Whether caused by a genetic predisposition or environmental factors, addictions run rampant throughout the world today. The argument of nature (genetics) versus nurture (environment) is an old one. Over time, this philosophical argument has been fine-tuned because of medical breakthroughs and discoveries. Most recently, the establishment of genetic predispositions for physical and mental disorders has confirmed the existence of a biological basis for all human disabilities.

**Genetic Predisposition**

Drugs affect people differently. The same drug can be highly addictive to one person, while another may not give it a second glance. Genetics may be one way to explain this difference. Although the field of genetics is fairly new, it has had a tremendous impact on the way experts think about the physiology and psychology of addictions.

For example, the disease model of addiction argues that some people are set up from birth with a propensity toward addictions. This is similar to someone who has diabetes or any other medical problem. Heredity plays a vital role in understanding addictions from this point of view. However, though this gives researchers a way to understand the potential origination of an illness, it does not explain why there are those with the similar predisposition who do not end up with the same problems. If the rate of getting the disease is 80%, then one needs to ask what factors cause the other 20% to lie dormant.

Many people feel powerless over their genetic makeup, while others view it as the hand they were dealt. However, there is a middle ground. Although it is not yet understood completely why two people with similar genetics have different responses to the same disease, research continuously uncovers ways to decrease the odds of either person succumbing to that disease. At one time, it was thought that medical treatment of a genetic issue could solve the problem; science is not there yet. It is the hope that in the future, the more knowledge gained concerning genetics, the closer researchers will come to a cure for any disorder.

**Environmental Issues**

Environmental issues include everything from the way a person is raised to the broader influence of the communities in which people live. This stance dictates that everything people are stems from how they live, where they live, who they live with, and all of the interactions and influences that
bombard them from the day they are born. For some, this argument reaches to conception and the primary environment of the womb. This position does not blame the individual, but the way he or she was raised. Responsibility rests more on the environment as a prime cause of falling into mental and physical problems. Thus, the solutions also lie within the scope of the environment.

For example, you might hear of the blame for a child’s misbehavior being placed completely on the parenting skills of the primary caregivers rather than on that child’s predisposition for acting out. Common sense would argue that it lies somewhere in the middle.

Another example is in the way people judge addictions. They might say that a person is only addicted because he or she is weak and out of control. Blame might be diverted to the way that person was raised, the economic conditions and the inability of the family or community to meet that person’s basic needs as he or she was growing up. Then, there is the more general argument that society has failed that person rather than him or her taking on the responsibility for his or her own actions.