

Chemical Dependency

"It always causes moral breakdown if there's any need, and it always involves massive denial. It aggravates [denial] as in the aviator case, the tendency to distort reality so that it's endurable." -Charlie Munger

This article is part of a [multi-part series](#) on human misjudgment by Phil Ordway, managing principal of [Anabatic Investment Partners](#).

There is not much else to say about this topic specifically, which is a true tragedy on many levels and combines or exaggerates many other psychological tendencies. But for anyone who might be under the impression that things have been improving in this regard, the opioid crisis in the U.S. offers stark evidence to the contrary. Drug overdose is the leading cause of accidental death in the U.S. with more than 50,000 total and more than 30,000 of them tied to opioids.^[48] It is likely that more people will die in America this year from opioid overdoses than from car crashes.

Munger in another talk quoted **Johnny Carson**, who said he had **three ways that were guaranteed to cause misery in your life: 1) Ingesting chemicals in an effort to alter mood or perception; 2) Envy; and 3) Resentment.** And Munger of course expanded on the topic, emphasizing inversion as an effective tool for problem solving and adding four prescriptions for misery: be unreliable, avoid learning vicariously, succumb to adversity, and ignore the rustic who said, **"I wish I knew where I was going to die, and then I'd never go there."** He ended the speech with the following line: **"[M]ay each of you rise high by spending each day of a long life aiming low."**

^[48] <https://www.asam.org/docs/default-source/advocacy/opioid-addiction-disease-facts-figures.pdf>