



The End of My Addiction

Olivier Ameisen

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"After years of battling uncontrollable addiction, I have achieved the supposedly impossible: complete freedom from craving." Dr. Olivier Ameisen was a brilliant cardiologist on the staff at one of America's top teaching hospitals and running his own successful practice when he developed a profound addiction to alcohol. He broke bones with no memory of falling; he nearly lost his kidneys; he almost died from massive seizures during acute withdrawal. He gave up his flourishing practice and, fearing for his life, immersed himself in Alcoholics Anonymous, rehab, therapy, and a variety of medications. Nothing worked. So he did the only thing he could: he took his treatment into his own hands. Searching for a cure for his deadly disease, he happened upon baclofen, a muscle relaxant that had been used safely for years as a treatment for various types of muscle spasticity, but had more recently shown promising results in studies with laboratory animals addicted to a wide variety of substances. Dr. Ameisen prescribed himself the drug and experimented with increasingly higher dosages until he finally reached a level high enough to leave him free of "any" craving for alcohol. That was more than five years ago. Alcoholism claims three hundred lives per day in the United States alone; one in four U.S. deaths is attributable to alcohol, tobacco, or illegal drugs. Baclofen, as prescribed under a doctor's care, could possibly free many addicts from tragic and debilitating illness. But as long as the medical and research establishments continue to ignore a cure for one of the most deadly diseases in the world, we won't be able to understand baclofen's full addiction-treatment potential. "The End of My Addiction" is both a memoir of Dr. Ameisen's own struggle and a groundbreaking call to action—an urgent plea for research that can rescue millions from the scourge of addiction and spare their loved ones the collateral damage of the disease.

The End of My Addiction Details

Date : Published December 23rd 2008 by Farrar Straus Giroux (first published October 9th 2008)

ISBN : 9780374140977

Author : Olivier Ameisen

Format : Hardcover 332 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Autobiography, Memoir, Biography, Health, Medicine, Food and Drink, Alcohol

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From Reader Review The End of My Addiction for online ebook

Lucia Gannon says

An honest tale of the destructive effect of alcohol. Olivier Ameisen is a remarkable individual. He is a gifted musician and a successful cardiologist. He has one almost fatal flaw. He was born with a genetic predisposition to constant anxiety and alcohol dependency. Using alcohol to curb his anxiety he quickly spirals into alcohol dependency and suffers all the consequences of an addict. Financial ruin, health problems including withdrawal seizures and almost loses his license to practice as a doctor. But Olivier doesn't give up. Despite living with continuous alcohol cravings, beyond his control, he spends his lucid moments trying to find something to help him emerge from this alcoholic hell.

He discovers Baclofen-a drug used to help muscle relaxation in neuromuscular disorders. In the absences of a physician willing to prescribe this drug for him he performs his own experiment-on himself. The result is nothing short of miraculous...

This book has had a profound effect on how I think about addictions, particularly alcohol addiction. Its author is a brave and courageous man to write his story honestly, warts and all. It is very readable, not at all over-burdened with scientific detail. It contains no pathos, no regrets, no self-flagellation. The story is presented in a matter-of-fact way. The author exhibits 100% acceptance of his condition. This, in turn, is helpful for the reader to think of addictions in terms of biological diseases and accept that the person suffering from such a condition deserves not less than 100% acceptance from their carers.

Jakamo says

A very well written and intelligent book that delves into the very nature and science of addiction, the stigma that it carries, and the cure (a non-addictive, non-narcotic muscle relaxant called baclofen) that is the most promising, and until now overlooked, medicine for addiction of any kind. I was prescribed it by my doctor when, like the author, nothing else worked. It has worked wonders and brought a new ray of hope into every aspect of my life.

Laura says

I was skeptical when I first heard of this book. If this man had actually found a cure for his alcoholism, why wasn't it all over the news?

Answer: Because Big Pharma doesn't want to fund studies showing how baclofen (a generic drug normally prescribed for multiple sclerosis) is effective in reducing anxiety, cravings, and the obsession for alcohol and other drugs.

