

Yes to life, no to drugs

Social acceptance, understanding crucial to helping users quit psychological addiction

By YU NAN
China Daily staff

Few people could believe that Xiao Bao, with her rosy cheeks and fit body, was once a drug abuser and had been twice sent to the Kunming Mandatory Drug Rehabilitation Centre in Southwest China's Yunnan Province.

The 28-year-old will soon finish her six-month abstinence programme at the centre as she was in a healthy condition.

"I hope I can start a new life," she said. Police first caught her when she was injecting heroin with some of her drug-addict friends in 2000, five years after she took heroin for the first time.

She was immediately sent to the centre to kick the habit and the six-month abstinence programme she took at that time did help her get off drugs for two years.

However, her father sent her back to the centre last October because she was found taking heroin again.

Xiao Bao said she did not blame her father but instead regretted and felt guilty about the harm she had done to her family and herself.

"I am looking forward to the day when I go back to my parents and the first thing I will do is to find a new job so I can take better care of them better," she said.

She said she felt grateful to the centre's staff, who give the addicts medical treatment, teach them new skills and rebuild their confidence with patience, care and love.

Around 2,000 drug addicts are given both physical and mental treatment there to quit drugs. Zhang Yuzu, the centre's director and one of its founders, said it is run by 260 people, including doctors, police officers and other skilled staff.

"The addicts come from all over the country, with 40 per cent of them locals from Yunnan Province," he said. Established in 1989, the Kunming Mandatory Drug Rehabilitation Centre is the largest of its kind in Asia and can handle 4,700 addicts at a time, he said.

"Altogether, 50,000 addicts have been treated since then through abstinence programmes lasting at least six months. Among them, 15 per cent have stayed off drugs at least for one year after leaving the centre," Zhang said. Yet he admitted that there is still a long way to go.

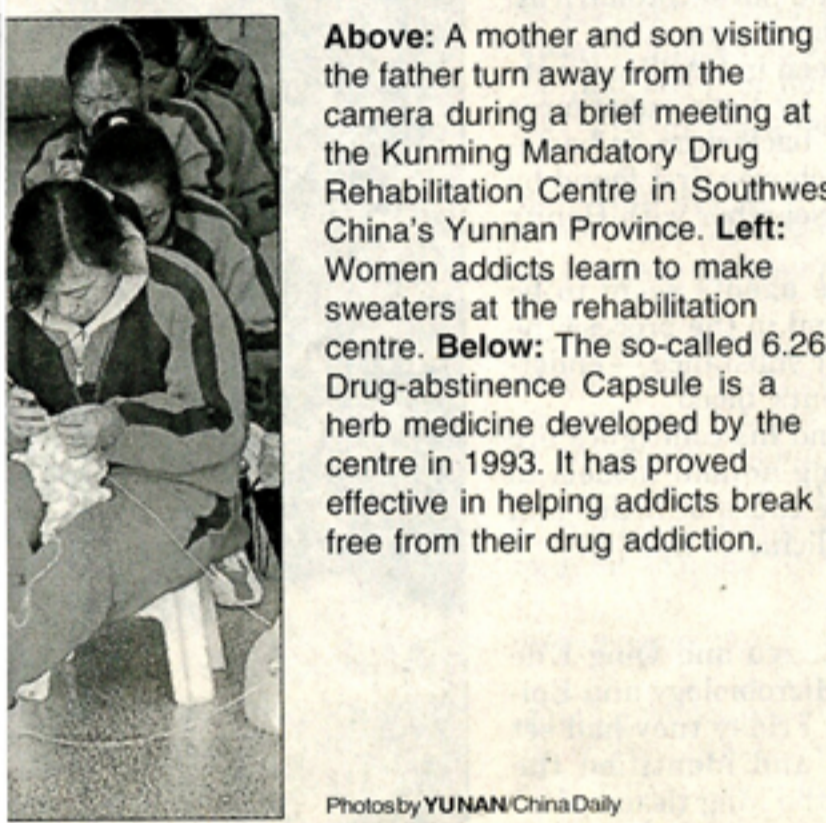
Not easy to quit

It did not take Xiao Bao much time to get addicted to heroin, but it has taken her eight hard years to kick the habit thoroughly.

"I first tried heroin when I was 20 and, within two days, I was addicted," she recalled. Like many other addicts, she was talked into taking heroin by friends.

Within two years, she had spent 20,000 yuan (US\$2,400) on heroin, using up all the money she had saved through her job selling cigarettes.

She said her parents felt forced to give her money to



Above: A mother and son visiting the father turn away from the camera during a brief meeting at the Kunming Mandatory Drug Rehabilitation Centre in Southwest China's Yunnan Province. Left: Women addicts learn to make sweaters at the rehabilitation centre. Below: The so-called 6.26 Drug-abstinence Capsule is a herb medicine developed by the centre in 1993. It has proved effective in helping addicts break free from their drug addiction.

these walls, most of them forget their pledges and start taking drugs again.

not bear to see the pain she suffered without drugs. They tried several times at home to help her kick the habit but without success.

