

OUTGROWING YOUR ADDICTION 'The Little Book'

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When I first decided to write about addiction, I said to myself; how the heck can I produce an entire article, when a single paragraph is all that's needed? I've wrestled with this for over three years, which (regrettably) has had me dragging my feet about starting. My 'writer's block' is a consequence of holding myself to unreasonably high standards of performance (an [ADD](#) thing). Essentially, I'm wanting to revolutionize how we think about *and go about* ending addictions in a way that's congruent with unconventional and unique healing work, which has always been at the heart of my practice.

So first, I've had to work really hard to get out of my own way and lower my self-expectations, so I might *adequately* address this topic. I'm thinking it'll keep growing and ripening like some of my other materials, but here goes:

All addiction is caused by suppression of feelings. If we could learn how to Feel our emotions rather than judging or *fearing* them, ALL addictions and recovery programs would literally cease to exist.

What complicates this issue even further, is that letting go of a substance or behavior that's helped us 'change the channel' when we've had awkward or painful feelings, is like saying goodbye to an old friend who's been the only truly reliable source of connection or comfort we've ever known. In short, it's always *been there* for us when we've had a need for relief~ so even just the *thought* of letting go of that relationship, can trigger sensations of loss and anxiety.

Addiction is addiction, whether it's to alcohol/drugs, online social media, sex or porn, gambling, exercise, eating, working, codependency or scholastic/athletic over-achievement--and the same root causes and recovery principles **always** apply, no matter what your drug of choice is~ even if it's *needing* to be in a

relationship. Addiction's the ever-present nagging you feel to avert feelings of depression, emptiness or deadness, and fill that gigantic hole in your soul.

Contrary to popular belief, addiction is *not* about indulging in a substance or behavior **every day**. It's about staying dissociated or disconnected from feelings and sensations that help you *discern* when you've worked-out, masturbated, drank or eaten enough, and stopping before you get hurt, go numb or black-out.

If you're willing to keep an open mind, this text should make sense to the rational *and* intuitive parts of your brain, so self-destructive compulsions can become a thing of the past.

Conquering addiction is actually a simple matter. Gaining self-acceptance, and enough emotional growth to help you feel *all* your feelings without censure, self-ridicule or self-judgment is where we must begin. This journey isn't deprivation-based, because the moment you're **forbidden** something, aren't you craving it much more? *Sure you are--it's only human!* So once more, you can't resist using--and once again, you beat yourself up for it. This vicious cycle repeats over and over, until you're feeling paralyzed, hopeless and ashamed~ and of course, needing (once more) to self-medicate those awful sensations!

Addicts are really hard on themselves, so there's always a need to self-medicate the pain that's self-inflicted when we shame ourselves, and *that's* the vicious cycle of addiction. Addicts are always scanning their inner terrain and beating themselves up for *something*. If you began whacking yourself in the head with a baseball bat from the minute you got up in the morning, how do you think you'd be *feeling* at the end of your day? Wouldn't you have to *alleviate* that pain--and how would you go about that?? **More importantly, who do you think originally *taught* you how to criticize, shame and guilt yourself?? If you're thinking it was your parents, you are absolutely right.**

Your emotions represent facets of you. Running away from your difficult feelings, means running away from *yourself*. You cannot form and maintain a solid relationship bond with another, until you learn how to have a healthy, nourishing, friendly bond with you.

Outgrowing *any* sort of addiction involves growing emotional muscles. When you first start to *feel* the dark/difficult sensations you had to repress or kill-off during childhood in order to survive around your parents, and start to trust that they can't annihilate you, emotional development's the inevitable outcome. Addictions are eliminated when there's no longer a *need* to numb-out, or run away from You. In short, *feeling* brings about wholeness and Healing.

Conventional recovery programs such as 12-Steps, The Meadows, Betty Ford, etc., might *scare* you into getting sober, and help you gain some insights as to how you *got* to this place, but they can't help you get healthy, whole and **well**, to where you're a fully functional, self-actualized, joyful and personally successful being. **No group endeavor can.**

So what's really the point of sobriety, if you're still struggling to make your life work, and you're in such agony, you periodically want to die? Why get *sober*, if all your relationship attempts end up being disappointing and hurtful? Have you grown and healed, or have you simply managed to stop using and self-medicating your anguish? *If it's the latter, you are not "recovering."*

A lot of folks *relapse* after going the rehab clinic route, because their psychic pain cannot be well attended to within standard recovery models, and neuro-chemical imbalances due to Axis I (clinical) issues like [Bipolar Disorder](#) and [ADD](#), can easily go undiagnosed/untreated. Given *any* type of treatment modality, if we don't first *balance* brain chemistry, **no** client can make use of even the most solid and meaningful therapeutic intervention.

