior. In many cases the individual is unaware of the person's addiction prior to the marriage and then is faced with the reality. There are some statistics that says that in 2012 adults age 18 and over approximately 17 million of them had an alcohol use disorder because more than 10% of U.S. children live with a parent who has alcohol problems, and 23.9 million Americans age 12 or older or 9.2% of the population has used an illicit drug or abused a psychotherapeutic medicine. And these statistics come from the National Institute on Drugs and Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism at Stanford and the drugabuse.gov. So sometimes the decision of past and current use causes a strain on every aspect of the relationship and causes a pattern of behavior that is observed by the children in the family.

Scott Blair: Wow, those numbers are really high. Left unresolved, what are some of the short and long-term negative effects that these addictions have on the relationship?

Melissa Enoch-Deberry: Well, for one, as the individual progresses in their use their behavior worsens, I saw what the cognitive model which is the disease model of addiction that says, "There may be occasional drinking or occasional using, and then they began to have physical effects, such as blackouts. And they have emotional effects, such as shows of guilt, having to lie about their use or their behavior or more. And as the addiction worsens as they go from social use and progressing to more things in the crucial phase and the chronic phase. You began to see more physical deterioration, moral deterioration. It becomes excessive drinking and using, and then there's the whole spiritual desire that it can go all the way down to the bottom where completely decadence. And then there can be mental effects of that. Then find themselves having lives so much trusted as lost, and it can be vary from there.

Scott Blair: Well, what point in time do you see that the couples or even the individuals are admitting or becoming aware that their addiction is hurting the relationship?

Melissa Enoch-Deberry: Well, as far as addiction and alcoholism and their defense mechanisms, that phrase was coined by Freud. And basically, in short, it says that once the addiction and alcoholism seek a protective shell, so the protective shell is, first of all, denying so the couple or the individual will deny there's even a issue with all the reasons and excuses. "I was raised that way. My family did this. It was dramatic. It's okay to drink during the Christmas holidays or Thanksgiving or even deny that there's an issue. Then it grows from there. Then they go through each other projecting blame in which there's the loss of my job or loss of my goals or loss of my dreams. And then it can go to "That reminds me, it's not really that big of a deal. It's all right. I worked all week long so it's okay if I stay drunk from Friday or stay high from Friday through Sunday as long as I'm taking care of the family again." By the time that the roles of the family have actually switched, what happens is they stop being aware. And it becomes an issue because they go into a family system where the wife or children all begin to play roles. This is assuming it's the husband. It could go either way. And it says, well, okay, one person becomes the enabler and then someone becomes the hero and there's a scapegoat and who knows? Someone might become the lost child or someone becomes the mascot. And all those wore are emulated in the family so they may not be aware that there is an issue until it begins to affect them more greatly as the addiction progresses down into the crucial and chronic phases.

Scott Blair: Have you observed any trends among the people that struggle with addiction? Are there any patterns that seem to be common?

Melissa Enoch-DeBerry: When we interview, when we complete assessment, oftentimes we get into like family background, there is some genetics. Behaviorally as when they were younger, they may have experimented with the drugs, the peer pressure. So those are some of the trends that we see, and then they find themselves making detrimental, you know, like maybe getting kicked out of school or lose a scholarship or lose an opportunity early on. So those are some of the trends that I see with the individuals. My practice primarily focuses on the individuals. The families do come in. Then what I do notice is most of the times the families are operating under some of those other roles. You have the enabler, the wife's mother, making excuses for the child or the spouse or the husbands making excuses for their wives. And so those are some of the trends, and then as it progresses they're not being involved in treatment, not understanding treatment, not understanding recovery, not understanding what it is, what chemical dependency is, how it looks and things like that. So those are just some of the trends that I've seen with individuals and as they share about their family, then their relationships. People have numerous relationships and things like that.

Scott Blair: Okay, so the couple becomes aware that this is causing a problem in their relationship, and they're admitting they have an issue. Where do you start? What do you suggest that these couples do to kind of progress through the addiction?