Shen Jie, who is the centre's vice-director in charge of medical treatment, said: "Getting off drugs of any sort is not easy, whether it be heroin, cocaine, marijuana or 'ice' (mephamphetamine) or amphetamine-type stimulants."

Shen majored in medical science at college and began to study drug dependence after starting work at the centre in 1993.

Drug addicts usually experience similar symptoms during their first 15 days of quitting: watery eyes, a runny nose and sneezing, night sweats, insomnia and muscular pain, according to Shen.

Xiao Bao recalled: "You feel as if tens of thousands of worms are crawling inside you, biting you in the beginning."

Shen said a medicine now used in the centre could greatly relieve the pain and it has proved effective in helping addicts break their drug addiction.

The medicine, called the 6.26 Drug-abstinence Capsule, is a kind of herb medicine developed in 1993 by the centre's researchers.

"It's safe, convenient to use and has no side effects," Shen said. He added that all the addicts have physically tackled their addiction with the medicine.

After the patients physically break free from drugs, the rest of the rehabilitation programme is relatively peaceful but with a regular and strict schedule, according to Xiao Bao.

The regular daily schedule includes time for activities such as listening to lectures on the harm of drugs, doing physical exercise, learning skills such as cutting hair and repairing machines. Such activities are designed to help addicts establish a better way of life, Shen explained.

Xiao Bao said: "The evening is the most exciting part of the day. We can watch videos and have some dance parties."

"I will never 'eat' again, never!" she said, using the local addicts' sense of "eat" to refer to heroin abuse.

Director Zhang said: "Every addict here claims they will stay away from drugs completely but, once outside

the toughest part of quitting drugs is educating the psychological addiction."

Trust and acceptance

Xiao Bao admitted that it was not so easy to live up to her pledge when she returned to society for the first time.

She found that the only friends who wanted to talk with her were those still addicted to drugs.

At first, she resisted the temptation to take drugs again and even tried to persuade her friends to kick the habit.

But, when her parents saw she was still with those friends, they lost trust in her and scolded her for going back to her old ways.

"I cried, and my line of defence and my confidence in fighting for my pledge were broken by the distrust and unjust treatment," she said.

Xiao Bao's parents now go to the centre, 16 kilometres from central Kunming, to visit her once a month. Her excellent mental and physical condition is a great comfort to them.

"Mum was happy to learn that I have put on 4 kilograms since coming to stay here," she said. "With their love and trust, I will not be scared of fighting for my pledge."

Xiao Bao said she hoped to find a job after leaving the centre but added: "I am still not so sure about whether people can accept me if they learn about my history with drugs."

Shen said it was crucial to foster a tolerant social environment with a broad understanding of vulnerable groups and their needs.

He asked: "Why do some rehabilitated addicts resort to drugs again, even after giving them up for five or more years? Because they lack the support of friends and a smooth channel of communication with mainstream society?"

Most addicts who have undergone the centre's six-month programme still prefer to stay at home after the end of their stay at the rehabilitation centre, Shen said.

"Social acceptance is vital to keep former addicts away from drugs or else they will be pushed back to the abyss," he said.



Ministry of Public Security statistics show that, of the 01,000 drug addicts registered in 2001, 85.1 per cent were between the ages of 15 and 35.

The same trend was found in the Kunming Mandatory Drug Rehabilitation Centre, said Zhang.

Education important

"Some addicts are still in high school. Juveniles, with their short memories and strong curiosity, who are immature and more easily manipulated, are the group most vulnerable to drugs, especially since amphetamine-style stimulants have become so easy to obtain," he said.

Zhang has been invited to more than 30 high schools to give lectures against drug abuse. The centre has also been used as an education centre for students. Zhang also established an exhibition at the centre on the perils of drugs, with explanations on rehabilitation treatment.

"There are about 30,000 students visiting the exhibition during the winter and summer vacations every year," Zhang said.

"Yes to life, no to drugs" — the centre's slogan — should be in the minds of not only addicts but also of children and everybody else in society."

The name of the addict has been changed to protect her privacy.