YOU'RE NOT JUST A BRAIN HOOKED-UP TO A LIFE-SUPPORT UNIT.

Given you're presently here, you've no doubt been **thinking** your way through life, as opposed to *feeling* your way along. That became your way to survive as a kid, but it's working against you as an adult.

I've known some brilliant individuals who've continually thirsted for insight, thinking this will somehow mitigate their inner despair. They literally believe their 'recipe for happiness' is buried within the chapters of the next self-help book they read, or that some kind of new-fangled quick-fix venue they've tried, will bring relief from their pain. Happiness is **incrementally** acquired. It's an [inside job](#) that requires steady, diligent commitment to growth and healing each day of your life, and 'baby steps' are what get you there.

Unresolved early psychic and emotional wounding damages the physical body, but Wellness has to be a conscious choice. Your mind, body and spirit all work together in concert. They *must* be on the same page and in harmony, or the symphony of your Life goes awry.

A colleague and I were good pals for many years. She's slightly more than a year older than I (and a [Borderline](#) with *gobs* of unhealed childhood trauma). Each year, she'd exclaim that her body was "falling apart," and warn me that *mine* would betray me too; "Just wait till *next year*" she'd always say, "you'll see that *everything* changes when you turn (fifty, sixty, etc.)!" Well, I'm still fit as a fiddle, and happy I worked hard on *my inside stuff*, so my outside's holding up fine. It's not about vanity. It's about true inner harmony and peace.

You'll probably become aware of some redundancies in this material. You'll be absorbing this information on different levels of your consciousness, and repetition helps with that. No book editor would let me get away with this, but if you can't 'hear' these concepts repeated in slightly different ways, you can't absorb and integrate them--and *that's* what's necessary for real change to occur. Some old 'files' inside you may get moved or reorganized as you start to get the hang of this groundbreaking approach to addiction, because long-standing (faulty) beliefs are being challenged and altered.

ADDICTS CANNOT DISCERN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FEELINGS AND THOUGHTS.

Right about now, you could be thinking; I've wrestled with really bad feelings my whole life, and I've learned that they do me no good. So now I just stay really busy, and I feel just fine! **Wrong.** You are simply **addicted** to staying "really busy" . . . but how are you tolerating the calm, serene and *quiet* times??

The truth is, you haven't *felt* those bad feelings--because you couldn't! What's happened instead, is you've rushed up into your head, **analyzed** those awful emotions and given them reasons to be there! Before long, you were beating yourself up for crimes you probably hadn't committed, and (*surprise*) you felt a lot worse! Emotions *reflexively* became thoughts, and you've never learned how to separate them. This bad habit you adopted around the age of two years old when you'd finally gained enough vocabulary to *talk to yourself* about your pain, results in depression, fatigue and anxiety.

Busy-bodies (people who compulsively run from their feelings) are *addicted* to staying in motion by fixing, helping and rescuing others, because when they run out of obstacles in their *own* life to keep them busy, they look for victim-types who'll happily supply drama and chaos to fill-up their [intolerable emptiness](#).

I am not interested in hearing about the decades of "*therapy*" you've had--or whether you've seen one clinician or twenty. If you're reading this right now, it hasn't worked for you the way it should have.

Ask yourself this; am I surviving--or am I **thriving**? The two can't coexist, so if you haven't gotten beyond personal or professional *survival*, there's some work to be done here. Self-sabotage is inherent among addicts. The *core* of this issue typically starts in infancy, and it's associated with **fear**. How can you *welcome* an emotion like joy, love, tranquility, etc., that you've never even experienced? Anything that seems unfamiliar or foreign feels intimidating--and it's natural to *want* to feel safe, especially when as a child, you frequently needed to find a foxhole to hide-out in, to escape chaos, drama or conflict in your home, to help you feel safer!

Most of my clients have a much easier time accommodating pain than pleasure. It's the more familiar sensation to them, as they had to adapt and adjust to it from infancy onward. Addicts tend to get triggered to use once more as their pain starts to abate, because *feeling better* produces anxiety.

The goal of *psychotherapy* is to help you feel better. The goal of *healing* work is to help you learn to feel Everything--so you can become fully functional and *whole*. You can't accomplish this on your own~ even though you've probably grown up assuming you *had* to. **Real** recovery means learning to trust somebody with your well-being and growth, and gradually acquiring a rock-solid sense of Self.