This was a well organized book, complete with relevant articles, abstracts, and a nice bibliography. This subject interested me so much (even though I am not an addict and actually do not know any addicts) that I went to PubMed and looked up some current articles concerning baclofen and addiction. I was pleased to see that progress is being made, albeit slowly.

This book was written for the layperson, so don't be scared that it's full of medical jargon. If you have any connection to addicts, or are just interested in biology, chemistry, psychology, addiction, or how our society treats addicts, you must read this book.

It truly lives up to the "amazing" rating I give it!

Mads P. says

Read this for class for a report about interventions for alcohol dependence. This book was helpful in understanding stigma against those with diseases of addiction. Even when interacting with medical professionals, patients can expect to be judged and blamed for their disease and treated differently than patients with other diseases. Suggesting that chemical dependency patients have a spiritual or moral deficit that once overcome will cure their addiction is not only naive but also counterproductive in battling addiction. The book helps show the true power of craving to break willpower and spiritual and moral conviction. Physiological craving is the symptom of a disease; evidence-based treatments must be demanded. Whether baclofen is the answer, I don't know. It is still not in wide use for the treatment of chemical dependency. The book, near the end, started to sound like a commercial for baclofen. I hope that the research on it that has finally been funded provides some more conclusive results. If it does prove to be an effective treatment for many, the author has done a great service in sharing his story and advocating for research. Even if it doesn't, the book is still very eye-opening for those who wish to understand treatment for addiction from a patient's perspective.

Christa Williams says

Fascinating read about Olivier Ameisen's struggle with anxiety co-mingled with addiction to alcohol. Although an accomplished cardiologist, the alcohol addiction led to the demise of his practice as well as complete disruption of his life. He found complete relief through the use of baclofen, a drug with minimal side effects. I recommend it to anyone who struggles with addiction or has loved ones who struggle with addiction.

David says

physician's memoir of his very severe alcohol dependency, which cost him his career as a cardiologist, and the self-treatment he conducted using high-dose baclofen off-label. He published a case report a couple years ago about his own treatment, contending that the drug completely suppressed craving, such that maintaining abstinence was easy for him, and greatly reduced his lifelong anxiety, self-medication of which is ostensibly why he had been drinking for so many years and through so many failed treatments.

In part the book reads as an ad for the systematic research he hopes will be initiated on baclofen for addiction treatment. Apparently, drug companies are unmotivated to study it b/c it's already out of patent, so there's little profit to be obtained should it prove successful.

The number of interventions that have helped one person in particular via uncontrolled case study is infinite, and most don't turn out to be worth much, but he does have a coherent rationale for why it should work,

some animal research that fits, and apparently reasonable credibility with some brain researchers who know what they're talking about, so maybe it will turn out to be a breakthrough.

first part of the book is a boring (to me) recitation of the awful things he did and said while getting drunk all the time -- at the risk of sounding insensitive, this sort of description is fascinating at first but numbing eventually.

Author is very very sure of himself, a bit dismissive of everybody else [college students could create a [hopefully non-alcoholic:] drinking game with this book by taking a drink every time he writes approximately "I told [health professional x:] that my drinking was secondary to anxiety, but they didn't want to listen"], and writes in overdetailed fashion about trivia such as how he discovered how to use PubMed for literature searches.

Nevertheless, if you're interested in addiction treatment, it's worth a look.

Reid says

Got this for a buck plus tax at my local Dollar Store and gave it to a certain someone. That someone, my source, read it and said it was one of the best nonfiction books he's ever read, for many reasons, including the writing, the intelligence, the understanding and insights into addiction and drinking, the medical community and the US drug industry, etc. Say no more, say no more. FYI - In case you're interested. I may read this, too, and add to this review later. (I'm making this my one and only review by proxy. Not everyone is on GR - hard to believe, I know.)

