This interview can be read to get a sense of what a person goes through that causes them dependency problems with psychoactive drugs and compulsive behaviors. The interview also helps one grasp the forces that propel people into recovery and keep them there.

There is an intimate connection between drug use and violence, especially alcohol. The violence can come from alcohol’s lowering of inhibitions, from methamphetamine’s stimulation of aggressiveness, or from steroid’s spur to anger (roid rage). In most cases there is an existing susceptibility for aggression.

This is a 45-year-old recovering male alcoholic with violence and drug problems for part of his life. He went into treatment and became a drug/alcohol/violence counselor.

Q: Do you think there is a relationship between drug use and violence?

“In my case there was a direct relationship to drug use and physical abuse. I have never been in an altercation without the use of alcohol or drugs or coming down off alcohol or drugs. I think that alcohol and drugs would push me over the emotional wall to doing things that I would never consider doing if I wasn’t under the under the influence of something. For instance if I was having problems on the job, or problems in my emotional life, or problems with my relationships, they are compounded if I am on alcohol or drugs. The feelings to lash out and to hurt sometimes seem like a logical thing to do when you are on alcohol and drugs. You view people, your loved ones, as the enemy. And as it has been said many times we hurt the ones we love.”

Q: How did it affect your relationships?

“When I was in my first relationship, my first marriage, I might be imbibing on alcohol or taking drugs and be pretty mellow until my spouse or loved one would come in and suggest something or make an accusation that didn’t fit with whatever I was thinking and put me in a position of not living up to their expectations and instead of dealing with the fact for fact, I would blow it up into, ‘I’m not good enough.’ Or she was always pushing on me and then verbal abuse happens first and if you happen to be with someone who is strong minded and strong willed too, they don’t take that very well. Of course what I’ve done is exert my size and superiority to those people and pushed them around.”

Q: Were you able to turn it off?

“In my case it always happened when I had no other recourse and my brain patterns were altered by chemicals. I thought about this many times that I’ve gone from point A to point B in a matter of a flash, a blink of an eye. Punch first, ask questions later.”

Q: Did you try to get help?
“Battering is a treatable condition, I think it has to be viewed like drug addiction or alcohol addiction, absolute abstinence. Under no conditions may you take two steps forward and one step backward. The only way the cycle can be broken is complete honesty, talking with other people, saying the exact things you did, and coming to the truth of it. I have never seen anybody stop a behavior like that unless they really wanted to change and then it is really fairly simple.”

“The first thing they do is just like in step one of the 12-step program is admit that they have a problem. Admit that they are powerless over that problem and be willing to do whatever it takes to change.”

“There is Batterer’s Anonymous. There are batterers’ groups everywhere. They are not spoken of because very few men want to admit that they go to them. It is not even as socially acceptable as being an alcoholic.”

Q: Do you think there are a lot of batterers?

“There are a huge number that are batters and I think there are 2 or 3 categories. There are those who may have been drinking along with their significant other to keep up and that person was abusive emotionally, verbally, or physically. There is another kind of person that is an aggressive person that just wants to overpower. What I have seen in treatment is women who mostly go along with their spouse and the violence becomes accepted behavior in the home. What happens also oftentimes is one or the other of them stops drinking or stops the abusive behavior and the other one is left alone and doesn’t have a treatment facility or a treatment direction to stop themselves, so they are left out there in the cold. This happens to a lot of women.”

Q: Are we more aware of spousal abuse nowadays?

“Back in the ’50s and ’60s hardly any women were coming to 12-step treatment programs. They were mostly men. Women started coming out of the closet in the late ’60s and ’70s for their own recovery. Alcoholism or drug addiction and AA and NA and the different 12-steps programs are now almost 50% each men and women. The same thing is happening with batterers and physically abusive people. It was embarrassing for a man to admit that he was hurt and pounded or attacked by a woman, so it was just kept under the carpet. But nowadays things get more equal.”

Q: What factors set you up for violence?

“Fear of abandonment and loss of control. Myself, I was somewhat abandoned by my parents even when I was living there. Then I was abandoned at about 15 when they moved and I wasn’t invited to go. I was divorced at an early age and I view that as abandonment. That ties into a behavior that I have along with alcohol and drug addiction, Oftentimes when someone has the fear of abandonment, they push the issue so far in order to make the other person abandon them just to test them. They get caught in an infinite loop of making things happen and being terribly remorseful that it actually happened.”
Q: What about loss of control?

“I think that loss of control is a chicken and egg kind of thing. When does it begin, when does it end? In my case I would have control if I didn’t take any alcohol or drugs. If I forgo that learned behavior and just go ahead and take the alcohol or drug, what happens then, if you’ve had any sobriety, you are doubly, triply guilty than before you took the drink, so now I think the tendency to violence is even greater than it was before because you are feeling so bad about yourself.”

Q: Did you have problems with violence when you played sports?

“I don’t think that the steroids caused the problems as much as the emotional poison that was there before that. Being good enough, strong enough, fast enough, you could make 30 tackles in a game and spend the whole week worrying about the one you missed. That was the kind of person that I was and the kind of person that many addicted people are. Nothing is ever good enough. In that particular profession the more violent and ugly you are, the better you might be on the field and you make much better copy off the field when you are that eccentric.”

Q: What would set you off?

“I could have a day where I lost my job, my wife left me, my bank account was zero and get through it. Or I could take a drink or a drug and go out and see that a bird crapped on my car and break people in half. In other words, I seldom react to the things that need to be reacted to and that is also part of an addicted person. We tend to avoid the things that really need addressing and we get nuts over things we don’t need to spend the time on. It is misguided anger, misguided noninterest. Those are the things that I have done and I have seen many people do. They are not giving the proper responses at the proper time for life’s setbacks. They build up, and they build up, and they build up, and in my case if I put alcohol and drugs in me, I am a bomb. There are people that do that without alcohol or drugs. Many of them spend the rest of their life in prisons or worse. People like me and thousands of others walk around normal and they are known as people who can handle stress and pressure better than anybody but at home your son didn’t mow the lawn right and you’re kicking the dog or beating the wife.”

Q: Is there a key to what you have learned?

“In addiction, in my own recovery from alcohol and drugs, what I have learned is that there are no big deals. There just isn’t anything worth getting crazy about.”