THE ROOTS OF ADDICTION

First of all, addiction **is not** inherited. Depression, neurological and mood disorders can be passed along genetically, and your folks learned dreadful ways of parenting you from *their* parents~ but **addiction itself, is not**

"passed on" from one generation to the next. Buying into this nonsense, has you continuing to make excuses for yourself and remaining disempowered.

Your parents learned to *self-medicate* their anguish, and so did you--in fact, given that children learn from example, your folks inadvertently taught you what methods or substances to try **first**, to flee awkward or painful events and emotions.

Every child has fundamental needs. When those needs are not responded to, he/she experiences sensations like frustration, shame, despair, sadness and rage. Since children have a limited capacity for reasoning, they automatically assume it's *their* fault when requirements for affection, soothing, comforting and support aren't being met--and they grow skilled at *shutting-down* those important needs, because it feels uncomfortable/bad to maintain them.

No small child has the ability to recognize how messed-up his/her parent is, and understand why that adult isn't capable of giving them loving attention, support and praise. He automatically presumes it's because he's not lovable, and spends the rest of his life trying to convince himself it's not true, with various dysfunctional partners, who can initially make him feel better about himself, but who ultimately echo the punishing, abusive traits of his parent!

When painful feelings get repressed in childhood, our emotional growth is stunted. We grow up trying to function with a very limited number of emotions, which hampers our capacity to react appropriately to many life circumstances. That's when we turn to drugs, booze, sex, food, etc., to *cope with* our difficult/awkward experiences, and the sensations they trigger in us.

In the simplest terms, if your parents held and soothed you, and helped you learn to *accept* your feelings as a kid rather than escaping or shutting them down, you would never have needed to numb-out your discomfort with any substances or behaviors! Running from your anguish was your only means of *surviving* life back then, and you've found stellar ways to do that ever since. The trouble is, they have harmed and derailed you.

Think of it this way; your feelings are like a bunch of colors in a Crayola box. If you've decided to draw with only *a third* of those crayons, the rest remain unused. So even though they're waiting in that box, you've treated them like they don't exist. Maybe you've favored only the warmer, brighter tones (red, yellow, orange), while the cooler colors (purple, blue, magenta, dark green, etc.) are ignored. All these hues represent parts of your *actual* emotional palette.

The outcome? If you're drawing exclusively with only warm colors, won't your pictures look somewhat monochromatic and uninteresting? Well, that's *exactly* what's happened to your personality. It's become predictable, one-dimensional and flat or boring, like a cardboard cut-out of someone's image.

THE DARK NIGHTS OF THE SOUL, AND OTHER BEASTIES

Your survival instincts have kept you alive and on this planet, but they were learned throughout childhood--and they became reflexive/automatic. When children experience psychic and emotional pain, they try hard to understand

and make sense of it. They'll ask themselves; **why** am I feeling lonely, sad, empty, frustrated, etc.? Their siblings might not be *echoing* those feelings, and neither are their parents. Thus, this kid feels isolated/alone with these sensations, and thinks something's *wrong* with him/her for feeling that way! If this child tries to tell someone in his home about the feelings, he's often made to feel wrong or bad for having them. His sadness could be ridiculed or made fun of, or it's summarily dismissed by the other family members, and *toxic shame* results~ but in truth, the family member who is cast as 'the black sheep' is usually the healthiest and most sane of them all.

Very quickly, this ostracized kid learns that difficult sensations are dangerous and bad, and begins suppressing them--because when he *doesn't*, he feels worse!

The first time you try sitting with your murky, terrifying, ugly feelings, you may think you're gonna die, and you're afraid you *won't*--'cause it's excruciating. Years ago, I named *mine* "The Dark Nights of the Soul." Don't worry--I've got techniques that'll help you *get through* these easier than I did, but you won't like being there.

I've realized many years later, that what 'died' in me when I'd worked up the courage to navigate my own dark tunnels was my long-held *compulsion* to shove food in my mouth whenever I felt bad, empty, sad, bored, frustrated, etc., ~and it radically altered my life.

The most critical information you'll gain as you learn how to tolerate these sensations, is that you *will* emerge alive! That's right, those feelings won't actually **kill you**--in fact, they're here to help you grow stronger, healthier and whole. Now, you can finally start learning to *trust* that.

DENIAL IS NOT JUST A RIVER IN EGYPT.

