



November 2006

## Addiction: A Family Disease

By Kathy Avayianos

While it is quite common for family members with an embedded addict in their midst, to assume that it is solely the individual with the addiction who has the problem, it is important for all family members to learn about the collaborative patterns that they have engaged in as part of a family system.

Addiction envelops the family collectively as everyone becomes progressively immobilized by the pervasive distress. Each individual contributes to the functioning of their family system and engages in efforts to manage and endure what is happening to their family where addiction resides. Amidst the stress and chaos that enters the home of an addicted family, each individual family member gradually adjusts and adapts with survival behaviour that causes the least amount of personal stress. The family learns to manage while incorporating the problem. As all families are a part of a system, individual family members acclimatize themselves in order to live normally. What may have been thought of as unhealthy, problematic or stressful at one point eventually becomes the norm as does enabling and co-dependency.<sup>1</sup>

In some cases, families that host an addicted member do not acknowledge that the problem exists in a direct manner. They may choose to not talk about the problem or confront it. In turn, family members repress their emotions and consequently ignore their own internal instincts. By not talking, not touching, not confronting, not feeling, and not trusting the emotional development of the family is inhibited and this is largely done to survive and cope with a perceived sense of powerlessness around the addiction.<sup>1</sup>

When a parent is the dependent member, the addiction becomes embedded in the fabric of what is familiar for the family. This becomes the reality that the entire family comes to accept, especially the children. The status quo becomes comprised

of rigid and unhealthy relationship patterns, coalitions formed against the user or the non-using partner, possible conflicts and violence and inappropriate distance or closeness between certain members.

Learning to enable as part of coping with addiction in the family is quite a common and natural adaptation for family members. The intentions behind enabling are usually rooted in love, care, concern and fear. Enabling prevents the dependent person from experiencing the negative consequences of their own behaviour. Family members protect the dependent person by denying the problem to others or making excuses, thereby protecting the image of the addicted person. Family members can also enable by agreeing with the rationalizations of the addict, including blaming themselves and justifying their accompanying behaviours. Family members will 'walk on eggshells' when in the company of the addicted person, for fear of upsetting them, while other family members enable by avoiding the problem - withdrawing from the family issue and refusing to talk about it. Many family members will take on all the responsibilities of the household, thus relinquishing the addicted person of further accountability. The impact of the addiction can accordingly infuse family members with feelings ranging from apprehension and confusion to frustration, anger and resentment, tempered with fear, anxiety and sadness.

Family members are not the only ones who enable. Friends, co-workers and employers can easily fall into similar enabling patterns in efforts to manage the addiction within the shared relationship.

In the addiction field, one will hear the term co-dependency. Co-dependency is a learned set of maladaptive and compulsive behaviours that can be passed down from one generation to another. It can be both an emotional and behavioural condition that affects an individual's ability to have a

healthy mutually satisfying relationship. Co-dependency often affects the spouse, parent, sibling, friend or co-worker of a person who is addicted. A co-dependent person focuses their attention and energy on the family member who is addicted and they typically sacrifice their own needs to take care of the addict. People experiencing this problem often come to a place where they prioritize the health, welfare and safety of others before their own and can easily lose contact with their own independent needs, desires and sense of self.<sup>2</sup>

While the intentions of the co-dependent person are honourable, their increased motivation to caretake and control the unmanageable addict can become compulsive and self-defeating. As the addict relies more and more on the 'caretaker', the caretaker may develop a sense of reward and satisfaction from being needed.

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1020 McNicoll Avenue  
Toronto, ON M1W 2J6  
Tel: (416) 495-0926  
Fax: (416) 495-7943  
Toll Free: 1-800-387-6198  
[www.bellwood.ca](http://www.bellwood.ca)

## The Family Mobile

### ... Addiction *continued from P. 1*

By continually doing more than their share, and by loving people that they can rescue, co-dependent people can become over invested in concentrating on things outside themselves. When co-dependent people experience a sense of helplessness within a shared relationship, they may come to take on the role of the martyr and it is a struggle to break away from the cycle of co-dependent behaviours that has become routine for them.

Co-dependency appears in varying degrees along a continuum. The further along on the continuum, the greater the effect on the quality of life. However, this deterioration in quality of life may create an opportunity for the caretaker to begin the recovery process.