Kathryn says

If there was a zero star rating, I would have used it

Ryan Holiday says

I approached this book with some skepticism. By the end, I felt guilty to have been stuck making the same mistake as the highly-credentialed doctors who refused to consider the merits of Ameisen's research because they'd grown so fixated on traditional treatments. 12 Step programs are a god-send for many but considering their alarming relapse rates, doctors (and readers) remain open minded to new alternatives. Like the author rightly points out, we've come to believe that addiction is a disease but have been treating it the same way for nearly 70 years. For what other illness would that be acceptable? Where else would we tolerate prevailing sentiment that blames the victims?

The premise of the book is that after years of struggling with an addiction that lead to the voluntary closure of his medical practice, Dr. Ameisen begins to look for off-label solutions to his sickness. Believing that AA and rehab were not complete cures - attending 2 meetings a day for 7 years to only temporary success - he hears of a obscure drug called baclofen that has made some progress curing alcoholism in rats. He begins to self-prescribe the drug at very high doses, following the scientific method and recording the results when he can. High doses of baclofen led to an almost immediate end of all craving and achieved 9 months of sobriety.

An open minded editor of a medical journal agreed to publish his findings and this potential cure has been slowly making its way through the medical community. Unfortunately, doctors are prey to the same entrenched dilemmas that all businesses are and they have been reluctant to experiment further with his ideas, despite the promising signs. Ameisen, thankfully, has remained sober since.

What is perhaps most striking besides the scientific implications, is that in addition to being a renowned pianist and doctor, Ameisen is a strikingly talented writer. He makes complicated medical topics easily digestible and he speaks of his addiction openly rather than shamefully. A common assumption might be that a work of this nature would be full of rationalizations or cognitive dissonance. That is not the case - it is clear and forthcoming. Nor is it dull or too anecdotal.

Though this book was not the subject of much fanfare at release, its significance will certainly grow in time. If ongoing studies corroborate Ameisen's results this will stand as a ground breaking work and a turning point in the treatment of addiction.

Joy says

3 stars for the presentation. 5 stars for the idea and the guts to tell the story.

Brandon says

I was fascinated by the neurochemistry/other life sciences in the book intermingled with the storyline of what happened.

Kony says

Among the dozen or so addiction memoirs I've read, this one's pretty good. In terms of storytelling, it's well-written, well-paced, and narrated in an engaging voice. In terms of substance, it stands out for two reasons.

(1) The narrator is a doctor, so he describes his journey through symptoms, treatment, relapse, and finally recovery from the perspective of someone who really understands and takes seriously the scientific method. Unlike many addicts and experts, he's clear-eyed about distinguishing his chronic anxiety from his alcoholism, clarifying that the former is a root cause of the latter.

(2) The narrator has cured himself with a little-known miracle drug (baclofen), so he's writing not for cathartic or literary purposes, but to promote his cure. His book is basically a vehicle for describing why and how he ran a case study on himself, then published it in a peer-reviewed journal to deafening silence from the medical community. For all that, the book is still engaging, not didactic, and reads like a human story - except the last chapter, which reads like a grant proposal plus op-ed. For aesthetic reasons I'd have cut this chapter and made it an appendix. But I appreciate his sense of moral urgency.

Liza Abrahams says

Interesting

Jennifer says

Great novel on Ameisen's struggle with alcoholism and how he became his own case study in finding a new way to treatment Alcohol Use Disorder. Love the multiple case studies presented and the detail of baclofen regimen used.

Madeleine Fletcher says

Essential and compelling reading for anyone addicted to anything they don't want to be addicted to, be it cigarettes, alcohol, overeating, etc. The author's solution for people struggling to eliminate a craving that is wreaking havoc with their lives and relationships is high dose baclofen, a safe, relatively inexpensive, older medication that is ignored by the big pharmaceutical companies because they can't make a lot of money off of it. The scientific papers lending support to his thesis are all reprinted in the appendix. So this is a very useful book, as the use of high-dose baclofen is currently off-label for addictions, and one would have to convince one's doctor if one would want to have a prescription for it, this book would help with that.