Years ago, I loved a 'recovering addict' who'd always told me, "if my *past* girlfriends had only been this supportive and loving, I could have accomplished anything!" In hindsight, I'm sure his 'picker' was broken, and many of those women were [Borderline Personality Disordered](#). Distinct patterns emerged during our relationship~ for one, I was all the things he *said* he wanted, yet he suffered terribly from depression. I later came to realize that without someone to demonize for his pain, he had to confront his *own* demons. The *lack* of conflict in our relationship brought him face to face with his own anguish, dissatisfaction and self-loathing, and he could no longer blame his feelings (and failings) on his partner! That reality spiraled him into the depths of a full-blown mid-life crisis, and no amount of shopping for things he couldn't afford (a transferred addiction from alcohol 'sobriety'), could fix it.

Addiction is at the **core** of every person's attraction to a personality disordered individual. Addicts feel a desperate need to run from inner emptiness, self-loathing, depression and dissatisfaction. Borderlines give 'em stellar opportunities to do that, as all the drama, chaos and strife in that relationship *distracts* them from their very own discontent and anguish, which is central to why far too many individuals remain with impaired or toxic partners.

Is full recovery painful and scary? Yes, which is why you'll need a little hand-holding and supportive guidance along the way. You're used to *restrictions* in standard recovery models which can feel imprisoning--but they also provide a sense of **safety**. Certain breeds of dogs have to be 'crated' when you first bring them home. This helps them feel safer, as they adjust to their new surroundings. Getting healthier means gradually stepping outside your comfort zone, which initially feels a bit unwieldy and unsafe.

You may feel miserable, but it's *familiar* and therefore, more comfortable than leaving that crate! This is why discharged inmates frequently go back to jail. It's much easier getting 'three squares' a day, than getting out into the world, and trying to support and make a life for themselves.

You might talk endlessly about what you really "*want*"--but look around at what you have, because *this* reality is reflecting your true desires, and Fear keeps you stuck here. Everyone's afraid of something, but have you ever been able to *trust* someone to help you navigate the scary parts of your life??

With reference to core work and Self retrieval, here's the bottom line: If you aren't willing to let yourself hurt, you won't tolerate being helped, and you'll never be able to experience real joy.

[Integrated Recovery](#) is sort of like remodeling your kitchen--it always seems worse, before it gets better. This stage doesn't last too long, but it can feel destabilizing. The good news is, you are supported *every* step of the way. The next tangible sign of your recovery is noticing **the absence of pain**~ which I guarantee, will feel pretty uncomfortable at first.

THE BIRTH OF CODEPENDENCY

[Codependency](#) is an addiction. It's driven by the need to be needed, because our sense of worth *depends* on it. This involves constantly trying to *give* what we desperately need to *get* for ourselves--but don't feel worthy of receiving. We learned this mechanism in childhood, but it's left us with serious deficits and obstacles that inhibit our capacity to love and be loved.

The non-needing child has adapted, to make difficult feelings *not matter*. He adopts coping mechanisms that help him put those emotions away, or numb them out. He might go into his head to fantasize about how *it'll be different* when he's grown and can exert more control over life's circumstances. Other times, he'll look around for a child who has it **a lot worse** than he does, so he's able to feel better *by contrast*, about his immediate pain or frustration. It's like the *compulsion* people have to gawk at a freeway accident. It helps them feel **thankful** for their loveless, passionless lives--but even *that* could invoke survivor's guilt, which later on, can feel shameful.

Addicts learn to feel grateful for their anguish, because there's *always* a sibling, friend or parent who's had "a rougher time." The problem with this ideation, is one builds up an incredibly high threshold for pain! Discomfort has to be *excruciating* to gain their attention--but it still may not register, because compassion is reserved exclusively for others, and **never** given to oneself.

Difficult sensations of emptiness are experienced when we've discarded dark or "unacceptable" feelings from our personality since early childhood. When those sensations were treated as *bad or wrong* by our parents, we regarded them precisely the same, as we matured! In short, we harshly judged them (*and ourselves*) as "bad" whenever they started to surface.

Each time these "bad" sensations (hate, anger, envy, frustration, etc.) came up, we tried to make them go away, and called ourselves on the carpet for having 'em. Life throws us curve balls, and our feelings and moods can shift accordingly. If at anytime, you're unable to feel nice, light, loving emotions, and all the darker ones have been banished from your emotional repertoire, what the heck is left inside to feel?? **Only Nothingness or Emptiness!**

My addicted clients (recovering and otherwise) have described a dangerous, nebulous sensation they could not identify--but have needed to *escape* their entire lives. It's a sense of 'deadness' that threatens to engulf them, if they don't get busy and run from it--or numb it out with a substance or behavior.

Misery comes easy. *Happiness takes diligent work.* You've always been your worst enemy--but with whom do you spend the most time? **Recovery** means learning how to be your best friend.

SHOW ME WHERE YOU ARE, AND I'LL KNOW WHERE YOU'VE BEEN.

