

The Ice Breaker

Moms and Dads Against Meth, Inc.

E-mail: madatmeth@yahoo.com

Website: www.methawareness.org

Volume 3, Issue 2 August–September 2007

“There is no use worrying about things over which you have no control, and if you have control, you can do something about them instead of worrying.”

–Stanley C. Allyn

Meth in the workplace: Up, down, or unknown?

Why would an employer hire a meth addict? The answer is obvious: they wouldn't—if they knew the prospective employee used meth. The use of illicit drugs has made drug-testing a standard procedure in the hiring process for most companies in the United States. Many companies continue to test employees at random or if drug use is suspected, such as when an accident with serious injury occurs.

Many employers feel that the *threat* of drug testing should be enough to keep employees from using illicit drugs *ever*. But some people, particularly meth addicts, seem to find ways around the drug testing. Since meth can clear from the system in as little as 48 hours, it may be difficult for an employer to get accurate results.

Quest Diagnostics, a leading provider of diagnostic testing, publishes a drug testing index which examines the proportion of positive results per drug for all tests done in the U.S. The March 2007 report showed that drug use hit a new low in 2006 tests (see the table at right). The downward trend is heartening, but what about the cases that don't show up in the tests?

The reality is that many meth users could be flying below the radar at work. Initially, a meth user may be just what an employer is looking for: energetic, able to concentrate on fine details, and highly productive. However, with time, an employee who is using meth regularly may be prone to bursts of anger, paranoia, anxiety, and simple carelessness. The threat of violence is also a realistic concern for employers.

It is true that employers, supervisors and managers can't be expected to diagnose substance abuse or addiction, but it is important for them to understand some of the signs and symptoms of methamphetamine use. While their main focus is on productivity and cost efficiency, as authority figures they also need to be mindful of the personalities of their employees. Many things, not just drug abuse, can interfere with a person's work performance, and an employee who displays some of the symptoms isn't necessarily a meth user.

Knowing the signs and symptoms of meth use can help prepare employers or supervisors to confront and intervene when appropriate. Employers and supervisory staff should be watchful for changes in an employee's appearance: rapid weight loss, ignoring personal hygiene, skin pallor, hand tremors, dry mouth, excessive or rapid talking, and dilated pupils. An employee who exhibits extreme mood swings could be suspect, if there is no other explanation for sudden shifts into anger or depression.

The costs of drug use in the workplace are considerable:

Occupational injuries and fatalities

Absenteeism and employee turnover

Increased illness rates and health benefit utilization

Lost productivity

Low employee morale
Workplace violence
Identity theft

The Economic Impact of Methamphetamine Use in Benton County Arkansas determined that meth-addicted employees cost each business just under \$47,500 per year in that particular county.

Identity theft is an unrecognized hazard of drug use in the workplace. Many drug addicts find that stealing and utilizing others' personal and financial information is remarkably easy and profitable. Whether these persons are gaining information from rifling through their fellow employee's wallets, or from customers of their employer, this type of crime costs *everyone*. A 2004 survey by the Identity Theft Resource Center showed that 14% of victims who responded to the survey said the impostor was an employee of a business that had their information. Businesses can't even calculate what the customers' loss of trust will cost them

An increasing number of companies are showing films and holding meetings for employees to learn about drug abuse, symptoms, and ramifications of drug use. While most companies fire employees who test positive for meth and other illegal drugs, some provide treatment resources to employees who come forward to ask for help with an addiction. Some unions are also stepping forward to educate members and offer help to those who need it. An excellent Power Point presentation for education on meth in the workplace can be found online at: www.dol.gov/asp/programs/drugs/workingpartners/sp_iss/meth_Workplace_Presentation_11-28-06.ppt

Employees who are addicted to meth will inevitably crash and burn at some point in their lives. The health problems endemic to meth use will catch up with them, they'll lose jobs, security, family and friends, or get arrested. If the crash leads to treatment and recovery, it'll be the best thing that ever happened. Trends and statistics aside, it still comes down to helping one person at a time to live one day at a time.

Voices from the Butterfly House

Hello, I am Elsie and I am an addict. (I waited 'til the last minute to write this out, so bear with me! I have been really sick).

