

METRO NOW
15.05.07



the columnist

KIRAN BEDI

We would have injected vitamin C if only they had made it illegal!

Ewan McGregor

A walk away from drugs

It is close to impossible for a drug addict to help himself. What he or she needs is 'structured' help.

I HAVE been involved with drug abuse treatment programmes for two decades. It all started when I saw the vicious cycle of drug addiction-domestic violence-crime-prison-back to crime-etc etc... To break this cycle, we opened a drug abuse treatment centre which later became the Navjyoti Foundation which provides residential treatment in Delhi.

This weekend, our project head Dr Ajay Grover called an assembly of former patients, so that we could see for ourselves the impact of the treatment effort.

I would like to share with you the story of one of those people.

But before we get there, shall we try and understand what drug addiction and its possible consequences are.

Drugs affect every aspect of the life of an addict — he himself, his family and society at large. In most cases, drug addicts lose out on an education, jobs, family relationships and are often involved in illegal activities.

Once affected, an addiction cannot be treated by the addict himself.

Even the severest psychological blow — the loss of a job, separation from family, the death of a loved one — will fail to put them back on their feet.



Ewan McGregor and Robert Carlyle in the motion picture *Trainspotting*. Critics have slammed the movie for glamorising drug use, so even if you do see it, remember to 'Just say no'.

Addiction cannot be treated without structured help. The journey to full recovery is long and begins with acceptance of the problem and acceptance by the addict that he needs help.

Quitting isn't good enough

Simply quitting drugs with the help of substitutes does not quite help recovery. An addict needs a scientifically-structured treatment programme where all issues pertaining to the problem of drug addiction, mainly physical, mental, behavioural and social, are attended to simultaneously. Research has shown that six to 12 months are needed to ensure positive behavioural changes in a drug-affect-

ed personality. Time is needed to restore lost health, a lost job, a lost relationship.

One such story

"I read an article in the paper, after which I started attending Navjyoti's out patient treatment programme. After 22 days, I was admitted to Navjyoti and treated for six months. I was motivated enough to leave drugs but was looking for the right kind of help, which I got here. In the last 17 years, I had tried many times to leave drugs, switching over to alcohol, but would always go back to smack.

"The first three months went by easily enough, and in the last months I worked. The Vipasana meditation programme the Art of Living course helped me a lot. I attended an after care group for three months. I read a lot of spiritual literature. All of which helped me build my drug-free life.

"Three years into my recovery, I again began to feel lost and alone. I shared this feeling with my peer group but that did not help. Then it hit me that I need to change my daily routine. I started walking in the mornings. That did help.

"I know the value of my recovery. Recovery is a glass house which needs to be protected at every stage.

"I have now got a new job and am settling down slowly. I face a lot of problems but I always remember the saying: 'No Pain, No Gain.'"

Stay away

What this 'experience' tells us — again and again — is that recovery is an exception. Which is why it's best to 'stay away' from being such an exception.