TODAY'S RADIO

- FM 91.5 MHz: 09:00 Easy FM, 12:00 XFM, 14:00 Keith & Liqian Show, 15:00 Music Sans Frontiers, 21:00 Joy FM
FM 87.6 MHz: 10:30 Around Beijing, 14:30 Classic Sound, 15:00 Grand Theatre, 17:00 Trendy, 20:30 Dinner Music
FM 97.4 MHz: 08:30 Music World, 11:00 Pop 2002, 13:00 World Classic Concert
15:00 Music Saloon, 20:30 Beautiful Life, 22:30 New Music Magazine
FM 90.0 MHz: 08:00 Auto CD, 09:30 Chinese songs by popular singers, 11:50 Music, 12:00 Happy 30 Minutes, 17:00 Radio songs
AM 603 kHz: 08:30 Reading Time, 10:00 Community & Life, 18:00 Travel Guide, 20:10 English pop songs, Tuesday, April 15

TODAY'S TELEVISION

- CCTV-1: 11:20 Chinese Ethnic Groups, 17:00 World Express, 19:00 News; weather, 20:05 Serial: The Republic (4), 22:00 World Report, 23:02 Modern Workers
CCTV-2: 10:30 Road to Health, 15:30 Shopping, 16:05 Art Investment Guide, 19:30 China Business Report, 20:00 Life, 21:35 Economy 30 Minutes, 22:15 Stock Market
CCTV-3: 13:07 Behind the Scenes, 16:20 Wonderful Time, 18:30 Elementary Art, 20:34 Hand in Hand, 21:04 Dream Theatre, 21:36 Art Scope, 22:40 Late News
CCTV-4: 10:30 Sports Online, 16:05 About Language, 19:35 Across the Straits, 20:05 China Showbiz, 21:00 China Report
CCTV-6: 11:37 Today's Movie, 18:31 Documentary: Sound of Music, 19:45 Chinese movie: The Lu Town
21:25 World Screen
CCTV-8: 19:02 Animal World, 19:37 Studio Express, 21:53 French drama, 23:44 German drama
CCTV-9: 11:15 Learning Chinese, 13:15 Rediscover China, 14:30 Science and Nature, 19:30 Around China, 21:30 Centre Stage
BTV-1: 11:30 Beijing Express, 12:33 Special Focus, 17:25 Stock Market, 18:30 News; weather, 19:41 Focus Today, 20:38 23-part serial: Kickoff (1, 2)
BTV-2: 10:32 Dream's Come True, 12:05 44-part serial: Liu Luoguo (19), 18:23 Chinese Top Music, 21:45 Amusement Park, 22:42 Concert Hall
BTV-3: 17:00 Serial: The Guarding Angel (18), 18:35 Modern English, 19:00 Discovery Channel, 21:35 Science and Technology, 21:00 News, 22:10 44-part serial: The County Magistrate (30, 31)

BRIDGE (By Phillip Alder)

British novelist and essayist E.M. Forster wrote, "Railway termini... are our gates to the glorious and the unknown. Through them we pass out into adventure and sunshine; to them, alas! We return."

This is especially true if you are joining Harry Potter, using platform nine and three-quarters at King's Cross Station in London to catch the Hogwarts Express.

In this deal, you are the declarer in three no-trump. After West leads the spade king, threatening to derail your journey to nine tricks, how would you continue?

Note South's rebid. Jumping to two no-trump instantly shows your point-count and hand-type. If partner has a four-card major, he can instigate a hunt for a 4-4 fit. If you rebid one heart, you might have only 12 points.

You start with six top tricks: one spade, one heart and four clubs. You can establish three more tricks in diamonds, but if you drive out the diamond ace, surely your train will crash, the opponents taking too many spade tricks.

Instead, you should hope that the heart finesse is working. If it is, you can get nine tricks via one spade, four hearts and four clubs. But you might

Bridge hand diagram showing North-South and East-West cards and a solution key: Opening lead: ♠ K

need to take three heart finesesses, which requires three dummy entries. You must be careful with your clubs. After winning the second (or first) trick with the spade ace, play the club eight to dummy's nine and take a heart finesse. Next, staying on track, overtake the club 10 with dummy's jack and take a second heart finesse. Then lead the club queen to dummy's king, take a third heart finesse, and claim.

CROSSWORD (No 6865)

Crossword puzzle grid with clues: ACROSS 1 Director - Craven, 4 Part of MHz, 8 Shaggy beasts, 12 Alley from Moo, 13 Potato, 14 No future, 15 Black gemstone, 17 Cease, 18 Comics' Miss Kett, 19 Unassuming, 21 Swift-footed, 22 Alpine refrains, 25 Bossy's chew, 26 Put - (hassled), 27 Frame inserts, 30 Uncles and cousins, 31 Howled, 33 Monkey haven, 35 Houdini feat, 37 Snare, 38 Function, 39 Rowboat seat, 41 Beach scavengers, 44 Himalayan humanoid, 45 Uttered, 46 Cheat, 47 Money drawer, 51 Cathedral part, 52 Bear constellation, 54 By way of, 55 Very pleased, 56 Smell terrible, 57 Somber evergreen, 24 Oxford tutors, 25 Decent grade Soap ingredient, 1 Serenade, maybe, 2 Geological period, 3 Go undercover, 4 Fem. honorific, 5 "En garde" weapons, 6 Greasy dirt, 7 Tack on, 8 Harvests, 9 Feed the kitty, 10 Lightweight toy, 11 ASAP, 16 Comic-book heroes (hyp.), 20 Loop train, 21 Financial resource, 22 Joke, 23 Aunt Bee's, 28 Poet - Pound, 29 Head skyward, 31 Game fish output, 32 Mimic, 34 Make a choice, 36 Selected, 37 Tease, 39 Fidgety, 41 Deep bell, 42 Caspian Sea tributary, 43 Volcano's output, 44 Long ago (Stray dog), 48 Common vine, 49 Rest, 50 Lemon - Juneau's st.