Recovery from co-dependency involves change and growth on behalf of the entire family. Caretaking and enabling behaviours need to be recognized and worked through so that the co-dependent person can embrace their own feelings and needs. Recovery involves deep work based on shifting the relationship with self and learning to take responsibility for feelings, actions and behaviours. A major area of focus for recovery can be establishing and reinforcing boundaries in relationships. Cultivating a new sense of healthy, personal boundaries can emerge from discovering what individuals believe they do and don't deserve. The journey of recovery invites co-dependent people to assert themselves by maintaining clarity and capability surrounding their own commitment to the enforcement of these personal boundaries. By creating a congruency between their verbal assertions and their behavioural commitments, family members can create positive change for themselves. By letting go of the need to control people, places and events, co-dependent individuals can recover from self-defeating patterns of shame and fear. They come to accept and understand the powerlessness that comes with attempting to control the addict within the family. Recovery from co-depend-

ency is possible whether or not the addict chooses recovery.

In recognizing the significant impact of addiction on the family system, Bellwood Health Services aims to provide a safe, supportive and confidential environment for families to explore how their family system has come to be affected by addiction. Through the provision of our four-day Family Program, Bellwood endeavors to educate and assist families in dealing with their own personal adaptations and stressors. The Family Program consists of lectures, workshops and group sessions for addicted families to explore their own issues and venture into their own personal journey of recovery. This service remains available to the family members of our clients, alumni and to families in the community.

Bellwood's Family Program is also a valuable tool for health care professionals and corporate representatives interested in obtaining addiction education.

*For more information about the Program, contact the Bellwood Intake Department at 416-495-0926 or toll free (800) 387-6198.*

***Kathy Avayianos, B.A., B.S.W., is a Family Counsellor at Bellwood.***

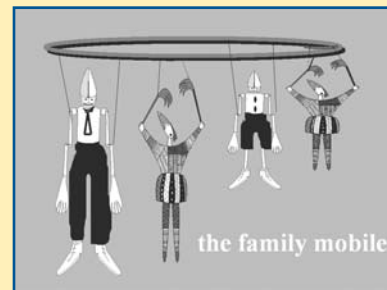
#### References:

- (1) Edwards, John T., *Treating Chemically Dependent Families*, 1990.
- (2) National Mental Health Association Fact Sheet, 2006.

***"It's a good thing to have all the props pulled out from under us occasionally. It gives us some sense of what is rock under our feet, and what is sand."*** Madeleine L'Engle *Writer*

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(416) 495-0926, Ext. 144, or  
[conniemartin@bellwood.ca](mailto:conniemartin@bellwood.ca).

To understand the impact of an addiction on the family, think of the family as a mobile with everyone reasonably in balance. Along comes *addiction* to one or more of the family members and it is like a tornado hitting the mobile.



The family is tossed about as though they were feathers in the wind. Some members will fall, some will hang on for dear life and in so doing, lose themselves in unspoken anger and frustration. Some may become a victim of the same disease. Whatever the mixture of the behaviours coming out of this shake-up, is seldom healthy for the individuals or the family unit.



Changing the status quo is necessary and scary. The answer is to get guidance and treatment from the professionals who know what is transpiring and can help you. Healthy communication between family members takes courage. Only then is understanding and change possible.

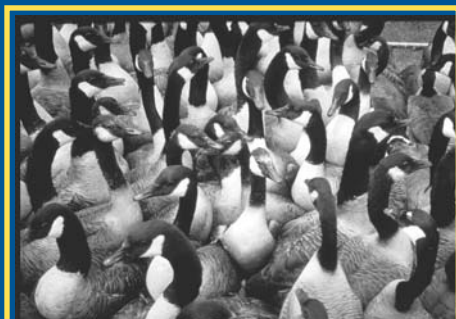
*"Courage is doing what you're afraid to do. And there can be no courage unless you are scared."* - Edward Rickenbacker - Aviator

## ALUMNI Corner

### The Graduation Present

... by John N.

Last evening I heard a sound in the sky and looking up, I noticed a flight of Geese winging south. This aroused my curiosity and I found myself heading to the computer to look for Geese on the Internet and I'd like to share what I found.



