



ALCOHOL & DRUG

ABUSE

Breaking Free & Staying Free



HOPE
for the Heart

June Hunt

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JUNE HUNT



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Alcohol & Drug Abuse: Breaking Free & Staying Free

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Dear friend,

I wish you had known my Uncle Billy. He was quite bright. His teachers said that he was the kind of student who could make straight A's without even coming to classes! He was handsome with dark brown hair and deep set dimples in both cheeks. Everyone wanted to be around Uncle Billy, but he wouldn't allow much closeness. He kept his distance.

Although my uncle was smart and capable, I always felt sorry for him because he was somewhat the "black sheep" of the family. By the time I was a teenager, Uncle Billy had gone through many tough times. One day he awakened to find out he had lost his small refrigerator-freezer business—his business partner ran off with his wife and all of the company's money. He was devastated.

His life loomed as a dark picture of losses. He lost his wife, his business, his health, and his self-respect. He completely lost control of his life because something else had control of him. And ultimately he lost his life. You see, my Uncle Billy was an alcoholic, and he died as a result of suicide. We all loved Uncle Billy, but in the end we lost him.

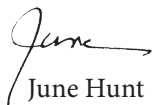
I have often wondered, *What could have helped my Uncle Billy? What could have saved him from his own self-destruction?* Like my uncle's, countless other lives have been destroyed by a chemical addiction, leaving family and friends

struggling with similar questions: *What set up this struggle with substance abuse? What could I have done to help?*

With addictions affecting so many, you may be wondering, *Can those in the throes of a chemical dependency be set free—permanently?* The answer is yes! There is hope. In order to break free from an addiction, there must first be the recognition that there is a problem and the willingness to face the problem so that healing can take place. But the most important step is turning to God, allowing His strength to help carry the burden. Isaiah 41:13 says, *“For I am the LORD, your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you.”*

If you are struggling with a chemical addiction, the heavenly Father is waiting for you with open arms, beckoning you to come to Him. He will walk with you each step of the way in your journey to freedom. Like His prodigal son who *“was lost and has been found”* (Luke 15:32 NASB)—you need not be lost anymore.

Yours in the Lord’s hope,



June Hunt

ALCOHOL & DRUG ABUSE

Breaking Free & Staying Free

He was an all-American hero. Some say he was the greatest baseball player who ever lived.¹ Mickey Mantle seemed to have it all—fame, fortune, and millions of fans. The day of his graduation from high school in 1950, he signed with the world renowned New York Yankees, a decision that began his road to stardom. The statistics support his superstar status: 536 career home runs, three Most Valuable Player awards, a career batting average of .298, seven World Championships, and baseball's Triple Crown, meaning he led the entire major league in the three categories of highest batting average, most home runs, and most runs batted in.

However, Mickey also lived an extravagant, alcoholic lifestyle filled with various types of abuse. When he was diagnosed with liver cancer, it was evident that the years of drinking had intensified the damage. Despite his successful treatment for alcoholism, the assault to his body was too severe, and death came swiftly. During the final inning of his life, Mickey stood before the microphones at a press conference, gestured toward himself, wanting the world to know that he was no role model, and said, "Don't be like me."²

What could take the greatest switch-hitter in the game of baseball from adoration down to addiction? Why do millions of people each year take that same painful path? The Bible gives this explanation:

**“There is a way that seems right to a man,
but in the end it leads to death.”
(Proverbs 16:25)**



DEFINITIONS

What is a drug?³

- ▶ A drug is a chemical substance introduced into the body that produces physical, emotional, or mental changes. Some drugs are helpful, and some are harmful.

Three primary ways of using drugs:

- ▶ Ingesting—swallowing pills, powders, liquids
- ▶ Inhaling—breathing in powders, smoke, fumes, and other inhalants
- ▶ Injecting—inserting a substance directly into the veins, which provides a more direct effect, or injecting the drug underneath the skin (called “skin popping”), which allows the drug to be absorbed more slowly into the blood stream

Three ways of obtaining drugs:

- ▶ Over-the-counter (including alcohol)
- ▶ Prescription (only prescribed by a medical doctor)
- ▶ Illegally (The legal status of a drug varies from country to country.)

QUESTION: “Is it possible to abuse drugs and alcohol and not become addicted?”

ANSWER: Yes. Just as every drug is different, everyone’s physical makeup is different. Some people become addicted after small amounts of a substance; others consume greater quantities before becoming dependent. Because of the destructive risk of addiction, using unnecessary drugs is dangerous. Substance abuse is like playing Russian roulette—it can cost you your life.

Conscientious Christians need to know that our bodies are not our own to abuse in any way—they belong to God.

**“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.”
(1 Corinthians 6:19–20)**

WHAT IS Substance Abuse?⁴

Substance abuse is the use of a chemical, legal or illegal, to the point of causing a person physical, mental, or emotional harm.