People have been telling me I write like I talk---I do that because when you read this I want you to feel like I am talking to you and not just preaching to you or something!

I don't really have a topic this month, so I am just going to talk about anything and wing it!

I still struggle with my brother's death, I don't blame myself, but new "conclusions" roll into my mind everyday of "why"? That unanswered question everyone struggles with. But I think I know. What I know is that he hurt, and he would only accept help from those that wouldn't or couldn't help.

I don't know. I just know he's got my back! I think he was an angel the day he was born, and he had 23 years to teach us to "let go".

I don't think I'm suicidal, but that doesn't mean others don't think that, or it doesn't mean I don't say some crazy sh** about Martin (my brother). One time I said to someone, "Sweet dreams" and they responded, "When I think about it lately, life sucks, wish I got my life in line long ago, need it to happen soon, there's so much I want, then I will for sure have sweet dreams."

Well, he said that to me well over a month ago and I've been thinking about it a lot, he made me think at times, life does suck! When everything seems to be spiraling out of control, you lose everything close to you and then you gotta' do this sh** sober? What's that? Wanting to get "it" together...make "it" right...feeling it's impossible...

Sometimes I feel like...alone...and maybe it takes someone pretty f***ed up to be with me, or want to be with me, like they'd have to be totally crazy and out of their mind.

For the first time in a long time, I'm feeling self conscious about myself. Don't really know why! Been single since January 2007---it ain't bad, but then being lonely kicks in! I know I'm not vulnerable 'cause I've been tested---and I'm not easy! HA HA! I've gained 25 pounds since I got clean. I don't think I looked good then, but I don't think so now either! Actually I have had 2 strangers want to hang out with me, one best friend and one really good friend...plus a few others---and it's like, I'm just not ready for a relationship! I'm still healing from the last one and I don't need someone to try and cover my wounds. I need them to let me heal! That's what's healthy!

One of my closest friends is in jail right now, and it sucks! Another friend is dealing with all "them cold hearted ladies" out there!

A good friend told me the other day I was amazing them. They said, "I can say, I doubted that you

would ever live up to your potential, but look—your persistence in cleaning up. I love it!

Shows that deep down you do care about yourself, despite your efforts. And you have an amazing ability to make a normal activity...utter chaos!"

Those words right there, whenever you feel you can't do this "sober sh**" anymore...read them, as if I'm saying them to you! Just remember that you're worth it, whoever you are, whoever you were, whoever you may become. God gave us the freedom to choose our future. If we f*** with that freedom, that's our choice. If we take that freedom and run with it, we can become anything we want.

So don't just close your eyes and let those times pass you by. There's really no time to waste...life is too short!

If you have any responses or anything to say to me or to add to what I have said—I'd love to hear from you! You can write to me at the Butterfly House, P.O. Box 172, St. Croix Falls, WI 54024

Editor's Corner

Nightmare on Washington Street: Terror in the B"a"tterfly House

An eerie noise woke me, was that a scream? I got out of bed and listened at the door, then, hearing nothing, I headed into the bathroom. Yup, that was definitely a scream. "Doreen!" Someone wailed from down the hall.

"T?" I said, turning on the light. "What's wrong?"

"A bat!" A lump under the covers answered. "There's a bat flying around in here!"

"I don't see it." I said, peering around.

"It's in here, and it's flying and I need to go to the bathroom." She threw the covers off and dashed out of the room. I moved hesitantly toward my room for a weapon. This being the Butterfly House, the only weapon I could find was a decorative filigree heart hanging from a doorknob. It was about 10 inches in diameter, made of metal, and since I was still half asleep, it struck me as the perfect thing to protect me from a bat careening around the room. Meanwhile, T. had gone downstairs to wake Doreen, who had dealt with a bat invasion earlier in the week by bashing it with a broom (and I challenge any and all PETA members to face a bat in the house in the dead of the night before they complain to us about cruelty).

Doreen brought a broom and burst into giggles at the sight of me in my red shorts, brandishing the filigree heart.

"It's not funny," T. scolded. "I'm scared to death of bats."

