

There is no single cause of substance abuse or addiction that can be definitely identified.

One common denominator is that most addictions start at a young age.

One man told me that he started drinking when he was about 8 years old. He grew up in a large and busy family that had many visitors. Visitors were generally served a drink.

Hardly anyone noticed that the young boy started finishing the visitors' drinks, many of which contained alcohol in one form or another.

By the time he was 12, he had become an alcoholic. He would start each day by having a couple of straight shots every morning before going to his middle school. Again, no one was paying very close attention except for several siblings, who thought it was hilarious.

A heroin addict started his addiction in high school. Dealers in his community provided expensive street drugs to suburban kids at low to no cost in the beginning. Once they had become hooked, the dealers knew that these kids would be able to obtain funds from their affluent parents, by stealing in the community, or by other, even more nefarious means.

It is tempting to "blame the victim" when it comes to substance abuse and addictions.

While it is true that the addicted individual must help him/ herself towards sobriety, these individuals are generally not entirely to blame for what has happened to them.

Overextended parents and inadequate law enforcement also play a role in addictions.

Studies have shown that much of the trouble middle and high school-aged children get into occurs between 3:00 PM and 5:00 PM, the often unsupervised after-school hours.

Parents need to provide supervision during these hours, as well as during the evening.

The anti-crime achievements of organizations like "Neighborhood Watch" and "Mother's Against Drunk Driving" have been substantial and are extremely impressive.

Parents concerned about the availability of illegal drugs in their communities could form a similar organization to combat drug dealers.

Working with school officials, the police, judges and the courts, as well as advocating for sufficient funding for enhanced police activities, parents could help to clear communities of these dangerous individuals.

Prevention is a better option than treatment, which is not always effective or accessible.

