

# Drugs and The Fog of Recovery

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Drugs? You've got to be kidding. Isn't that a no brainer? Aren't they what relapse is all about? Well, yes and no. Yes, substance abuse, the fog of recovery, and relapse are all about drugs and drug use. But sometimes those drugs come from unexpected places. Sometimes they're not the ones we eat, drink, smoke, snort or shoot. Sometimes the drugs of relapse aren't even outside of us. Instead, sometimes it's all about the drugs inside of us.

Now a lot has been written about brain chemistry and how drugs can alter its function, but that's not what I'm writing about. My concern here is how our internal physiology, even in our non-addicted states, can lead to a cascade of chemistry which ends in relapse. While this could include the sensations of withdrawals and cravings we experience when faced with an unexpectedly severe stressors or triggers, it can also include some very pleasant stimuli, too. Take ice cream for example.

When most of us think of ice cream, we think of desserts or birthday parties. Ice cream is one of those universally enjoyed foods which, in this day and age, even the lactose intolerant can enjoy. But what if in addition to these commonplace universal associations, every time you ate ice cream you were reminded of that heroin-shooting threesome you engaged in, just prior to beginning your recovery, where you were covered in Ben and Jerry's Cherry Garcia? Okay, so smack and ice cream may not be your every day, run of the mill dessert menu items, but for you, even in recovery, that might still be an appealing combination.

There are a lot of things that can unexpectedly ease us into the fog of recovery, even things we don't commonly associate with drugs or consider to be drugs, like ice cream. Sometimes these so-called "other-drugs" aren't even drugs at all. I once knew a person in recovery who would feel ferocious cravings and withdrawals every time he saw a black 1986 Monte Carlo SS. Why? Because that's the same kind of car he used to drive while he was using. Now, ten years into a stable recovery, the mere sight of that car still causes a hormonal hurricane inside of him, severely tempting him to enter into the fog.

As you might have already guessed, once you've established a stable recovery, beyond cars and ice cream, almost anything can be a potential drug and gateway to unexpected relapse: an old familiar song, a book, a movie, a sport, a building, a particular kind of sunny or rainy day, etcetera. Our abilities to associate people, places and things with pleasure are endless, and so too are the limitless ways these associations can lead us down into the fog.

The hardest part of recovery isn't getting clean, it's staying clean. Though, in foresight, the first day of sobriety might seem an insurmountable mountain to climb, once conquered, a whole new series of endless challenges await us. The obvious ones - pain, suffering, loss - are easy to spot. But it's the less obvious ones - the ones we often like - which can be the most difficult to identify and avoid. Yet, understanding that a drug isn't always a drug can go a long way toward unmasking those imposters and keeping you from being caught by the fog of recovery.

**Robert offers anonymous and confidential substance abuse recovery telephone coaching** to help those who wish to stabilize and maintain their recovery from substance abuse. Recovery coaching with Robert is available worldwide to anyone fluent in English who can reach him at **786-262-5750** (USA). For more information, please visit **<http://trafn.com/coach.html>**