

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**DIRECTIONS:** Read the text. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.

Our society treats addicts like criminals and losers. But what if addiction isn't about physiological triggers, weakness or lack of character? What if addiction is a function of how environment interacts with the basic human need for connection?

In his book *Chasing the Scream*, Johann Hari postulates just that. He tells the story of a researcher who conducted an addiction experiment with rats. Rats in individual cages were offered two water bottles; one was laced with heroin, the other was plain. Given the choice between bottles, 100% of the rats chose the bottle laced with heroin. All became addicted, and all ultimately killed themselves with a heroin overdose. But then the researcher thought to himself, these rats, which are ultimately social animals, are alone in cages; they have nothing to do *but* drink the heroin-laced water. What if they were offered other alternatives? Would the pull of the heroin still be so strong?

As it turns out, it wasn't. When rats were put into cages in groups, and given access to recreational equipment, they stopped choosing the heroin-laced water. The researcher's conclusion? That the heroin addiction was essentially a replacement bonding activity in the absence of the rats' ability to bond with anything else. Hari postulates that the same principle can be extended to humans. Humans will inevitably bond and connect with something, because to do so is our fundamental nature.

This theory has had successful real-world results in treating addiction. In the year 2000, 1% of the population of Portugal was addicted to heroin. Considering this a state of crisis, the country convened a board of experts to study the issue, and their recommendations were surprising. They advocated decriminalizing heroin, and spending the money that would have been spent on the criminal justice process on reconnecting the addicts with society. Portugal did just that. They invested in job creation, and in giving former addicts microloans to set up small businesses. The result? In 2014 injected drug use was down by 50%, overdoses and suicides had also declined significantly.

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