

Episode 9 – Youth and Addiction

Richard Lloyd Jones: This is Episode 9 of our Healing Through Consciousness podcast series here on Thinking with Somebody Else’s Head. Addiction comes in all forms. Today, we’ll dig deep. I’m Richard Lloyd Jones.

What is an addictive personality? You’ll see all sorts of definitions if you Google that! From addiction being a learning disorder, to a passion for something gone wrong, to the more serious diagnosis that it’s a character disorder, it’s difficult to get a final word on this all-too-common behavior.

I’ve been around my share of addictive behavior, including a favorite uncle who beat his battle with the bottle courageously and, I think, cold turkey, and lived out the rest of his life as a functional and responsible contributor to society. I remember him with great affection.

But it’s in the treatment of addiction that we really find out what’s going on. However, that treatment must involve helping the addicted individual move out of the modern mania of seeing all problems as having outside causes. Dr. Keppe once told me that healing only comes through interiorization, which is the process of helping people begin to have contact with what’s going on inside them. This is a prominent aspect of any psychoanalysis session with Dr. Keppe’s Integral Psychoanalysis.

We’ll see another wonderful example of that today with Dr. Claudia Bernhardt Pacheco talking to Jen, who’s trying to understand how to help her family.

Claudia Bernhardt Pacheco: So Jen ...

Jen: Yes.

Pacheco: I have some questions about the situation with your son. Is he your only son?

Jen: Yes. He is my stepson.

Pacheco: Stepson.

Jen: Yes. He and his sister have lived with us, their father and me since 2001. I’ve raised him more than half of his life.

Pacheco: Okay.

Jen: And they have really no contact with their biological mom.

Pacheco: So you have two step children. So the girl is ...?

Jen: 14.

Pacheco: 14. The boy is 16.

Jen: Yes.

Pacheco: Say more things about the family, the situation of the family, the background.

Jen: Well, their biological mom is an alcoholic. And so she was pretty absent a lot of the time. Even when she was there, she was pretty absent in their lives. Shortly after my husband and I got married, it was Father's Day weekend, and we were supposed to have the kids that weekend and we couldn't find them anywhere. Their biological mom had actually packed up the car and moved them out of state. And we had to end up hiring a private investigator to find them. So when they went to court and the court actually said, "You know what, then they have to go live with their dad." So they came to live with us. And at the time they were too young to understand that their biological mom essentially didn't really want them. We had a great relationship. In fact, most of the time I would forget that I didn't give birth to them. And I think they felt the same way. But my son had a lot of problems with my mom. And that was the first time we ever noticed that he started blaming people for things that were his own fault. He started taking money from my dad's dresser and then blaming, "Well, if you had given me more money, I wouldn't need to steal money." He would have fights with my mom. And even to this day, he says that they were her fault, not his fault. And that's the first time I can remember ever having an issue with him not accepting responsibility and with him not being the loving kid that he always had been.

Pacheco: Okay. Here we have a complicated situation as you said, as you described, because both children, they have the big influence of the mother, and this is a psychogenetic influence anyhow, even though the father is different, right? He's not an alcoholic.

Jen: No.

Pacheco: No. He was never an alcoholic.

Jen: No.

Pacheco: Because an alcoholic personality has the tendency to have like a loose ethics. They are not really ethical in their behavior. I don't mean necessarily social, moral, ethical behavior, but something more inner. Something that the person is more, not lying so much, not deceiving so much and being more constructive, worried in doing good and being good for themselves and for people being more constructive, productive. So, an alcoholic as any dependency, any substance abuse, hides a very loose kind of personality in terms of ethics.

Jones: What they call in the movie. Thank You for Smoking, they called it a flexible moral standard, right? Very flexible.

Pacheco: Very flexible.

Jones: That's right. Not in a good way.

Pacheco: So anyhow, let's speak more directly about your son, as he is already showing an addictive personality as his mother had, and he is addictive to computers and sexual games. Eventually you will perceive more and more things that he will probably be

addictive. So this is a difficult time for you and your husband to deal because he's an adolescent, he's starting to think that he must become a man and he must follow his own personality. And he will give an enormous importance to the life that he will develop with these kinds of friends that will support his values. Do you follow Jen?

Jen: I do.

