

## Life is Negotiation

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Everyday each of us is faced with numerous choices and opportunities. Negotiating our way through the maze of our daily lives is not always a question of right or wrong. Instead, it often consists of choosing the best course of action based upon information that may not be clearly defined or through situations that present themselves to us unexpectedly. During these times a steady hand and a clear mind are required to ensure we negotiate the turns and curves of life safely and with care.

For a person whose life is compromised by substance abuse, learning good decision making processes is sometimes unfamiliar territory and can be quite overwhelming. At the Behavioural Health Foundation we provide people a safe environment in which to practice sound decision making, even when the outcomes may not be clearly defined. Through positive coaching, communicating relevant experiences and the teaching of established methods of reasoning; we provide the necessary tools to negotiate the challenges of day to day life.

To those of us not negatively affected by the consequences of personal substance abuse, having to learn sound decision making skills may seem like a foreign concept. However, for the substance abuser this is a necessary, and sometimes overwhelming, process. For many days, and even years, the substance abuser has dealt with life and its negotiations through their drug of choice – dulling their minds, emotions and cognitive experiences in the fog of addiction and the altered state of reality manufactured by a chemical high.

When a person has their first chemically induced high, they temporarily suspend their cognitive and emotional development for that moment. During the experience, the person is not in the present. Instead, they are experiencing life through an impaired sense of reality produced by a manufactured, and false, sense of elation, power or invincibility. Their actual reality becomes suspended and muddled by an altered and chemically induced one. The continued and repeated altered state of reality through drug abuse will lead to a more complete breakdown in the person's ability to deal with the real world. This deterioration pushes them further into the state of manufactured, and altered, reality through the continued cycle of substance abuse. The addict loses their ability to negotiate the real world.

Negotiating the way back to reality and dealing with the hidden consequences of living for so long in an altered reality is frightening. Some don't negotiate the journey safely. Some will retreat back into the now familiar darkness of addiction. For them, it is safer there; more predictable. There are also those that will pay the ultimate price of becoming hopelessly lost in their addiction, never to return to the light and hope of life.

At the Behavioural Health Foundation we reach out to those lost in the fog of addiction. We come along side and offer a hand of friendship, strength and safe guidance. Many of us have been there before. We understand the fear and challenge of facing life with its many gifts, struggles, consequences and demands. With this understanding we teach the tools, mechanisms and skills required to confidently negotiate life's challenges head on.