

A place to feel comfortable, not blamed

by Lincoln Tritt

Note: This is a third in a series Tritt wrote in 1993 about alcoholism and alcohol abuse. This commentary was typeset the way it was requested by the author.

Tritt is a Gwich'in Athabaskan living in Venetie, Alaska.

When in an uncomfortable or unfamiliar element, most people with drug or alcohol problem will try to get away to where they can feel safe or accepted. In this case,

to a bar where there are people who they can identify with and more important, who seem to understand their problems. Unfortunately, this is also an ideal place to get an encouragement to have a drink. Since we feel guilty about drinking in today's society, it is easier

to do it with others, who can share the blame.

It is often hard to communicate with people outside of these elements because of the attitude of

"bad people" that is very prevalent. The people who are supposedly there to help you, do not know how to communicate with a human being, who is trying to get out of an "against all odds" situation. This usually depends on how long the habit has lasted. The one characteristic, that some native leaders have trouble comprehending about today's generation, is the habit of talking too much from the mouth and not the

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heart or the mind. The mouth does not think and learning comes from getting information with your ears and other senses. The ability to listen is very important in the development and lives of the each individual.

Habits in the mind

With all these burdens, a person with a problem find it hard to ignore an, "it doesn't matter" feeling. This is usually the result of now having two problems. Our people taught of two sections of the brain, which is also in today's science. So that when we develop an alcohol or drug problems we are no longer just

dealing with the problems of our conscious mind, but also with our subconscious mind which does not have the ability to analyze or reason.

Without self-discipline, people can easily get into a consistent

form of behavior. To name a few, there are gambling, lying, stealing or even teasing. These actions are theoretically controlled by the sub-conscious mind, much like when a person

burns his or her hand. The hand is jerked away before the conscious mind learns about it. This is because these actions

are controlled by your subconscious, which does not have to take the time to reason, but act. So things are done automatically, without the delay of thoughts.

These habitual behaviors often become a need of the mind so that

it is done more and more frequently. Unfortunately, with cigarettes, drugs and alcohol, they also become physical needs. So now

both your mind and body have these needs. The sub-conscious mind

now has a never-ending need to fulfill.

At this point a person gets into sneaking drinks, hiding a bottle or get irritated when confronted about the problem.

Often times in these situations, the conscious mind would rationalize these unacceptable behaviors. This makes it hard to quit the practice, because in essence, the indi-

vidual is fighting with self. Since the individual is dealing with forces of equal power, the struggle becomes hard to win. This often requires that the individual seek outside help (alcoholics anonymous for some, guidance or a treatment center, depending on which values are important to them). From personal experience I think that spiritual guidance is the most effective way to deal with these problems. In order to deal with a problem, it is important for each individual involved to understand the problem, first.

Since a bar or cocktail lounge is a business, it is set up to appeal

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to a person who wants to shut out the world and not have to

be reminded of his or her fault. The lights are low to give the feeling that a person can not be seen. The bartender seems to respond to all your problems. The atmosphere is seemingly free for expression. Unfortunately, the focus of the establishment is not the problems of the patron or the individual, but the money the individual possesses. As long as the money is there, often, it and not the individual is welcomed.

Drinking may be a problem, but until a person runs out of money,

they have not seen anything. Since most of the friends are basically in the same situation, what a person has, is usually

more important than the person. If a person has nothing to offer for the friend's habit, then the person is usually left

alone. Frustration sets in because the person feels that

everything he or she had, was spent on the friends and other people.

Now that they are down, they think they are not being paid back.

Remember, when addicted the individual's focus is only on self and the need for relief, so any inventory of every little favor the individual did for others is taken. Anger sets in, but it does not do any good, because all that happens, is the bouncer kicks the person out of the bar. This is like hitting rock bottom, because whatever pride a person has left just got kicked out and the person is totally humiliated. No friends, no money and no hope.