We searched high and low, and the bat seemed to have disappeared. I went back to bed, making sure to shut my door tightly, and after a few paranoid fantasies about the bat crawling under my door, I fell asleep.

At 3:30 a.m., I heard people shrieking out in the hall, so I rose again, grabbed my weapon (still the filigree heart), and opened the door to find Doreen and E. standing outside.

"There's a bat in my room," E. explained. "It was in T's room, and I heard her scream, so I thought she was having a nightmare. When I went in to wake her up she said 'I'm already awake, there's a bat in here!' And then it flew down to my room."

Doreen studied the filigree heart in my hand. "What are you going to do with that, poke it?"

"Well, no, but, hey, yeah, does this thing come off?" I tried to remove the bead at the point in the heart. We headed down the hall, toward E.'s room.

"Here, Mary," Doreen said. "You go first." She pushed me to the door. I opened it a crack and peeked into the dim room.

"Ooh, I see it! It's there on the mirror frame." They looked over my shoulder. "Now how can we . . ." it started to crawl around and we all squealed and shut the door.

"That thing is huge," Doreen gasped.

"Large Brown bat," I answered.

"Mary gets all technical," E. snickered.

We peeked into the room again to see the bat swooping around in a crazy, looping flight.

"Listen, while it's flying, I could just swing at it with this," I gestured with the filigree heart. "Oh, but then I'd have to get pretty close to it," I was rethinking my choice of weapon. "I guess I was thinking of a tennis racket. Do we have a racket?"

We opened the door. The bat had stopped flying, but we couldn't see where it had landed. Doreen gave me a little nudge, laughing, so I ventured my upper body into the room, enough to see around the corner to hit the light switch. The mother bear in me emerged then, and with the courage to protect "my girls," I moved slowly into the room, still clutching my heart (and that is a remarkably *figurative* and *literal* statement). Doreen noted my stance, slightly crouched, hesitant, keenly alert, and obviously terrified, and started laughing hard.

I went back to my room to find a better weapon. Doreen was poking in the closet with a broom, and E. had wandered downstairs in search of a snack. The bat had apparently found a perfect hiding place, and no doubt it was as terrified at the prospect of being found as we were of finding it.

We trundled E. off to the Rose room, and all went back to our respective beds.

I woke again later to a scream. E. was calling me from across the hall. I got up, grabbed my broom, strongly wishing I could just fly away on it, and opened the door.

"It's up on the doorsill," E. told me. I got ready to swing my weapon, but the bat got an inkling of my intent and took off into another swooping flight. I took a few ineffectual swings at it, and we both screamed for Doreen.

The bat had again disappeared, so while Doreen and E. discussed where the poor girl could get another hour of sleep before getting up to go to work, I closed myself into my room, hoping that the bat hadn't found its way in there while I was out.

The next day, the bat was on the window screen in E.'s room, and Harley, our tiny clawless housecat, had found it. Cat studied bat, bat studied cat, and people tried to figure out how to shut the inside window without allowing the bat back into the room. It took some maneuvering, but the end result was a bat-shaped "suncatcher" that delighted the cat, although E. was not thrilled to have "bat under glass" in her room. Eventually, Doreen figured out a way to open the outside screen without letting the bat back into the house, and it flew away, we hoped never to return.

Bats in our Bellfry: Part II

Another Sunday, another bat. E. and T. discovered it flying around upstairs as they were preparing to go to bed. Doreen was asleep downstairs, so they used E.'s cell phone to call her on the house phone.

"Help us!" E. whispered urgently into the phone. "There's another bat flying around up here!"

Doreen grabbed her "bat-catching" mop and a fishing net borrowed from her husband, and headed to the rescue. She trapped it with the mop-head, but when it started to crawl out of the trap, the girls screamed and shut the bedroom door, and Doreen ducked to the stairs to consider the situation.

Eventually, the bat flew downstairs, and surprisingly, E. and T. followed Doreen downstairs to help in the capture. E. helped by hiding under a table in the dining room and alternately shrieking and laughing as Doreen tried to catch the bat with her fishing net. T. sprawled on her back on the floor, laughing hysterically and fending the bat away with her feet in the air. Doreen finally managed to cast the net over the bat, but the bat seemed to know a little about fishnet, and began making his escape. T. quickly grabbed a towel to drape over the bat, and they gingerly carried the bat, net, and towel out to the front porch, where they dropped it and ran back inside. (The next morning, they found the net and towel to be bat-free.)