Melissa Enoch-DeBerry: Well, if an intervention is necessary, education is important realizing that the family has a value and sharing with them or enlightening them to get help, if possible, you have to work within the family. You can treat the individual, but you really need to treat the whole family. The family disease model looks at it as a disease that has affected the whole family and individuals has started practicing in those certain roles and they just need to do things differently.

Scott Blair: Can we drill down on that a little bit, like can you name a few specific items that you have couples work on that help resolve some of these negative issues that you're talking about?

Melissa Enoch-DeBerry: First thing is they need to understand it as a disease or as something that affects the whole family so they all need education. The thing to realize is that there are symptoms that must be diagnosed and treated. Then they can understand that in their education as they go through the movement and process of recovery there are going to be hills and valleys in it. I'm going to have a honeymoon phase. The first week's going to change, but the wife or husband cannot expect immediate results because it didn't happen immediately. And so then the reality part of it, letting the individual know that, okay, you're clean now but there are some more things that you're going to have to work on. If it gets overwhelming, they can make it through treatment, through counseling, through sharing with others, through self-help groups. And then when you get into the latter part of the recovery stage or the early part which is one year, at least, clean and sober helping them to make it to that milestone, you begin to look at more emotional recovery. What are the causes? Where does it go back to? And working on that as an issue. There is a suggestion that for every year that an individual has been using is the number of months that you would need to work in treatment and work on those issues. So if a person's been using 12 years, at least, 12 months in some type of counseling to work on those issues and see what exactly has caused their guilt and what are some of their personality defects and their character that they can work on and help work in conjunction with attendance to self-help groups. All afford an individual with Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous as well as the family members with the Al-Anon and Nar-Anon.

Scott Blair: So with couples approaching or even the entire family approaching the addiction in this new way, what are some of the changes that you're seeing in the quality and interactions of the family?

Melissa Enoch-DeBerry: One thing is more communication, when they start using, oftentimes they are reaching out, alcoholism removes it. It also removes the individual's role since they began interacting more, mood changes more. Then they began to share their own thoughts and their own feelings, things that have been affected as a result of the use, and just continue to work on that. So they learn to communicate their feelings, learn to share their thoughts more, and just learning to realize about the behavior and what's more positive versus the negative.

Scott Blair: Well, you quoted some high statistics early, and I'm sure that all of us know somebody that is struggling with some type of addiction. So I'm sure this show is going to be very popular and downloaded a lot. Is there anything else that you think our listeners should know about this topic?

Melissa Enoch-DeBerry: Wherever they are and they've maybe downloaded, there are organizations all over that can help and direct them to the first step as to what they need to do and what can help them. It is a

process so they need to know what. It's not going to happen immediately and just know that yet the other person may be using but there is some background to it and they have been affected and that help is available. And September is National Recovery Month. It's an annual celebration that they can download SAMSHA, S-A-M-S-H-A, or Recovery Month, and they can look that up. And there are going to be activities hopefully worldwide. We're hosting one in Charlotte, North Carolina, September 20th, but there are other organizations who are hosting National Recovery Month this month, but they're highlighting those individuals who are in recovery, who are working in recovery, and they're sharing their stories and sharing the process. If they look those things up, they can probably find organizations that are working and working with individuals that have recovered from this and hope is possible. So hopefully the individuals that download that will know that as well. It's not completely a life sentence.

Scott Blair: Melissa, thank you so much for talking with us and being on the show today. To find out more about Melissa Enoch-Deberry and her practice, Trinity Counseling Services LLC, you can visit their website at www.TrinityCounselingCharlotte.com or call 704-921-9600 for an appointment. Thank you so much for joining us today, and I hope you'll join us again next week. For more information about this show and previous episodes, visit us at StayHappilyMarried.com. I'm Scott Blair. Until next time, stay happily married.

Announcer: Thank you for joining us today on Stay Happily Married. If you'd like more information, please visit us on the web at StayHappilyMarried.com. We would love to hear your feedback or comments. Please email us at Comments@StayHappilyMarried.com or call us at 919-256-3083. Until next time, best wishes.