

NEBRASKA LICENSEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

A SERVICE OF BEST CARE EAP

Recovery – The Road of Happy Destiny

I don't ever remember as a child thinking "I want to be a doctor when I grow up and then abuse drugs and alcohol and nearly destroy my life". No, I had the usual desires, to help others, to be academically and professionally successful and to retire on the laurels of a respected professional career. But as so often happens, life interrupts the best laid plans. I spent so much of my time trying to conquer the next mountain that I was not really accomplishing anything. I had just finished a competitive fellowship and was a few months into setting up a busy practice. I had made the mistake of setting up a specialty practice in a rural area which is problematic because of the level of care that they are used to providing in a rural setting did not adjust well to having a specialist in their midst. The pressures of trying to bring a specialty practice to a small rural hospital soon became overwhelming and the insanity slowly set in.

Drinking was starting to become really problematic for me and I started to abuse other substances. My behavior was really becoming affected by this. I found quickly that in medicine there is a very poor understanding of the phenomenon of addiction, in fact, we often "shoot our wounded". As I started drinking more, I would find myself isolating. I was filled with anger, resentment and everything was someone else's fault. I had no peace in my life and the vicious cycle of addiction was becoming very active in my life. Worst of all I was receiving no support at work and I felt I had nowhere to turn.

At this point it was suggested that I go to the NE LAP for an evaluation. The evaluation process was confidential and I felt very comfortable with the whole process. I found that I was not unique and that I was not a moral failure. I was reassured that there were people in the medical profession who understand addiction and who have sympathy for those struggling with this disease. Through the NE LAP I found Terri, an LDAC who saved my life. Terri stood by me through the difficult times and as I progressed in sobriety she was right there with the NE LAP. I did end up going to a treatment facility that specializes in treating people in the medical field. This decision was one of the best decisions I ever made.

The treatment process involved coming to terms with a lot of issues, after all, we all have issues. Unfortunately for me, alcohol was my solution. In addiction, people try to make the behavior and the substance two different issues but they are not. People go through many different steps of deterioration before they take that first drink or pill. The substance of choice usually comes along later as a numbing agent for all the pain that exists in the addict's life. It is this pain that manifests itself as these behaviors that are so often associated with the alcohol or addict. Learning a new way of thinking and dealing with those root causes of addiction and being diligent about it is the only way this problem can be dealt with. It is in this process that the NE LAP helped me also, making sure I stayed on track and encouraging me along the way.

It is estimated that one in ten health care professionals is impaired in one form or another. With the rapidly changing pace of medicine today that number can be expected to rise. A recovering physician has two strikes against them when they walk in the door. You can expect little support from your peers and recovery can be a lonely path, but it doesn't have to be. The NE LAP can provide you with the help you need to take that first step towards recovery. It is there when you are struggling and need a hand up. But most of all it provides professionals and a network of friends who understand and who can believe in you as you "trudge the Road of Happy Destiny".

If you are a licensed health or health-related service professional wanting more information about sobriety and recovery, please contact the NE LAP at (800) 851-2336 or (402)354-8055 or visit our web site at www.lapne.org. If you would like to consult with the NE LAP, or schedule an assessment or an educational presentation, please ask for Judi Leibrock, NE LAP Coordinator, or Michelle Hruska, NE LAP Counselor.

December 2015