

Drugs & Alcohol and Harmful Habits



The disciple does not abstain from the things which he has been told to,
but instead he blames the Master for not getting any progress.
(Swami Ji)



After half a century in psychiatric practice,
I know without a doubt that the source of addiction
is spiritual deficiency. Irrespective of whether we are religious or atheist,
all human beings are spiritual by nature and spirituality is the
cornerstone of our recovery.
(Dr. Abraham Twerski)

Many initiates of the Sant Mat Masters entered the Path with a history of drug and/or alcohol abuse. A requirement for initiation is an agreement to avoid the use of these substances in the future.

In recent years, the keeping of this agreement may have become more difficult due to increased availability and society's acceptance of marijuana for medical and recreational consumption. The same can be said for gambling and pornography. The legalization or softening of sanctions can further encourage the mind to engage in these harmful behaviors.

This booklet provides quotes and articles related to the use, addiction and abstention of prohibited behaviors. It also reviews the Masters' teachings in this regard.



'Tis one thing to be tempted, another thing to fall.
(William Shakespeare)

I know the voice of depression still calls to you. I know those habits that can ruin your life still send their invitations. But you are with the Friend now and look so much stronger. You can stay that way and even bloom! Learn to recognize the counterfeit coins that may buy you just a moment of pleasure, but then drag you for days behind a farting camel!
(Hafiz)

When the heart becomes whole, it will know the flavors of falsehood and truth.
When Adam's greed for the forbidden fruit increased, it robbed his heart of health.
Discernment flies from one who is drunken with desire. He who puts down that cup
lightens the inner eye, and the secret is revealed.
(Rumi)

People fancy they are enjoying themselves,
but they are really tearing out their wings for the sake of an illusion.
(Rumi)

Brother, stand the pain; escape the poison of your impulses.
(Rumi)

Without suffering the pain of self-restraint,
no recompense can follow.
(Rumi)

Understand this if nothing else: spiritual freedom and oneness with the Tao are not randomly bestowed gifts, but the rewards of conscious self-transformation and self-evolution.

(Lao-tzu)

Mental toughness is many things and rather difficult to explain. Its qualities are sacrifice and self-denial. Also, most importantly, it is combined with a perfectly disciplined will that refuses to give in. It's a state of mind – you could call it character in action.

(Vince Lombardi)

The difference between a saint and a sinner is this:
that the one has perfect control of all the forces within him;
the other is dominated and controlled by them.

(James Allen)

Character is the ability to carry out a good resolution
long after the mood in which it has been made has left you.

(Cavett Robert)

No conflict is so severe as his who labors to subdue himself.

(Thomas a' Kempis)

The intelligent desire self-control; children want candy!

(Rumi)

Freedom is not procured by a full enjoyment of what is desired,
but by controlling the desire.

(Epictetus)

What lies in our power to do, it lies in our power not to do.

(Aristotle)

The first and best victory is to conquer self.

To be conquered by self is, of all things,
the most shameful and vile.

(Plato)

No one is free who is not master of himself.

(Shakespeare)

A long habit of not thinking a thing wrong
gives it a superficial appearance of being right.

(Thomas Paine)

Ninety-nine percent of the failures
come from people who have the habit of making excuses.

(George Washington Carver)

For an addict any excuse is a good excuse.

(an addiction counselor)

The sacrifice which causes sorrow to the doer of the sacrifice is no sacrifice.
Real sacrifice lightens the mind of the doer and gives him a sense of peace and joy.
The Buddha gave up the pleasures of life because they had become painful to him.
(Mahatma Gandhi)

Organisms repeat responses that have brought satisfaction in the past;
often these responses persist even when they no longer bring satisfaction.
(Walter Anderson)

Disgust is half the battle in the conquest of neurotic habits.
(David Seabury)



If we would know who is the most degraded and wretched of human beings,
look for a man who has practiced a vice so long that he curses it and yet clings to it.
(William Paley)

Old habits are strong and jealous. They will not be displaced easily if they get any warning
that such plans are afoot; they will fight for their existence with subtlety and persuasiveness.
(Dorothea Brande)

The desire to change the direction of your life is one of the surest signs of grace.
For a while you may not know the direction in which to go. But you will know without doubt
that the direction you have been going in is wrong.
(Eknath Easwaran)

The strong man is the one who is able to intercept at will
the communication between the senses and the mind.
(Napoleon Bonaparte)

Enlightenment – that magnificent escape from anguish and ignorance – never happens by
accident. It results from the brave and sometimes lonely battle of one person against
his own weaknesses.
(Bhikkhu Nyanasobhano)

It is better to conquer yourself than to win a thousand battles. Then the victory is yours.
It cannot be taken from you, not by angels or by demons, heaven or hell.
(Buddha)

Meher Baba

If God can be found through the medium of any drug,
God is not worthy of being God.