"You know," commented E. as she headed to bed. "I think some of the most fun times I've had in this house are the nights bats come in."

I hope nobody tells that to the bats.

Now that we have completed our study of the Twelve Steps of AA and NA, we have decided to study the power of words. We all use words to praise, to express love, to hurt, to vent our anger, and to try to make others understand us better. We've chosen twelve words that we think can have both very positive and very negative connotations, and we'll take a look at both sides each month.

"Laughter is the best medicine."

In the film "The Secret" a woman shares her remarkable recovery from cancer, part of which involved watching old comedies, such as Marx Brothers movies.

Many professionals agree that laughter seems to have curative powers, although they haven't quite figured out why and how such cures occur. One theory holds that laughter helps release endorphins and other beneficial chemicals that promote healing. The more we learn about the human body's ability to soothe and heal itself and the mind's effect on that process, the more apparent it is that "attitude is everything."

All professional opinions aside, it has to be said that laughing just feels good, and who cares why? From the snicker we let out at the memory of a funny moment to the roll-on-the-floor-helpless laugh, people love the sensation of laughter.

Our senses of humor, however, are as unique as our personalities. Some people guffaw at every mildly funny thing they hear, others rarely laugh out loud. While one person sees the humor to be found in nearly every circumstance, another fails to find even popular comedians funny.

I have a few favorite videos I keep handy when I need a good laugh. The "Carol Burnett Reunion" show has a scene between Tim Conway and Harvey Korman that never fails to have me crying with hilarity. I shared it with a friend one day, and he chuckled a little, and then wondered if "those two guys are still alive." I couldn't believe it didn't make him laugh. On another occasion, I shared "Fawlty Towers's 'rat episode'" with this same friend. By the end of the episode, I was literally lying on the floor, helpless with laughter, while he had watched the entire show in respectful silence. Humor is definitely in the eye of

the beholder.

Laughter. It's fun, it's cheap, and it's good for you. Get as much as you can every day!

**“Laughed at in the streets of my town,
Their laughter hurts, but I’ll hold my ground.”**

–Gorilla Biscuits, “Hold Your Ground”

Derisive laughter rings in the ears of the person who is being teased long after the torment ends. The dark side of laughter is that a bully can wield it like a sword, its cut similarly deep and painful. To be the butt of the joke, the despised, the teased, or the class outsider, is to know that laughter is not always a joyous, musical sound. “Children can be so cruel,” people say to one another, but it doesn't stop in childhood.

In adult society, the rowdy laughter in a bar, the mocking laughter at sporting events, and the scornful chortles of party guests commenting on another's fashion choices are all examples of the use of laughter to ridicule and belittle.

In childhood, the mean type of laughter can either make the teased person stronger and more able to handle teasing, or cause him to become an angry loner who may be prone to violence. Some people learn to encourage the laughter to gain the admiration and respect of his peers, as in the class clown (who oftentimes finds success as a comedian in adulthood).

People falling down, tripping on a rake, bumping their heads, slipping on a banana peel, and other pratfalls we see in movies and on television are funny. Human beings get a kick out of seeing other people suffer (although we would never admit to that blunt a statement!). The thing is, there is a lot of difference between laughing at a person tripping over a rope, and being the one who put the rope there for the person to trip over.

It's something we should all think about if we hear our children making fun of someone, or hear co-workers telling cruel jokes about a fellow employee. Laughing at the expense of another person's dignity and self-esteem can't be good for anyone.

“You grow up the day you have the first real laugh-at yourself.”

–Ethel Barrymore

“If you want to hear God laugh, tell him about your plans.”

–Woody Allen

Crystal Meth Anonymous Meeting

Mondays at 7 p.m. at The Butterfly House, 336 N. Washington St., St. Croix Falls, WI. We invite recovering meth users to join this diverse group as they reinforce their recovery and enjoy fellowship in a peaceful, hopeful place.