From the onset of my private practice internship many years ago, suicidally depressed people were finding their way to my office. I was working toward a Marriage & Family Therapist (MFT) license back then, and couldn't fathom why *or how* these people found me. After all, I was only an intern!

As this type of client kept showing up, I began trusting that a higher power (God, The Universe, etc.) was funneling these folks my way, because maybe I was equipped to help them. It truly seemed the only way to make sense of this odd phenomenon. I should mention here, that I'd reluctantly returned to academia at **forty-one** with no sense whatsoever, that I'd stay long enough to get a degree (much less, two). I'd always hated the discipline that schooling required of me, and still do.

It turns out, my life experiences had prepared me to assist these people in a way that *helped* them--so I was flying by the seat of my pants, and going mostly with intuition. Not all of them were committed to recovering, but the ones who were, went on to build productive, gratifying lives. In retrospect, beneath their addictions, all these clients had a common denominator; they were core trauma survivors--and to fill inner emptiness or deadness, *each* was addicted to one thing or another. I never *chose* to work with addiction, and I certainly didn't choose 'core trauma' work as my area of specialization - **it chose me.**

I believe each of us comes into this life with unique talents and abilities. If we're lucky, these innate gifts are recognized, encouraged and mirrored for us *when we're young*, so we can begin to learn who we actually are. I was a late bloomer--but one of *my* talents was understanding human nature, which got

to advance and grow, thanks to some challenging setbacks that forced me to get intimately acquainted with *myself*.

Addiction is not the *cause* of your pain, or why life isn't working as it should. Addiction is only a *symptom* of needing to escape difficult, painful feelings that have been too dangerous or scary to accommodate--whether they're bad, or *good*.

A remarkable thing happens when I'm working with new clients. They begin to see that it's not just 'negative' feelings that are scary to feel--it's *positive* ones as well. When you've lacked a frame of reference for feeling **good**, it's gonna feel foreign and uncomfortable for you the moment you start to get there, and you'll have a reflexive need to *sabotage* the gains you've made.

For decades, clients have asked me why healing doesn't come more quickly. I've always responded by saying that if it did, it'd feel like they were living inside someone else's body. They would literally feel so destabilized by totally new and foreign feelings, there's no way they could tolerate it! Change happens *gradually*, so we've got some time to adjust to it.

Change involves growth. As a little girl I had horrible 'leg-aches' every night in bed, presumably because my nerve structures couldn't keep up with the rapid growth my bones were undergoing. It hurt like crazy--but I'm tall and lanky. Growth *must* occur slowly, or it's hard to handle (even when the payoffs are outstanding).

TWISTS OF FATE, SERENDIPITY AND DIVINE INTERVENTION

I've known for quite some time, that I'm only a conduit for healing, and that far greater powers are guiding me in this work. Make no mistake; I'm not a religious person by *any* stretch of the imagination--but my spiritual bond is vibrant and unshakable. At this point, a little background seems fitting.

At twenty years of age, I wanted to kill myself. I was suffering an emotional breakdown, and was in so much psychic pain, I just **wanted out**. The details leading up to this aren't as salient as the catalysts that led to my total loss of Self. My teenage years were about having to be *the perfect daughter* for my dad and his new third wife, with whom I'd had to live at age fourteen. The newlyweds weren't bad people, but they knew *nothing* about adolescent development--and for them, harsh discipline was their recipe for keeping me 'in-line,' and helping me become a "responsible" young woman.

So, during a time when I was supposed to be *forming* an independent Self, I was forced to surrender my burgeoning little autonomy, totally to their will. If I behaved imperfectly, I'd be punished. Punishment usually involved loss of freedom (*already* in short supply), or docking my very meager allowance. I wasn't allowed to reveal/express any disparate feelings during those times, or dire consequences surely awaited. In short, I couldn't have any emotions that ran contrary to what my *parents* wanted to observe, or there was hell to pay. I quickly learned to bury my frustration, sadness and rage.

Perhaps like you, I'd had uncertain, unstable beginnings. Life never felt safe, normal or good--and when it did, the rug was yanked out from under me. I

needed to sense that I *belonged*, but now I'd gotten thrown into a home life that was impossibly rigid/strict, and my feelings about it weren't permitted. The upshot was, I suppressed a whole lot of my emotions, because it wasn't *safe* for them to be experienced or expressed. As a direct result, I developed an [eating disorder](#). How *else* could I keep denying/shoving-down my feelings and find any sense of solace, selfhood or control within that environment?