The value of sense-objects is great or small according to the intensity or urgency with which they are desired. If these lusts and longings increase, the corresponding objects assume greater importance. If they subside in their intensity or urgency, the objects also lose much of their importance. If the lusts and longings appear intermittently, those objects retain possible value when the lusts and longings are latent, and actual value when they are manifested. All these are false values because they are not inherent in the objects themselves.

When in the light of true knowledge all the lusts and longings disappear completely, objects vested with importance through the working of these lusts and longings immediately lose all their borrowed importance and appear meaningless.

Now just as a coin which is not in current use is treated as false, though it has a kind of existence, so the objects of lusts and longings when seen in their emptiness are treated as false, though these objects might continue to have some kind of recognition. They are all there, and they may be known and seen, but they no longer mean the same thing. They hold false promise of fulfillment to an imagination which is perverted by lusts and longings, but to the tranquil and steady perception they are seen to have no importance when they are considered separate from the soul. (<http://discoursesbymeherbaba.org/v3-140.php>)

Renunciation of desires curtails the very life of the ego-mind. Therefore it is a process invariably accompanied by acute suffering. But such suffering is wholesome for the soul because it liberates the soul from bondage.

Not all suffering is bad. When suffering leads to the eternal happiness of desirelessness, it should be regarded as a blessing in disguise. Just as a patient may have to suffer an operation at the hands of a surgeon in order to free himself of persistent and malignant pain, the soul has to welcome the suffering of renouncing desires in order to be free from the recurrent and unending suffering caused by them. The suffering which the soul has in renouncing desires may be very acute, but it is endured because of a sense of greater freedom which comes when desires gradually disappear from the mind. If a swelling on the body is opened and allowed to drain it gives much pain, but also much relief. Similarly, the suffering from renunciation of desires is accompanied by the compensating relief of progressive initiation into the limitless life of freedom and happiness.

Habits are so assumed; but when we endeavor to strip them off, it is being flayed alive.
(William Cowper)

No one can be enlightened unless he be first cleansed or purified and stripped.
(Theologia Germanica)

Who fights with bows and arrows is not the true valiant one;
Who banishes from his mind all cravings, lures and greed is a warrior indeed.
(Kabir)

Gary Zukav on Addiction
The Seat of the Soul, Chapter 10
Excerpts

You cannot begin the work of releasing an addiction until you can acknowledge that you are addicted. Until you realize that you have an addiction, it is not possible to diminish its power. The personality rationalizes its addictions. It dresses them in attractive clothing. It presents them to itself and others as desirable or beneficial. A person who is addicted to alcohol, for example will say to herself or himself, or to others, that drunkenness is a way of loosening up, of relaxing after a tense day, of having fun, and, therefore, it is constructive.

Recognition of your own addictions requires inner work. It requires that you look clearly at the places where you lose power in your life, where you are controlled by external circumstances. It requires going through your defenses. Even when striving for clarity, or when outer circumstances – such as an injury caused by driving drunk, - provide evidence of an addiction, the personality often clings to a perception of its addiction as a mere problem, initially, as a small problem, then as a bigger problem, and then as a significant problem.

Why does the personality resist acknowledging its addictions?

Acknowledging an addiction, accepting that you have an addiction, is acknowledgment that a part of you is out of control. The personality resists acknowledging its addictions because that forces it to choose to leave a part of itself out of control, or to do something about it. Once an addiction has been acknowledged, it cannot be ignored, and it cannot be released without changing your life, without changing your self-image, without changing your entire perceptual and conceptual framework. We do not want to do that because it is our nature to resist change. Therefore, we resist acknowledging our addictions.

An addiction is not merely an attraction. It is natural for males and females to admire each other, for example, and to feel warmth and attraction toward each other. An addiction is more than that. An addiction is characterized by magnetism and fear. There is attraction plus fear, plus a jolt of energy that is out of proportion to the situation. Attractions are a pleasing part of life. They can be satisfied and left behind, but addictions cannot.

