

Transcript of BNI-ART Institute's brief intervention heroin case.

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Doctor: You had a really painful abscess. You did quite well. Do you mind spending a few minutes talking about your heroin use?

Patient: I already told him I've been shooting up almost a year and I'm thinking at some point of getting some help but I just really... I gotta go meet someone in a couple hours.

D: Well it only takes five to ten minutes, really.

P: Five, ten minutes, that's all? Alright doc, you got five minutes.

D: thank you. Before we dive into this discussion—I know it's pretty heavy—give me an idea of what your day's like, what your life is like, so I can see it through your eyes.

P: It all depends what's going on with the people I hook up with and sometimes, you know, it's just. . . I have to use every day, you know. You'll have this kind of, like, uncomfortableness and a little bit of cramping and once I score I feel much better enter.

D: So you're just trying to feel good; not be dope sick, you mean.

P: Yeah, yeah. Because if I'm not feeling OK I really don't have much I can do before I score.

D: What else goes on in your day?

P: Well, it depends on if I have enough to get through the day, you see. I try to take some . . . try to take care of an appointment or something because I have a daughter and if I can get maybe some work under the table I can give her mother a few dollars and I feel good about that.

D: That sounds like your daughter is pretty important to you. You're trying to do the right thing. That's great. You're going through an awful lot. Thinking about this abscess today, do you see any connection between drug use and your abscess?

P: Yeah, I do. It's where it probably came from, probably from an old pair of works.

D: Maybe you could help me see it through your eyes: what you like about heroin, what it does for you.

P: Well, when I score I'm not worried about, like, all the problems I have. I'm not worried about the court case. I'm not worried about the fact that my mom is not doing well. You know, I broke up with my relationship but I'm still in contact with my daughter. It helps me be able to deal with life.

D: "Deal with life." That's a way of coping with things and using heroin to help you cope with things. Is that right?

P: Yeah, yeah. That is . . . that works for me.

D: Just to help you handle all the troubles. Does it do anything else for you?

P: It makes things kind of crazy.

D: Crazy in what way? Negative or positive?

P: I'd say negative, I think.

D: Living with this type of uncertainty, this chaos, what other things do you like less about heroin in addition to that?

P: Well, the abscess is not helping things out and dealing with the Department of Corrections. If I never started using I probably wouldn't be caught up in doing all this, you know.

D: You got a lot on your shoulders right now, huh? Remember when you came in here? They had a pain scale with these different faces? One was no pain and ten was the worst pain in your life? And you scored about an eight. So we have this other type of scale I wanted to show you. It's this readiness ruler here. It's like numbers, you know. One is not ready to make changes in your life and ten is very ready. I was just wondering if you wouldn't show me where you're at. Oh, please be honest. Don't tell me what you want to hear but be honest.

P: I would probably say . . . probably like a six.

D: A six. Could you point to that?

P: Yeah, right here.

D: That's where you're at. Six is pretty good. That's 60% ready. Tell me why haven't you chosen a one or a two or something less?

P: Because, I don't know, I've been through so much right now and I'm almost there where, you know, where something's got to really change for me. I can't hold a job. My family's on my case. I just got a lot of people coming at me right now.

D: Sounds like you've got a lot of reasons for change.

P: I don't like living in a shelter. I don't like living in the streets. I wasn't raised this way.

D: What concrete steps could you take to make these changes?

P: Steps I would like to take? I don't know.

D: Something positive, you know, like what's going to help you with your daughter or craziness in your life?

P: You know, I don't know. I really don't know where to start sometimes. Maybe I just . . . I just need to stay away from certain people.

D: Stay away from this negativity?

P: Definitely, definitely, I mean, because that's what they're all about. They're all about getting high and sometimes when I'm with them I don't really want to get high but it's there and I'm not going to say no.

D: Persons, places, and things. Trying to avoid things person selling drugs or using drugs. That makes a lot of sense. That would be like step one for you.

P: Yeah, yeah. Absolutely.

D: Anything else?

P: I don't know; maybe check myself into some kind of program, I think.

D: That's really good that you're seeking help and want help with the program. We have a program here, "Project ASSERT." I can't promise you we'll find you a bed but we can work together and try to get you someplace as soon as possible. What could you do in the meantime?

P: I don't know. I mean, maybe cut back a little.

D: Cutting back makes sense. I'm just trying to go over a few options with you. Another option would be acupuncture. It can reduce the craving.

P: I've heard of it. I'd give it a try, give it a try. I'm not sure it's going to . . . I'm not sure it's going to keep me, you know, I just really need to quit.

D: I agree. You've got a point there. Well, it sounds you have good start here: staying away from people that are negative that could get you into more trouble. Keep you out of jail, going to a detox program. Have you done something in the past that you've been proud of or felt successful about that could help you now?

P: I haven't been clean for that long so . . .

D: Are there other people in your life, family or other friends who could help you in a time like this?

P: Yeah, I got a cousin. Right now I think he's something like two years sober or something.

D: That's great. That really is. I think we've got something started now. I'm going to take you over to Project ASSERT now but before we go I'd like to write down some things that we talked about today, sort of like a promise between you and yourself. So you can take this with you. What were some of the steps that you agreed to?

P: Well, we talked about just staying away from certain people, you know, stay away from certain people.

D: Stay away from certain people.

P: Yeah.

D: Okay.

P: Check myself into a detox program.

D: Check into a detox.

P: Get a bed there absolutely. And I guess maybe the other one is talking to my cousin.

D: Well, that sounds like three important steps that you can take. Do you think they work for you?

P: Yeah, I mean, I gotta push through like I said.

D: I think you're on the right path. I'll get in touch with Project ASSERT right now, get you over there, and they can work with you on getting you a safe place, a detox program.

P: Thanks. Thanks very much, I mean, no one's ever listened to me and this is the first time someone's actually sat down and talked to me. I've been in the hospital a lot of times and all they do is take care of whatever I've got going and then just check me out. This is the first time that anyone's really sat down with me and I really appreciate you helping me, doc.

D: I really appreciate you spending the time. I know you're a big hurry but I'm glad you spent the time. I certainly learned a lot from you and that will help me be a better doctor.