Geese migrate. To start they gather in groups in preparation. When geese fly they adopt a "V" formation. This "V" allows the point goose to break the air resistance for the others and when the point goose is tired, another just slips into place.

Some times the flight is disrupted by hunters and should a goose be wounded and have to drop out, two other geese will accompany the injured bird to the earth and stay with that bird, lending assistance until death or recovery has occurred.

As you graduate today, remember the geese. Gather in a group for there is safety in numbers: go to a meeting. Find someone to help lead the way and reduce the resistance: find a sponsor. If your recovering wings should falter: accept help because we can't do it alone.

Don't be a silly goose and fly alone.

## It's Never Too Late: Positive Parenting

*It has been reported that positive parent-child relationships characterized by high levels of involvement and attachment can provide a buffer from the kinds of distress children may encounter, such as peer pressure, with regard to substance abuse, body image and self-esteem, and bullying.*

To find out what we as parents and family members can do to parent and role model more effectively, we turned to **Penny Lawson**, *Manager of Family Services and Special Programs* at Bellwood for an answer. This is what she said:

"A current lecturer and writer about parenting is a woman by the name of Barbara Coloroso. Her basic message is that we need to raise children who are able to make good decisions for themselves. She states that to do this, children need to have the opportunity to make age appropriate decisions along the way and to believe that parents are confident that they can do so.

It has been said that the single biggest factor in resilience is an involved, dependable and caring adult. To be resilient, or able to recover from, or adjust to misfortune or change, we need to have confidence in our inner resources and external supports. We need to have opportunities to help or lead others, to have constructive opportunities for emotional release, and to have hope and the ability to dream. Fostering this in our children is a challenge for us all.

Never too old to learn, and after hearing Barbara's tape, I had an opportunity to practice a new behaviour. My youngest child, who is in her thirties, sent me an email asking me what she should do about a situation. Fresh from my new learning I replied that I did not know what she should do, but that I trusted in her ability to make a good decision as she had always done so in the past (true). The gratitude expressed in the return email reinforced the behaviour in me and I have practiced it to good effect. We are never too old, and it is rarely too late."

### Helpful books by Barbara Coloroso include:

- "Winning at Parenting Without Beating Your Kids" – an Audio Cassette
- "Giving Your Child the Gift of Inner Wisdom"
- "Just Because It's Not Wrong Doesn't Make It Right – From Toddlers to Teens: Teaching Kids to Act Ethically"
- "Parenting Through Crises. Helping Kids in Times of Loss, Grief and Change"

## BELLWOOD AND LIVING CLEAN RECOVERY SHOW

Bellwood is pleased to be a major supporter of "Living Clean", a weekly live recovery call-in show hosted by Glenn Allen. Watch for monthly guest appearances by Bellwood staff. Living Clean airs Sunday evenings, 11:30 p.m. Eastern, on the CTS television network.

## Alumni Phun At Bellwood

The Annual Alumni Barbecue in June attracted a large crowd of alumni, clients, staff, volunteers and their families for an evening of great food and fun. Happily, the weather cooperated completely!

Chef Daniel catered the barbecue and provided a varied menu including hamburgers, hotdogs, sausages on a bun, grilled salmon, grilled chicken, an assortment of shish-kabobs, salads, fresh fruit, cookies and squares. As well, he had a station just packed full of snacks like popcorn, tacos and soft drinks. It was a feast!

Children and adults alike were entertained by a couple of clowns (Lindylou and Schmendrake) who wowed the crowd with their mysterious magic whilst twisting balloons into hearts, bunnies and poodles. There were games and prizes for kids of all ages.

Best of all was the awesome band of 9 young men who call themselves "**The Unionist Ministers**", which they describe as a *railroad band*. Their unique sound and material - half of which is original - is a genre that seems to cross generational lines. Toes were tappin' and no one was nappin' at this really special event.

Watch your mail for upcoming events which are open to all Bellwood alumni, staff, volunteers and clients. The next event is the Annual Bellwood Christmas Party which will be held on Tuesday, November 28th. Come and help us usher in the Christmas season.



*Looks a lot like our President and Tom Levine!*



Members of **The Unionist Ministers** band getting down!

## Aftercare At Bellwood

... by David Paul

There are three phases in a client's journey on the road to recovery.

