



# **Beyond Parody: Columnist Drug/Alcohol Addiction Still Here As We Start 2021 With Pandemic**

by Ty Bechel

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I apologize for the brief hiatus, but I just finished school after 5 years of papers, research, and deadlines. A breather was nice, but onward we go. The new year is here, and we are almost a full month in 2021. The pandemic is still a thing, and so is drug and alcohol addiction. It amazes me from personal lived experience and those that I help today how addiction is bigger than the activity of using drugs or alcohol. Addiction attacks your self-esteem, your family and tries to box you in. It is easy to look at someone struggling and judge them on their looks and social class. Human beings can be mean and hateful on the one hand but preach love and unity on the other.

I have been working with drug and alcohol addiction in a professional capacity for approximately 5 years. I have witnessed families ripped apart, mothers and fathers bury their children, and society ignores the simple solutions to improve our communities and unify families. I have seen the “upper” class command us to listen to their uneducated whims of how those of us they believe are their inferiors should listen and do what is right.

When the world is \$200 trillion in debt, and many of the banks and much of the land are owned by a small percentage of people that wouldn't throw water on someone “beneath” them if they were on fire, there comes a moment when we realize politics, regardless of what side you're on, and big business has probably caused more damage to societal structures and human psyche than we all want to admit. Compassion is not in the interest of most but flows in the veins of the passionate few. Being an underdog in a world of savages is an understatement.

One of the worst moments I have witnessed outside of accidental overdose death, or intentional overdose, is when a mother has their child (or children) removed from her. I understand in many cases, it is necessary for the protection of the children until the mother can get healthy and stable. The destruction and creation of an empty shell are nearly complete, and the addiction cycle is coming to a close. The mother walks with a blank stare, carelessly moving from relationship to relationship to find a purpose to latch on to. Every baby they see that cries or giggles drive the blade of despair deeper. People close to them condemn and remind them it is their fault. Judges tell them they are pitiful excuses as mothers and don't deserve their children. The motivation to become healthy and fight to be the mother they once thought they could be is stripped away in each nasty and hate-filled statement.

I have sat and listened to the emptiness pour from mothers' souls about failing as parents and that they don't feel they can ever recover. Sure, it is easy to say, “Listen, you did it to yourself, and loving your children shouldn't be this difficult; you got what you deserved.” Tough love and shaming may work in some cases, but what the hell does

condemning the mother and reminding her of the mistakes she is fully aware of that got her children removed from her do to help develop a recovery plan and offer her hope? We all need hope to heal, regardless of what ailment or problem we are facing.

Thankfully, there are programs for new mothers with infants, which is a start to properly provide support and care that they can use to find a way to heal, grow, and fulfill a purpose. Compassion gives us the ability to learn and love from a place society tells us not to. Compassion is the evolution of love and understanding, and we can no longer suffocate it. Chestnut Health Systems has a Doula Program for pregnant and postpartum women. According to a 2019 Today.com article, Holohan reports that “doulas aid couples with making a birth plan and advocating for moms during labor.” Relating to addiction, a Doula will help a soon-to-be or new mother with support and develop a plan that also includes recovery goals. Both the Queen of Peace Center and Wish Clinic in St. Louis, MO, also has a robust program to help mothers and their children. The National Institute on Drug Abuse reported in 2019 that an analysis showed that 32,000 babies were born with neonatal abstinence syndrome or neonatal opioid withdrawal syndrome (NAS/NOWS) in 2014.

As I always say, this is not a parody. These are real-life problems that require real-life (and compassionate) solutions. I know it is easy to direct hate and ignorance toward mothers and fathers, but we must, as a community, get to the root of many of these problems. And much of them relate to intergenerational ideas that do not work, poverty, and a society that has allowed compassion to be perverted with personal political ties.

If you are in the Madison County, IL region and would like a Recovery Coach for support and help to navigate treatment services that can benefit you or your loved one, you may contact Amare at **618-780-4843** or **618-741-7669** to talk with someone with lived experience. Once connected, they can help develop a recovery management plan and linkage to treatment services and other resources. If you would like to connect directly to the treatment providers in this article, their information can be found below.

Chestnut Health Systems | Phone: 618-877-4420

Queen of Peace Center | Phone: 314-531-0511

Wish Clinic | Phone: 314-768-8230