There are five types of substance abusers.

- ▶ An **experimental** user is a person who uses a drug out of curiosity.
- ▶ A **recreational** user is a person who “gets high” on drugs on special occasions (parties, celebrations).
- ▶ A **regular** user is a person in a constant pattern of drug abuse who also attempts to live a normal lifestyle.
- ▶ A **binge** user is a person who uses drugs uncontrollably for a brief period of time and then abstains until the next binge.
- ▶ A **dependent** user is a person who is emotionally and physically hooked on drugs and whose life centers around obtaining those drugs. This person has a chemical dependency.

Regardless of the substance, the Bible describes the substance abuser: “*When such a person hears the words of this oath, he invokes a blessing on himself and therefore thinks, ‘I will be safe, even though I persist in going my own way.’ This will bring disaster on the watered land as well as the dry*” (Deuteronomy 29:19).

QUESTION: “I have friends who drink heavily—sometimes to excess—and they want me to party with them. Is it okay for me to go with them, even if I am not drinking?”

ANSWER: There’s an old saying, “You become like what you hang around with” or, as the Bible says, “*Bad company corrupts good morals*” (1 Corinthians 15:33 NASB). Going with those friends is not wise. Scripture clearly states,

**“Do not join those who drink too much wine
or gorge themselves on meat.”
(Proverbs 23:20)**

WHAT ARE the Four Major Drug Classifications?²⁵

Drugs are generally classified into four major groups depending on their effect on the body.

- 1** **Depressants** are drugs that produce a calming effect and slow down the central nervous system.
 - Prevalent types are alcohol, sedatives (sleeping pills), tranquilizers (valium), barbiturates (“downers”), and organic solvents (model airplane glue, gasoline, and aerosols).
 - Psychological symptoms are poor concentration, distorted thinking, lack of judgment, and aggressiveness.

- Physical effects are drowsiness, slurred speech, lack of coordination, tremors, decreased energy, coma, impaired vision, decreased pulse rate and blood pressure, respiratory depression, and death.

The Bible refers to those who ...

**“Stagger from wine and reel from beer ... and are befuddled with wine; they reel from beer, they stagger when seeing visions, they stumble when rendering decisions.”
(Isaiah 28:7)**

2 Stimulants are drugs that excite bodily functions and speed up the central nervous system.

- Prevalent types are cocaine, crack, meth, and amphetamines (“speed” or “uppers”).
- Psychological symptoms are excitability, increased energy, exaggerated self-confidence, heightened sexual drives, temporary exhilaration, irritability, apprehension, and intensification of all emotions.
- Physical effects are hyperactivity, restlessness, insomnia, loss of appetite, dry mouth, bad breath, itchy nose, dilated pupils, rapid and unclear speech, perspiration, headaches, dizziness, elevated blood pressure and heart rate, psychosis, and death.

The book of Proverbs describes those who walk without wisdom, those who are victims of their own folly. Like the one who takes stimulants ...

**“Disaster will overtake him
in an instant; he will suddenly be
destroyed—without remedy.”
(Proverbs 6:15)**

3 **Hallucinogens** are drugs that alter and distort reality.

- Prevalent types are LSD, marijuana, PCP (“angel dust”), and mescaline.
- Psychological symptoms are hallucinations, heightened sensitivities, anxiety attacks, lowered inhibitions, and out-of-body experiences.
- Physical effects vary with each drug. LSD acts as a stimulant; marijuana acts as a depressant (reactions differ with each individual): sleeplessness, loss of appetite, increased energy, increased pulse rate and blood pressure, eyes fixed in a blank stare or rapid involuntary eye movements, slurred or blocked speech, higher rate of accidents and violence, disorientations, and death.

Although the Bible does not directly mention hallucinogens, it does address the hallucinogenic effect of alcohol, which is frightening and disturbing.

“Your eyes will see strange sights and your mind imagine confusing things. You will be like one sleeping on the high seas, lying on top of the rigging. ‘They hit me,’ you will say, ‘but I’m not hurt! They beat me, but I don’t feel it! When will I wake up so I can find another drink?’”
(Proverbs 23:33–35)

4 Narcotics are drugs that reduce pain and elevate a person’s mood.

- Prevalent types are opium, morphine, codeine, heroin, methadone, and meperidine.
- Psychological symptoms are temporary euphoria, dulled senses, lethargy, and confusion.
- Physical effects are relief of pain, droopy eyelids, constricted pupils, slowed reaction and motor skills, drowsiness, lack of coordination, depressed reflexes, dry mouth, constipation, scars or abscesses at injection sites, and death.

When you are in pain, rather than turning to drugs, turn to the Lord, be dependent on Him, and seek His direction for pain relief.

“I am in pain and distress; may your salvation, O God, protect me.”
(Psalm 69:29)