The first stage, Phase I, occurs when a person accepts that they are suffering from an addiction. They then have to decide the best course of action - whether or not to get treatment. This is one of the most important steps for an addict to make and probably the most difficult.

Phase II takes place when the person enters a facility like Bellwood and begins their treatment program. Both of these stages lay the groundwork for change and recovery, but without the next stage, Phase III, recovery will be difficult and a lasting renaissance nearly impossible.

Phase III is also known as *Aftercare* and Bellwood believes that it is essential for every graduating client to take part in the program if they want to have the best possible outcome. Bellwood's first outcome study demonstrated that 88% of Bellwood clients who were abstinent after one year post-treatment regularly worked their program in aftercare, including attendance at self-help support groups. It should be noted that 12-Step meetings attended on a regular basis are an *essential* part of aftercare.

Bellwood's Aftercare Program consists of 2-hour weekly group meetings held on Tuesday or Thursday evenings. Groups are facilitated by experienced, professional Recovery Counsellors, some of whom have been in recovery themselves for many years.

Clients remain with their same Recovery Counsellor from Phase II throughout their stay in Phase III. Clients may remain in an Aftercare group for up to 5 years. Bellwood also accepts people in recovery into our Aftercare programs even if they did not graduate from our treatment program.

If clients find themselves having difficulty in their recovery, they may access their counsellor for 1:1 sessions. Clients in Aftercare who suffer a relapse are asked to attend Bellwood's Relapse Prevention Group that takes place on Monday evenings. This group is highly structured and is individually focused on the client's needs in order to get back on track with their recovery. Upon completing eight weeks of the Relapse Prevention Group, clients may return to their original Aftercare group.

Although an addiction harms the addict in many ways, it can also have devastating effects on their loved ones. Addiction *is* a family disease. It is recommended that family members attend the Family Aftercare Groups, held on the same nights as the client groups. They too, may access the family counsellor for added support.

Out of town clients who are unable to attend Bellwood's program, will have aftercare pre-arranged by their counsellor in their hometown. Mini Treatment Programs are available to clients living outside the Toronto area as well.

Bellwood endeavours to keep alumni, clients and their families connected to Bellwood for support and fellowship and hosts annual alumni social events such as the annual summer BBQ and Christmas party.

Many clients have reported that if it were not for aftercare, they would not have been able to remain clean and sober.

No matter how many statistics are quoted when measuring successful outcomes for those who choose aftercare, one thing is certain: Recovery is possible and with the support of aftercare, the odds are on your side.

*David Paul, HSC, CW is a Bellwood Recovery Counsellor.*

## KISS Under The Mistletoe

... by Terence Flynn

The holiday season can present a challenge for most people and especially for those in early recovery. The hype, the festive mood, the unrealistic expectations to be "Ho, Ho, Ho" holly-jolly-happy, can be overwhelming for many.

We are bombarded by messages that suggest "more is better". The manipulating messages from the advertisers with their merry-making-marketing strategies push a festive round of cocktail parties and gala seasonal dinners, where alcohol in some form, is mandatory to usher in the season. Starting in October, we and our loved ones are told that we cannot live without this or that exquisite object or magical toy.

Consciously or unconsciously our expectations get heightened and we can find ourselves set up for disappointment. Some will overspend on gifts and end up in January anxious and depressed over their debt. Others will overeat and berate themselves for doing so. Still others will become stressed and overtired. For those in recovery, you will recognize each of these scenarios as set ups for potential relapse.

So **KISS** – **Keep It Simple**, be **Smart**. Stay clean and sober and remember to take it a day at a time or an hour at a time if needs be. Keep your expectations realistic. Remember only *you* can make *you* happy and at peace with yourself.

Keep your life in balance. Beware of being over confident or slipping into feeling sorry for yourself. Eat well, exercise, stay well rested, and reach out to others who can provide the support you need. Stay in the moment. Go to meetings and be sure to give back to the recovery community. Oh yes and have a very relaxed, sagacious and loving holiday season!

