

We talk a lot about addiction in this country. We read day after day about the arrests for methamphetamine production and sales, hear the debate about marijuana legalization, both condemn and feel sorry for folks who have gotten caught up in the opioid trap through legal means by way of pain relief related to illness or injury. I read a letter in a newspaper just today lamenting the fact that marijuana is now legal in Michigan. The writer went on to delve into his own religious interpretation that deplored human deviation from the “sober” norm. And yet, I wonder about that writer and many others. Could they be addicts, too?

There are all sorts of addiction. Not all addicts are dependent on alcohol or other mind-altering drugs. The addiction to violence in this country is even more pervasive, and it isn’t even illegal. And, for once, I am not even talking about guns.

I’d guess that there is a fifty-fifty chance that the writers (especially if male) who bemoan the opioid crisis or the legalization of marijuana sit down in front of that robber of time and common sense—TV—to sit in devout attention to football.

The recent nearly fatal injury of an apparently nice young man from a blow to his chest while making a tackle in an NFL game has once again brought to the foreground the violence that is professional football. This was an unusual injury, but the mayhem that is American football has caused all kinds of unnecessary injuries to other parts of the bodies of those young male athletes. And, as has become common knowledge in recent years, improved equipment has not prevented life destroying head injuries and career ending damage to knees and shoulders. There is good reason for these young men to negotiate to get every dime they can from the game they have chosen to play, for it is a rare football player that has a long career. And now, science has shown that progressive brain disorder is associated with repeated head trauma. In 2016, even a health official with the NFL acknowledged the link between football and this disease.

I don’t blame these young men. To turn down a very big paycheck because of something that has only happened to others would not be easy for most boys. And, if they are fully apprised of the danger of this sport, they may well need that big salary to support them in their later years, since their health, both mental and physical, will probably be a serious issue.

No, in this case, I think the addicts should take the blame.

They are they folks who plop down in front of the TV or sit in the stands at football games for young boys, high schoolers, college athletes, and professional NFL players to appreciate the violence. And, football fans might try to dispute this, but it is the violence that attracts the crowds.

So, all you addicts who bemoan the moral failings of the person who uses marijuana, the pitiful meth addict, the person dependent on doctor-prescribed painkillers, and the person lying on the street drunk or high on who knows what, don't forget your own addiction. It may not kill you, but it can well destroy the lives of countless young men in this country.