Most of the people I've worked with, were **born into** these types of homes. They've had absolutely no frame of reference for what it means to trust their instincts, feelings and intuitions, having had to *abandon* them since infancy. **I wanted to die, after only six years in that environment!** I've known your pain, and the horrific *emptiness* you've lived with for years, which has driven your addiction to drugs/alcohol, eating, fixing/rescuing compulsions, obsessive gym workouts, gambling, fighting--or even *fucking* your way through inner deadness and despair.

By the grace of God, I was able to find the help I needed *when I needed it*, which launched my recovery and growth and gave me a template for helping others. This didn't occur immediately. I've spent many years plugging-up the holes in my boat, and *that* brought me to where I am today. If you're still breathing, it's not too late to start healing.

Healing work always seems counterintuitive to clients, because it challenges everything they grew up learning about how to **survive**--but if their methods *worked* for them, they wouldn't be in this pickle! This is *transformative* work, which (initially) feels like 'boot camp' for the soul.

TWELVE STEPS, THE DEVIL AND THE HOLY GRAIL

Don't let *anyone* tell you, that you're "powerless" against addiction! You can completely eliminate it--and I've written this to show you how. This material is intended to rattle a bunch of cages. If it doesn't, I've failed in my mission to illuminate a path toward full recovery, where your addictive *impulses* cease to exist.

There's a saying; The Devil you *know*, is better than the Devil you don't. It's *fear* that keeps us circling the drain, rather than trying something new that'll help us climb out of the sink. Predictability is comforting somehow, even if it doesn't serve us. That's just plain ol' human nature.

Various modalities having to do with 'sobriety' want you to surrender darker emotions--but if you've been harshly judging those feelings since childhood, and you're now told they're 'bad' and you shouldn't be *having* 'em, aren't you needing to keep *escaping* them somehow? You bet! *So you just get yourself to another AA meeting--and once again, you're running away from your very own feelings.*

Alcoholics Anonymous is extremely helpful, but I think their *greatest* benefit is providing a safe, welcoming environment, within which you begin to forge trusted alliances, and can gain a sense of **family** with kindred spirits. I think it's what keeps people going back for years, decades or a lifetime. We seek what we never received in childhood--even if it's just *acceptance*.

Some twelve-step sponsors urge you to "let go of your anger." Apparently, they need you to magically **dispose of** this normal, natural emotion which is inside to activate you, ease depression, and help you feel vibrant and alive. It's not that asking God to help you with various challenges is wrong--but it can have you passing the buck, and side-stepping your healing and growth.

God may have a hand in the outcome, but *we're* responsible for the action. If you've persistently given painful or difficult concerns over to your **deity** to manage, you're not *outgrowing* your addiction, you're **out-sourcing** it! That's like expecting your parents keep supporting you financially, while refusing to get a job. You'll likely remain a disempowered adult who never feels safe or secure in your world, and you'll have to numb *those* feelings out too!

If suppression of feelings means denying or numbing them out, doesn't this mean that fighting your addictive impulses will *remain* a continuous battle, once you get sober? And what about all those good folks who've *transferred* their alcohol addiction to relationships, pastry, [cigarettes](#)--and God knows what else, when they've given up the booze?!

GOT RAGE? BRING IT HERE!

I **love** working with angry people! The reason is, their emotions are closer to the surface--and they don't judge their rage. When someone can *feel* their emotions--even if it's only anger, we're considerably ahead, in terms of their ability to make faster progress and heal. For an addict, that's very good news!

Emotions trigger chemical changes in our physiology. When we're depressed, we'll lack energy and impetus/motivation. When we're angry or enraged, our body gets a big hit of adrenalin, which is activating and energizing. We *need* these emotions to surmount dangerous/harmful situations, and react to any emergency that comes our way. This is our *fight or flight* mechanism, but for many of us, it was dismantled and rendered useless during childhood.

People who've amputated darker emotions out of their personality structure, function as only *half-people*. Ever heard the phrase, "nice guys finish last"?? Well, if at any given time, you *can't* access emotions that are loving, bright, generous and spiritual, and you've judged/discarded the *other* ones as bad or wrong--what's left inside to feel? **Again, nothingness!** Welcome to your **core void**. Core emptiness exists inside you, because there are hundreds of important emotions that you haven't *allowed* yourself to experience.

I've done extensive work with [panic & anxiety issues](#). Given that anxiety and panic are nothing more than powerful feelings that can break through all *emotional controls* we've put in place since we were kids, does it make healthy, rational sense to "get rid" of anger--or *any* feelings for that matter??