*Terence Flynn is Bellwood's Director of Spiritual Care.*

## G B F

**The Gordon Bell Foundation** for the Prevention of Addiction has recently established the "Simon Wood Fund" to help Ontario families who are unable to pay for adolescent addiction treatment. Simon Wood was a young man whose tragic death was the direct result of abusing drugs. Donations to this fund help to pay for qualified adolescents and their families to obtain assessment, treatment and after-care services that may not otherwise be available due to financial limitations, as well as sponsor education and prevention activities. Several adolescents have already benefited from this fund.

The Foundation has also co-sponsored a number of initiatives with other organizations including:

- *Parent & Community Handbook*, and *Parents Need to Know* with Parent Action on Drugs  
[www.parentactionondrugs.org](http://www.parentactionondrugs.org)
- *Parenting for Life Series* with The Psychology Foundation of Canada

The ability to continue funding adolescent treatment, education and prevention activities is possible through the commitment of our donors who recognize the importance of our initiatives.

To make a donation, please send your cheque, payable to:

**The Gordon Bell Foundation for the Prevention of Addiction**  
1020 McNicoll Avenue  
Toronto, ON M1W 2J6  
Attention: J. Laird  
[www.gbfaddiction.com](http://www.gbfaddiction.com)

Bellwood baseball hats and t-shirts available for purchase, with all proceeds going to the Gordon Bell Foundation. Baseball hats are available in either navy blue with yellow trim or yellow with navy trim for \$12 each. Complementary yellow t-shirts can also be purchased for \$10 each. Contact Tracy Gaulin for further information at 416-495-0926 or [tgaulin@bellwood.ca](mailto:tgaulin@bellwood.ca).

## Alumni News

The **Alumni Christmas Party** will be held on November 28th from 6:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. Come and help us celebrate with a delicious Christmas menu catered by Chez Daniel, a children's room with videos and other fun activities, and a special visit by Santa Claus!

**Please RSVP to Maria Shibaeva by Tuesday, November 21st.** Maria can be reached at [mshibaeva@bellwood.ca](mailto:mshibaeva@bellwood.ca), or 416-495-0926, Ext. 303, toll free (800) 387-6198. Santa and Chef Daniel both need to be prepared, so please indicate the number of people in your party, including the number of boys and girls and their ages.

## Bellwood Professionals In Residence Days

Health care professionals and corporate representatives continue to find Bellwood's Professionals In Residence Days to be a valuable way to receive some addiction-related education while gaining an understanding of Bellwood's addiction treatment programs. These complimentary one-day workshops are available to professionals who deal with addictions as part of their job. A recent attendee's comment indicates the value of attending: "*Bellwood's Professionals in Residence Day provided "real" insight into addictions and Bellwood programs - something you cannot get from a pamphlet.*"

**Upcoming workshop dates are: November 8, December 7, February 21, April 4, and June 7.**

To register, contact Charles Senior at [csenior@bellwood.ca](mailto:csenior@bellwood.ca) or 416-495-0926, ext.302, toll free (800) 387-6198.

## Bellwood Presents Dr. Cardwell C. Nuckols, MA, Ph.D.

As part of our vision to continue to be a centre of excellence in the training, education and treatment of addiction, compulsive behaviours and behavioural health problems, Bellwood is pleased to announce that we will be hosting two full day educational workshops by Dr. Cardwell C. Nuckols on January 29 and 30, 2007.

Dr. Nuckols has been described as "one of the most influential clinical trainers in America". His passion and mission is to assist in the translation of emerging scientific research into information and techniques helpful to those who do the important work of helping alcoholics, addicts and those suffering from co-occurring disorders, find their personal road to recovery.

**January 29 - *Treating Early Life Developmental Trauma - A Science Based Perspective***  
**January 30 - *The Science of Recovery***

For more details, or to receive a workshop brochure, contact Charles Senior at [csenior@bellwood.ca](mailto:csenior@bellwood.ca) or 416-495-0926, Ext 302, toll free 1-800-387-6198. Or visit the News/Events section of [www.bellwood.ca](http://www.bellwood.ca) to download a copy of the brochure.

## Who's New At Bellwood Health Services

Lakshmi Siva - Research Assistant; Tala Chulak - Casual Nutritionist/Fitness Instructor; Trevor Swanson - Casual PA; Mark Wilson - Casual PA; Kelly Karges - Casual Fitness Instructor; Maria Tassopoulos - Research Assistant. Welcome to Bellwood!