

# An Issue of Influence...

## The Ripple Effect - Unintended Consequences



You throw a pebble into calm water and watch the ripples until they reach the shore. Our choices, which bring on a series of events; like pebbles thrown into the water. Every decision we make, statistically, directly affects at least seven others and an untold amount of others indirectly. Which means for every decision we make, there will be consequences that we may see or not see. There were pebbles thrown and ripples on the water, before we were born, that have impacted our lives. To put it simply: No matter what your intentions, sometimes there are unintended consequences.

How do you try and avoid unintended consequences?

By paying attention to the ripples, by stepping outside yourself long enough to understand that the choices you make today could affect not only you, but also others for years, and even generations to come.

By throwing new pebbles in the pond, by helping others, we create a whole new set of ripples. Each pebble has the capability of starting a whole new cycle of ripples. Helping others when you may never know where the ripples will end.

Making an attempt to avoid unintended consequences means taking a risk. A risk of getting involved in life - in the lives of others as well as your own.

We all begin life with generations of ripples, choices made before we were even born, that can affect our lives. But we can wade into the waters of life and stop the ripples. We can make a stand, and stop making excuses for why we do the things we do.

Before you toss that pebble into the pond, or rock into the ocean, stop and think about the consequences. The ripple you cause today could last for generations. Your children are watching you and every choice you make.

Whether you see the results of your choices are not, you are responsible. Once you are aware of that, there is no excuse left to continue along the same path. People have already made choices that have affected your life to this point, some good, and some bad. Today you have a choice. You can change things, one pebble at a time.

*The above is an adaptation of an article by Michael Clark in the Jacksonville Addiction Recovery Examiner January 26th 2010.*

### Also in this Issue:

*The Signs and Symptoms of Addiction and their ripple Effect* 2

### For More Information:



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## Youth Event Calendar



Mondays at 5:30-7:00pm  
at the Laporte School in the FACS room.  
Tuesdays at 4:00-5:30 pm  
at the HAPA/Taskforce office in the old  
Utke Hardware Building

### Alternative Highs

Laporte:

**Check our website for upcoming events**

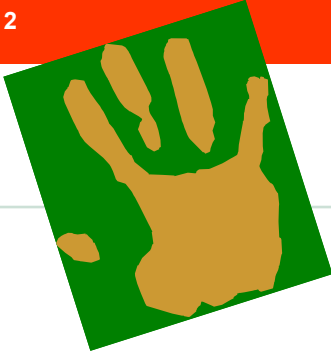
Nevis 5th Quarter:

Feb. 19th

*To follow home game at Bethany Lutheran  
Church*

Park Rapids:

**Check our website for upcoming events**



## Signs and Symptoms of Addiction

(As defined by the American Psychiatric Association (DSM-IV) and the World Health Organization (ICD-10) criteria.<sup>(1)</sup>)

By simply reviewing each symptom, one can begin to see the ripple effect of addiction

**Tolerance:** Has the use of drugs increased over time?

If there is addiction present in one's life, the increase in use will take resources away from everyday life.

Time that was spent with family and friends and money that was used for food, clothes, fun with family and friends, etc. will be taken up using. Attention and focus that was spent on work or family will be spent on using.

**Withdrawal:** When using is stopped, is there any of the following symptoms: irritability, anxiety, shakes, sweats, nausea, or vomiting?

When withdrawal sets in, one has an inability to fully show up to be a parent, sibling or child to those in one's family. The focus is on how bad the substance is needed or the sickness that occurs from not having the chemical in the body distracts from living life and being present with others. Priorities of others are shifted onto the person in withdrawal and off of other things including parenting others or maintaining financial stability, etc.

**Difficulty controlling use:** Is use more or for a longer time? Is the use to escape reality? Does the use stop after using one time, or does one time lead to more times?

Difficulty controlling use is difficulty controlling oneself. The substance will dictate priorities, energy and state of mind.

**Negative Consequences:** Is use continued even though there are consequences in mood, self-esteem, job, health or family relationships?

Dedication to family, job, relationships is all pushed lower on the priority list. Treating those who we love and care for us how they deserve to be treated becomes less important than getting high. The user can start to experience guilt and hopelessness, losing their way out of the addiction.

**Neglecting or Postponing Activities:** Have social, recreational, work, or home activities been neglected or forgotten because of use?

Life in general gets put on hold for use. More guilt and poor self image results from their life situation. Users get defensive and blame others for the consequences of their actions. The user becomes the victim of their situation when what truly victimizes them is their addiction.

**Spending significant time or emotional energy:** Is a significant amount of time spent obtaining, using, concealing, planning, or recovering from use? Is a lot of time spent thinking about using? Is use ever concealed or minimized? Is there thought of schemes to avoid getting caught?

What was all this time dedicated to before the addiction? Work, school, family? What is the user not thinking about? Taking care of them selves physically, mentally, spiritually? Pulling their weight and responsibility in their family and other relationships?

**Desire to cut down:** Is there thought about cutting down or controlling use? Have there ever been unsuccessful attempts to cut down or control use?

In some cases of addiction, the user still has the ability to see that their use is having a negative effect on their life and has a desire to quit. When the attempts are unsuccessful, the guilt, low self esteem and hopelessness associated with addiction can be greater than their desire to get sober.