An addiction cannot be satiated...An addiction can be anesthetized.

Enter into your own fear, into your own sense of wanting a drink, or sex with a different partner. Ask yourself to seriously review all of the times in your life that you thought you would gain so much from that, and face what you gained.

Hold onto the thought that you create your experiences. Your fear comes from the realization that a part of you is creating a reality that it wants, whether you want it or not, and the feeling that you are powerless to prevent it, but that is not so. This is critical to understand: your addiction is not stronger than you. It is not stronger than who you want to be. Though it may feel that way, it can only win if you let it. Like any weakness, it is not stronger than the soul or the force of will. Its strength only indicates the amount of effort that needs to be applied toward the transition, toward making yourself whole in that area of your life.

Recognize that what you are doing when you fear that you will be tempted, and that you will not be able to resist the temptation, is creating a situation that will give you permission to act irresponsibly. Is it possible to create a test that you cannot pass? Yes. The experience of wanting to be tempted in order to test yourself is the act of creating an opportunity to act irresponsibly, to say to yourself, "I knew I couldn't do it, anyway," and give in to your addiction. The heart of making a temptation that is greater than you can resist is that you do not wish to be held responsible for your choice.

The greater the desire of your soul to heal your addiction, the greater will be the cost of keeping it. If you – if your soul – have chosen to heal an addiction now, you will find that the decision to maintain your addiction will cost you the things that you hold most dear. If that is your wife or your husband, your marriage will be placed in the balance against your addiction.

This is not the doing of a cruel Universe or a malicious God. It is a compassionate response to your desire to heal, to become whole. It is the compassionate Universe saying to you that your inadequacies are so deep that the only thing that will stop you will be something of equal or greater value in opposition to your inadequacies. This is the same dynamic that is expressed in terms of space and time and matter by the second law of motion: "A change in the momentum (mass, direction of movement, and speed) of a body in motion is directly proportional to the force affecting the body in motion, and takes place in the direction that the force is acting." By the magnitude of the costs of your addiction you can measure the importance of healing it to your soul, and the strength of your own inner intention to do that.

Try to realize, and truly realize, that what stands between you and a different life are matters of responsible choice. In your moments of fear, what you are obscure about in your thinking is the power and magnitude of your own choice. Recognize what your own power of choice is. You are not at the mercy of your inadequacy. The intention that will empower you must come from a place within you that suggests that you are indeed able to make responsible choices and draw the power from them, that you can make choices that empower you and not disempower you, that you are capable of acts of wholeness. Test your power of choice because each time you choose otherwise you disengage the power of your addiction more and more and increase your personal power more and more.

As you work through your weaknesses, and you feel levels of addictive attraction, ask yourself the critical questions of the spirit: If, by following those impulses, do you increase your level of enlightenment? Does it bring you power of the genuine sort? Will it make you more loving? Will it make you more whole? Ask yourself these questions.

This is the way out of an addiction: Walk yourself through your reality step by step. Make yourself aware of the consequences of your decisions, and choose accordingly. When you feel in yourself the addictive attraction of sex, or alcohol, or drugs, or anything else, remember these words: You stand between the two worlds of your lesser self and your full self. Your lesser self is tempting and powerful because it is not as responsible and not as loving and not as disciplined, so it calls you. This other part of you is whole and more responsible and more caring and more empowered, but it demands of you the way of the enlightened spirit: conscious life. Conscious life. The other choice is unconscious permission to act without consciousness. It is tempting.

As you choose to empower yourself, the part of you that you challenge, the temptation that you challenge, will surface again and again. Each time that you challenge an addiction to alcohol, for example, and you are drawn twelve times that very day to have a drink, challenge that energy

each time. If you look upon each recurrence of attraction as a setback, or as an indication that your intention is not working, you choose the path of learning through fear and doubt. If you look upon each recurrence as an opportunity that is offered to you, in response to your intention, to release your inadequacy and to acquire power over it, you choose the path of learning through wisdom, for that is what it is.

The first time that you challenge your addiction, and the second, and the third, you may not feel that anything has been accomplished. Do you think that authentic power can be had so easily? As you hold to your intention, and as you choose again and again and again to become whole, you accumulate power, and the addiction that you thought could not be challenged will lose its power over you.