The truth is, when we start learning how to experience our emotions, we no longer have to escape them--and voila! Our *need* for the addictive substance or behavior automatically vanishes. Your 'core void' shrinks too--which has driven your addictions in the first place! When *feelings* begin to replace the awful emptiness we've lived with inside, there's a marvelous sense of ease, aliveness and wholeness that comes with being human and healthy.

Does this mean you'll never have a rotten, painful day? No. It means you'll feel a new strength growing inside your core, which helps you trust that you'll *get through it*, and this feels pretty darned okay. Tomorrow, you'll probably feel lighter.

HEAR NO EVIL, SPEAK NO EVIL.

"Children should be seen, and not heard" sends the message to a kid that he's no more important than a piece of furniture or a lawn ornament. His feelings and needs don't matter to anyone, so he's just an object to be looked at~ not related to. This kind of upbringing spawns sensations of shame and unworthiness, which the child presumes he is at fault for experiencing.

In childhood, you had to figure out ways to put your sad/empty feelings aside, to survive in your home environment. It was either that--or take a dive off a tall building, or throw yourself in front of a speeding auto. Far more children than you might imagine, commit suicide! They can't understand their painful, darker feelings, and there's nobody (*safe*) around to tell about 'em. Much of the time, difficult emotions were treated as *wrong* by parents who've found it *inconvenient* to have a frustrated, unhappy child nearby, and made the kid "bad" just for having emotions. Thus, the die was cast.

People who dissociate from painful feelings in childhood, frequently become [People Pleasers](#), and develop all sorts of ailments, such as cancers, migraine headaches, anxiety disorders, heart problems, stomach or colon disorders, eating disorders, obsessive-compulsive traits--and even, **personality disorders**.

If you were intended to *only* have nice, light, generous and cheerful feelings, wouldn't you have been **created** without the ability to *feel* anything else? I guess you haven't gotten around to asking God about *that* one, have you??

Judeo-Christian teachings want us to "turn the other cheek" when somebody harms us, or violates our freedoms. They teach us to be passive little lambs, *even* if that means being led to slaughter. I say, horseshit!

What type of organization would encourage you to passively stand by, and idly observe your partner or child being hurt? Are you kidding?? But if you've been taught that anger is a *bad* feeling, how can you muster any **outrage** if your loved one is in danger? If someone threatened your kid, wouldn't you be doing *whatever* it took, to protect him or her? *Well, wouldn't you?*

I'm amazed, that most species of animals will *fight to the death* to protect their young--yet this isn't always true for humans. In fact, during the course of my career, I've become convinced that many of us would have been much better off had we been raised by wolves in the forest, rather than our parental units.

SELF-MEDICATION AND THE BORDERLINE PERSONALITY

Since we've unquestionably loved our parents--even if they were the source of our pain, we have learned to accept that 'loving' comes with anguish--and that became the relational blueprint from which all our adult attachments have

been built. In short, **love equals pain**--and this pain must be mollified, or how can we maintain our love affair? We have to escape the bad parts, to hold onto the good ones--which drives overwork, substance abuse, and/or a litany of *acting-out* behaviors, including [passive aggression](#).

A Borderline *splits-off* their darker facets from their lighter ones, but this is not a characteristic that's exclusive to someone who's personality disordered. The **codependent rescuer/fixer** personality has [acquired this trait](#) as well.

Many of us adopted this reflex in early childhood, when we had to separate, compartmentalize or box-up the rageful, crazy, injurious parts of our **parent** from their more normal/nourishing facets, so we could stay *attached* to him or her. Every time that box toppled off its shelf, banged us on the head and split open, we scooped-up those nasty, hurtful contents that spilled out, and stuffed them back in their box so we could feel close again--until the *next* time it happened. This is **precisely** what we do with a BPD partner.

We want to overlook, excuse, forgive and forget every assault, indiscretion and betrayal they've perpetrated on us, yet we don't cut *ourselves* any slack. (Surely, we must have done *something* to provoke them--hadn't we already learned that we were insignificant, unworthy and unlovable from our folks??)

Our need for relief from [self-flagellation](#) makes us return to the Borderline's poisonous well for another drink--no matter *how* hurtful they are to us. Their abuse is easier to take than *ours* when we're alone, for when we're beating-up on ourselves, we can't defend against our attacker! **Getting sober** means we must *unlearn* self-destructive habits we formed as little kids.

Given your Borderline has split *him/herself* into black and white all-good/all-bad, they do the same with you. As they cannot tolerate 'imperfect' traits in themselves, and have excised them from *their* personality structure, how can they accommodate any of yours? Still, you "love" them anyhow--even if it's spawned by a sense of obligation (a moldy leftover from your childhood).

