

Essay 1, Draft #2

Addiction

The use of substances, as well as engagement in certain behaviors, may bring rewarding effects for humankind. Nonetheless, an individual gets addicted to such behaviors and substances. For instance, the continuous use of cocaine as a substance causes addiction. As such, apart from the pleasure, addiction is often practiced in the attempt of escaping distress. Gabor Mate, a physician and addiction expert. Sheff, and Rodríguez, are men who have written about their experiences with addiction. Gabor Mate attempt to explain how people tend to succumb to this problem claiming to fill a certain void in their lives. The articles show how addiction is considered the process of hiding stress based on the stories of renowned writers. Maté's main points on addiction are illustrated by the experiences of Nic Sheff and Luis Rodríguez because they both reflect on the issues related to trauma, emptiness, and the negative health impacts of these substances on human beings.

Gabor Mate, in his work: "The Keys of Paradise" underlined various points about addiction and addicts. The points attempt to bring out the statement that addiction could be as a result of distress. He put his argument as follows: "The research literature is unequivocal: most hard-core substance abusers come from abusive homes." (*The Keys of Paradise* 36). This quote signifies that Maté affirms that addiction is geared on childhood trauma. As people grow from childhood, they tend to encounter various challenges. Some of the challenges may be associated with emotional rejection which brings emotional pain. In the book *"It Calls You Back"*, by Luis Rodriguez. Rodriguez tells a lot about overcome his identity as a

Latino born and living in the United States. The author states "I entered a Watts-area elementary school at age six, speaking only Spanish pushed from classroom to classroom until a teacher finally accepted me." (*It Calls You Back* 9). This quote represent that there was discrimination against people of color and it affected him. Also, the author talks about his life as a young gang member in Los Angeles. His experiences on the streets his involvement in gangs, his drug use, and the violence he participated in and witnessed. The main conflict is that Rodriguez trying to escape what he calls: "La Vida Loca", the crazy life of a gang-member. "My problem was that the gang life and drugs, as well as the political consciousness and artistic expression, were pulling me in a widely divergent direction."(*It Calls You Back* 2). Luis Rodriguez narrowly escaped a serious jail term and then struggled to overcome his powerful addiction to heroin and alcohol. He was trying to develop into an educated person and getting off drugs. Rodriguez states "I wanted to get clean."(*It Calls You Back* 5). And his horrible experience of getting off the drugs starts. Rodriguez's experiences and Mate's statements tell us that the drugs help addicts to escape from their problems. Moreover, in most families they are facing harassment, suicidal addictions, abusive terms, and other self-harming lifestyles that make children grow with traumatized minds. "As we'll see, the effects of early stress or advertise experiences directly shape both the psychology and the neurobiology of addiction in the brain." (*The Keys of Paradise* 38). The point of this quote is how stress affects the brain from an early age. As Mate acknowledges that not every addict starts using drugs because of trauma or abuse, much of this addiction is associated with a painful experience.

Secondly, addiction stems from the urge to fill a void in one's life. Mate states "At all costs, drug addicts want to escape spending "alone time" with their minds." (*The Keys of Paradise* 39). When a person has no task to perform, he or she will experience an unoccupied mindset. Therefore, bad intentions such as troubling anxieties, uneasiness, bad memories, and nagging mental experiences, occupy the mind. At this point person get bored. With regard to that, most people will deem it fit to use the drugs as a way of escaping the emptiness of their mind. Rodriguez made a point where he tried to be a whole person using drugs because this was the only way to feel better. Rodriguez claims that "I was also filling in the emptiness of my life- which heroin and other drugs had done fairly well.." (*It Calls You Back* 14). Consequently, the persistent use of drugs in the name of managing stress will lead to addiction and loss of control under yourself. Nic mention's "But control was something I'd lost a long time ago." (*Tweak* 2). This quote means that Nic keeps going forward and use drugs. As Mate puts it, the addicts use such drugs in an attempt to get that alive again feeling despite the temporal last. The drug makes addicts feel alive but this feeling doesn't last long. Mate said that drugs are emotional anesthetics that helps relieve mental pain and emptiness inside. Mate mentioned that "Heroin and cocaine both powerful physical painkillers, also erase psychological discomfort." (*The Keys of Paradise* 36).

Finally, Mate states that addiction has adverse health effects. The commonly abused and highly addictive drugs like methamphetamine, cocaine, among others, have got negative impacts on human beings. Also, he said the drugs often drain people emotionally leading to depression, a mental illness that may make our lives miserable or end up in rehabilitation centers. "Anyone who has experienced

depression knows, and this is a prime cause of the bodily weariness that beleaguers many addicts.” (*The Keys of Paradise* 41). On the same vein, Nic Sheff, the author of the "Tweak" based on struggling with addiction and Luis Rodriguez an American novelist in his book: *"It Calls You Back"* shares their touching experiences on the effects of addiction. Both illustrate that the long usage of the drugs as a way of escaping the world and distress in life leads to addiction. Once Nic started to use drugs he felt like one whole person and after that he used it every day. "Something was driving me that I couldn't identify and still don't comprehend." (*Tweak* 2). This quote describes his addiction to everything he tried in life and got used to that. Rodríguez and Maté illustrate that the prolonged usage of the drugs as a way of escaping the tribulations and distress in life leads to addiction. The same statement has been said by Mate in one of his explanations on addiction: addiction stemming from overcoming the void in mind. "For the addict the drug provides a route to feeling alive again, if only temporarily." (*The Keys of Paradise* 39).

The two writers in their stories show that drug use starts due to peer influence which later leading to addiction. They further state that, once one is addicted, they may be dangerous to them self and others. The example of this Nic shows when he was dating girl Zelda their relationship was unhealthy. Also he used his relationship with her to improve his self-esteem and to fight his own insecurities. He even said, "I'm not good enough on my own . . . I am just nothing" (*Tweak* 310). He didn't feel like a "total loser" when he was with her. He explained, "She is everything to me. She has given me a feeling of purpose, or completeness. It's what I've always wanted. She is what I've always wanted – she is better than crystal meth . . . I'll do whatever it takes to never lose her" (*Tweak* 234). He was willing to give up his sobriety for her

which is important in his situation. He also admitted that “Zelda was partly just a status symbol” (*Tweak* 298). He didn’t think he could survive without her, which was connected to his “deep-seated feeling of worthlessness” (*Tweak* 298).

Taking into consideration all points above, it is obvious that drug addiction comes from shocking childhood memories, the desire to fill the void with the mind, and, most importantly, live to meet their needs. In this regard, Mate shares the same opinion with the authors: Rodriguez and Sheff about the addiction process and its negative consequences. Therefore, it is important to learn from the exchange of experiences, such as the exchange of thoughts, so as not to fall into the same trap.