



# **Beyond Parody 2: Many Elements Surround Drug And Alcohol Addiction**

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There are many elements to drug and alcohol addiction. One of the most heartbreaking and gut-wrenching elements is trauma. I have worked with individuals struggling with drug and alcohol addiction for nearly five years. If you heard some of the trauma people had to experience, you would want to escape reality, too. Sexual abuse, physical abuse, or neglect are just a few forms of trauma some human beings have had to forcefully experience. Yes, sometimes some of us put ourselves in high-risk situations, but that does not somehow invalidate the trauma that lives in the mind and body that haunts those of us carrying it. Here is one that will make your blood boil. There have been quite a few individuals I have worked with that have been offered as a sexual “sacrifice” by their parent(s).

As we thumb through our social media, some of us look at those struggling with addiction as an inconvenience. Some people will even go to the depths of providing their argument against drug addiction being a disease as they digitize their subjugation for those that are painstakingly hurting. Honestly, it is probably safe to say the only people who need to debate if drug and alcohol addiction is a disease are those from the clinical, medical, or recovery field that are working toward solutions for drug addiction. “They did it to themselves,” some will say. Come on? Do people truly believe that someone wants to wander this world broke, hungry, disconnected from society as some leper? One thing is for sure, disconnection from anything purposeful and meaningful is a common theme in drug and alcohol addiction.

This isn’t always the case, but when exploring trauma, addiction, and the disconnection we can experience as human beings, we can look to the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) as a guide. The CDC defines ACEs as potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood (0-17 years) like experiencing violence, abuse, witnessing violence in the home or community, or instability due to parental separation or household members being in jail or prison. In a 2015 NPR article, Laura Starcheski provides a great in-depth explanation of ACEs and an opportunity to take the ACES test if the reader is interested. We can work on solutions together if we begin to understand the problem better.

There is such a grotesque societal misunderstanding about drug and alcohol addiction and even mental health. Trauma is one element of drug and alcohol addiction that is often evaded or disregarded. Some of us escape the adversities of trauma, addiction, and poverty to go on to live resilient and productive lives. Yet, some of us do our best to avoid the picket fences and ballroom dances because we have been made to believe we are the scourge of this earth. Hate is an addiction that needs attention, too. This is not a parody, this is real life. If you are interested in learning more about ACEs, you may visit the CDC’s website or the 2015 NPR and take the ACEs test yourself. If you are looking for trauma-informed care training for you or your business, you can contact the Executive Director of Refuge, Erin Bickle at 618-251-9790.