Each time their more favorable/desirable aspects show up, you think they're here to stay--and determine that **you** must be the insane one. This became your **survival** strategy as a child, or you would have packed a knap-sack and taken off on your own to survive on the streets at three or four! Sticking around *despite* the pain, has been practical/logical from a youngster's standpoint--but you're still doing it, and periodically escaping inner pain, with your addiction of choice.

[Learned helplessness](#) is a *remnant* from your painful childhood drama, which is perpetually re-enacted, until you make up your mind to get Well.

KARMA, AND OTHER DOGMAS THAT CAN BITE YOU ON THE FANNY.

While Buddhism promotes the belief that 'chanting' will bring us everything we want, it takes a dim view of emotions and actions that aren't considered congruent with '*being in service*' to another--once again, de-prioritizing **our** feelings and needs, and putting them on the back-burner to simmer, and rob energy from more productive pursuits! This nonsense is underscored by fears

of karmic retribution, if we entertain a retaliatory or vengeful thought toward somebody who's intentionally done us wrong--and suggests that we surely must have done something despicable in a **past life** to have *deserved* these parents, siblings or friends who've treated us abominably. Christ, [no wonder Buddha was fat!](#) If our **core belief** is that we *can't* have prosperity and love, chanting won't work, because shame and guilt from childhood block us from receiving! That's not *Karma*--it's just simple, metaphysical law.

A gal-pal always tells me how "Buddhistic" I am, and I think that's probably true. I fully believe in the karmic boomerang. In truth, I've likely had a hand in speeding it up a bit. I'm uniquely comfortable with my dark side--in fact, I celebrate it. Does that mean I'm a bad person?? Hell no - and if it did, I'm sure I'd have been struck down by lightning *decades* ago. What it means is, when somebody's intentionally crossed or undermined me, I haven't lifted a finger--but they've *always* paid a price, and I've heard about it later.

When you eradicate "*negative*" feelings from your personality, positive ones can't remain alive and vibrant. Therefore, shutting down/discarding your rage or envy for instance, **flatlines** your glee and happiness. That's how feelings work, and there's just no way around it. If you won't feel pain, you can't feel pleasure--or it takes tremendous intensity to capture and hold your interest, which is a key factor in [sex addiction](#) (my sub-specialty).

There's a humongous difference between sitting on your feelings--and sitting *with* them. Feelings are just parts of **You** that you've crucified and discarded a long time ago, and they're wanting to find their home again, inside you.

Being a healthy, whole person, means being able to experience and operate from a full repertoire of different types of emotions, *without* self-judgment. This is what's required, to be a multi-dimensional, fully-integrated being. It's easy for *half-personalities* to commit suicide, but **whole** personalities do not contemplate killing themselves. Ever.

CORE TRAUMA, AND YOUR ADDICTION AFFLICTION

I've seen where core trauma/narcissistic injury spawns addiction because people learn how to self-medicate their pain from a *very* early age. Numbing-out or running away from our anguish is natural, because who in the hell wants to *feel* that?! We begin to regard darker emotions as **monsters** who mean to overtake and kill us, and *fear* makes us run from them! But these monsters aren't living under our bed or in our closet--they're living *inside* us, and as much as we've tried to drown them, outrun them or *shop* them away, we can't. Retail therapy can only leave you broke. It cannot help you repair what's broken.

Who you are today, was established by the time you reached **five years old**. These were your *formative* years, and they powerfully influence your beliefs, your principles, and your sense of Self. True healing means challenging some long-standing ideations, superstitions and rules you've lived by, which have trapped you in self-loathing and toxic shame. Getting well entails *unlearning* erroneous beliefs and faulty paradigms that haven't served you. This can be a formidable transition, particularly if you've spent many years in *traditional*

recovery programs. 12-steps may keep you from *using*--but here, we will be resolving the underlying pain, that's made you **want or need** to use.

Emotional wholeness means your addictions evaporate. Getting sober is easy--but shifting how you think you'll have to do that isn't, because it's an entirely different paradigm than you've tried before. There's a learning curve; it's like switching to a Macintosh, when you've *solely* used a Windows PC.

I'm always telling clients: If I could wave my Fairy Godmother Wand and make you whole and happy tomorrow, *I would* (and I honestly mean it)! This is a *process*. It doesn't take decades or even years, but I wholeheartedly believe in it, or I'd be hunting for a different vocation that feels as gratifying.

If you have an iPhone, iPad or iPod this app will let you **hear** this material;
[http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/web-reader-text-to-speech/id320808874?
mt=8](http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/web-reader-text-to-speech/id320808874?mt=8)

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