Pacheco: Okay. So every human being has a tendency to do a counter reaction or an opposition to what is good for himself. What Keppe brings in psychopathology, an innate tendency to say "no" to what is good. To deny, to destroy, to omit what is good and to feel attracted to what is negative, evil, bad for life. Even though people suffer from this, they follow this tendency because they are not really, really quite sure of what does freedom mean. People think that they are free to use the free choice to choose good or bad. And in reality, through science, we see that we don't have the choice. We are free only to be good, beautiful, and truthful, and to do what is good, beautiful, and truthful. And if we don't, we create many, many, many problems for ourselves, for people. We become crazy, we become neurotic, we become ill, we create social problems.

So in reality, we should never, ever be able to choose what is not good. So you are free to do whatever is good, beautiful, and truthful. So freedom is all, all that exists. All that is, is freedom. But to destroy is not freedom and evil is the destruction. Evil does not exist by itself. Evil is the attitude to destroy what is, which is good, beautiful, and truthful. So philosophically, scientifically, and theologically speaking, this concept, Jen, of freedom and free choice, it's absolutely important to be understood. And your son, if you could bring him some notion of this philosophical aspect of freedom, if he would understand a little bit of this, it would be very helpful because then he will understand why does he feel so attracted to what is evil. And why it's not so good for him to contradict those who suggest him being good.

Jen: He actually told his sister once that if there's a rule, he has to break it; he can't help it. He said, "If mom and dad give me a rule, I can't help it; I have to break it."

Pacheco: Yep. So I think that if he understands that it's not a matter of following rules, but that he has an inner code of life printed in his being. And every time he contradicts this inner code, this inner rule of what is good for him, he will be causing suffering for himself. So knowing better what is good and evil, what is free choice, freedom, this is absolutely important if he would understand a little bit about that. Another point is that he should understand that by contradicting many times, you and your husband, his father, he is in reality, obeying other powers that control him even more and even more destructively. That are enslaving him, which are the powers that be that create the Internet, that want him not to think, not to have a good, critical mind. And young kids ...

Jen: How do you make a 16-year-old care about that though? What he's doing is a lot more fun than what we're proposing he do.

Pacheco: What is the addiction he has? The most prominent one presently?

Jen: Probably at this point would be the video games. He's supposed to be doing schoolwork and he can't seem to concentrate because he has access to go to the video games.

Pacheco: If you ask your son, what does he associate video games with? What does he think about video games? What do you think he might answer?

Jen: He'd say they're fun and they're cool. And it helps him feel like a normal teenager

Pacheco: And schoolwork. What do you think he would associate school work with?

Jen: Boring and tedious.

Pacheco: Okay, so you feel like this. But what does it mean, school or learning in itself? I'm sure he will have to give a different answer because he will not say like negative things about learning, have a diploma, a profession.

Jones: Sure. Possibility to develop.

Pacheco: So he will say probably, he will probably answer, knowledge, a good thing, that will give him capability to have better money.

Jen: Mm-hmm.

Pacheco: Right?

Jen: Right.

Pacheco: Because one thing is what he feels. Another thing is what the thing is and what he knows about that. So Internet or video games is fun, it's cool. But what does it mean in itself to be all the time in video games? So if you succeed in having him associating, loss of time or something destructive ... he may even get there, if he's not feeling censored, if he's not feeling like tension, emotional tension. If you can do this with him as a friendly conversation and not emotional. Compassionate. And if you can have him do these free associations, so he will be able to tell him that following what is destructive or a loss of time, for him he sees us being normal, fun and cool. And doing something good for himself, having the possibility to grow, to develop and discipline, whatever, he feels as boring, as tedious. So if he is able to, by his own associations, give these tools for you to tell him this, it will be very powerful because this will come from his inner life.

Jones: Not you telling him, right?

Jen: Right.

Pacheco: Yeah. You will not be teaching him, but will be bringing from his inner life the truth that he's not in touch with. But he has, he knows.

Jen: That's good. That's good stuff. That's so true.

Richard Lloyd Jones: Good stuff indeed! It's riveting to watch a process of analysis that moves the person into a deeper understanding of themselves and others. That must have been what Socrates experienced all those years ago walking around the streets of Athens and asking questions to get people in touch with their incoherencies of thought and action.

And then there's Jesus' incredible example of that: Let you who have no sin cast the first stone. Eminently therapeutic, because it put everyone holding rocks into contact with their own hypocrisy of judging someone else for faults they also had.

But there is a social aspect to addiction as well. A manipulation for evil that we should also seek to understand. Which we'll do in our next episode. Drugs and Power coming up next time.