WHAT'S ON

Acrobatic & Magic Shows: Chaoyang Theatre specializes in Acrobatics by top acrobatic artists from all over the country. Time: 7:15-9:15pm, nightly. Magic Shows: Time: 6:00-7:00 pm; 7:30-8:30 pm, nightly. Venue: Chaoyang Theatre, 36 Dongsanhuan Beilu, Chaoyang District, Beijing. Telephone: 6507-2421, 6507-1818

China National Acrobatic Circus: China National Acrobatic Circus was the first State-level acrobatic troupe of New China and has won lots of gold medals in various well-known international acrobatic contests in places such as Monaco, France, Hungary, Russia and Italy. Now the star-studded cast are exhibiting the charm and elegance of the most professional comprehensive acrobatic art every night. Integrating superlative juggling, unicycling, balancing and jumping through hoops with the finest ancient Chinese dancing, the award-winning variety show will amaze you at every turn. Time/Dates: 19:15 - 20:30, every evening. Location: Universe Theatre, 10 Dongzhimen Nandajie, Dongcheng District (100 metres north of Piny Plaza). Tel: 6502 3984, 6502 2649, 6416 9893 Fax: 6500 2743

STAGE: Chinese dances: The Oriental Song and Dance Ensemble is to do what it does best. The song-and-dance variety show has been a box office hit in Hong Kong for years.

Programme: "Oriental Azury Clouds," "Imposing Qing Terra Cotta," "A Great Dream of Colourful Butterflies," "Percussion in the Lovely Sky" and more. Time: 7:30 pm, April 25, 26. Place: Beizhan Theatre, Xizhimenwai Street. Tel: 6554-6666

Symphonic Peking Opera: "The Royal Consort," a performance of symphonic Peking Opera, will be performed by 300 performers pooled from Shanghai and Beijing troupes. It tells the story of Yang Yuhuan, a favourite concubine of Emperor Li Longji of the Tang Dynasty (AD 618-907). Time: 7:30 pm, April 15, 17 and 18. Place: Poly Theatre, Dongshishitiao. Tel: 6506-5343

Ming-style theatre: The Liyuan Theatre presents traditional Peking Opera excerpts specially packaged in short programmes for foreign audi-

ences in its original style. The theatre revives the ambience of old Beijing by setting up Ming-style tables that enable guests to sample snacks during the performance.

With an interpretation in English, the performances are given by the Beijing Peking Opera Theatre. Time: 7:30 pm daily. Place: Qianmen Hotel, 175 Yong'an Lu, Xuanwu District. Tel: 6301-6688 ext 887

EXHIBITION

Joint show: Fire veteran

Kung Fu Show: The 70-minute performance displays dazzling skills of mysterious Chinese kung fu in a hero-plus-beauty story. Fifty kung fu masters amaze the audience with bare-handed practice, one-to-one competing and weapons practice. Presented by Beijing Detian Shunyi Culture Development Co., Ltd. Venue: Xin Rong Theatre (16 Baizhifang West Road, Xuanwu District). Time/dates: 19:30, nightly. Tel: 8354-0774, 8354-0775

Chinese artists hold a joint art show with their selected works of oil paintings and Chinese zhongcai (heavily coloured pieces characterized by fine brushwork) ink-and-colour paintings at the Wanfung Art Gallery. Hu Yongkai, Qin Long, Gao Wengang, Ma Haifang and Li Guangping have combined the use of skills and concepts from both traditional Chinese painting schools and prints, oils and Japanese paintings. Time: 9 am-5 pm until April 28. Place: Wanfung Art Gallery, 136 Nanchizi Dajie, Dongcheng District. Tel: 6523-3320

EXHIBITION

Hidden Dragon, Raging Tiger: The 70-minute performance displays dazzling skills of mysterious Chinese kung fu in a hero-plus-beauty story. Fifty kung fu masters amaze the audience with bare-handed practice, one-to-one competing and weapons practice. Presented by Beijing Detian Shunyi Culture Development Co., Ltd. Venue: Xin Rong Theatre (16 Baizhifang West Road, Xuanwu District). Time/dates: 19:30, nightly. Tel: 8354-0774, 8354-0775