Understanding the dynamics behind your addiction is one thing. Actually making the emotional connection to discharge the need for it is another story. Your addiction is not insurmountable. It is not overwhelming. If it continues to appear that way to you, it is because deep in your heart you do not see yourself as able to release the addiction, even if you understand why you are drawn to it. If your addiction lingers, ask yourself if you really want to release it, because in your heart you do not.

Until you fill in the inadequacies within you, you will always have your addiction. In order to release your addiction, it is necessary to enter your inadequacies, to recognize that they are real, and to bring them into the light of consciousness to heal. It is necessary to look deeply into the parts of yourself that have such power to you, to look clearly at how deep they are within you, and to see them as honestly as you can. It may be that your addiction has provided you one of the few genuine pleasures of your life. What is more important to you, your wholeness, and your freedom, or the pleasures that you get from satisfying your addictions?

When you understand that your addiction results from an inadequacy, the question becomes how you will respond to your inadequacy – by reaching for another joint or drink, or another sexual encounter, or by reaching inward for those things that fill the whole? Move into how strong the power of your addiction is, into how deeply you feel its attraction, and ask yourself if the time is really right for you to release this form of learning. That is for you to ask and answer.

When you return Home, when you leave your personality and body behind, you will leave behind your inadequacies. They do not, and cannot, exist within the realm of spirit. They are the experiences of the personality, of time and matter. You will once again enter the fullness of who you are. You will perceive with loving eyes and compassionate understanding the experiences of your life, including those that seemed so much to control you. You will see what purposes they served. You will survey what has been learned, and you will bring these things into your next incarnation.

If you choose to continue with your addiction, you choose to experience negative karma. You choose to create without compassion. You choose to be unconscious. You choose to learn through the experiences that your unconscious intentions create. You choose to learn through fear and doubt, because you fear your addiction and you doubt your power to challenge it successfully.

If you choose to challenge your addiction, to move consciously toward wholeness, you choose to learn through wisdom. You choose to create your experiences consciously, to align the perceptions and the energy of your personality with your soul. You choose to create within physical reality the reality that your soul wishes to create. You choose to allow your soul to move through you. You choose to allow Divinity to shape your world.

When you struggle with an addiction, you deal directly with the healing of your soul. You deal directly with the matter of your life. This is the work that is required to be done. As you face your deepest struggles, you reach for your highest goal. As you bring to light, heal, and release the deepest currents of negativity within you, you allow the energy of your soul to move directly into, and to shape, the experiences and events of physical reality, and thereby to accomplish unimpeded its tasks upon the Earth.

This is the work of evolution. It is the work that you were born to do.



I was held back by mere trifles, the most paltry inanities, all my old attachments.
They plucked at my garments of flesh and whispered: "Are you going to dismiss us?
From this moment we shall never be with you again, for ever and ever.
From this moment you will never again be allowed to do this thing, or that, for evermore."
(Saint Augustine)

All changes, even the most longed for, have their melancholy; for what we leave behind us
is a part of ourselves; we must die to one life before we can enter another.
(Anatole France)

Rationalizations enter the mind - perhaps the thought: "Won't God be just as pleased with me if I
live a good, moral life? Must I give up everything human - everything normal,
and be left in the end with, perhaps, nothing?"
(Yogananda)

Even though we know that the bondage of the mind is the cause of suffering, somehow we don't
want to become free from its clutches, because our mental fantasies, ideas, and concepts have
created our life. When the time comes to free ourselves from these things, we feel we are going
to flounder, we feel we will lose the reality that we have known for so long and have grown so
accustomed to. We get scared, and even though we know the bondage of the mind
creates so much suffering, we don't want to be free of it.
(Gurumayi)

Without struggle, no progress and no result.
Every breaking of habit produces a change in the machine.
(George Gurdjieff)

We have to suffer to reshape ourselves, to destroy the old and forge the new.
(Sant Kirpal Singh, *Spiritual Elixir*, 298)

Complete abstinence is easier than perfect moderation.
(Saint Augustine)

Eckhart Tolle on Addiction

(A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life's Purpose, 246- 248)

A long-standing compulsive behavior pattern may be called an addiction, and an addiction lives inside you as a quasi-entity or sub-personality, an energy field that periodically takes you over completely. It even takes over your mind, the voice in your head, which then becomes the voice of the addiction.

If you have a compulsive behavior pattern, this is what you can do: When you notice the compulsive need arising in you, stop and take three conscious breaths. This generates awareness. Then for a few minutes be aware of the compulsive urge itself as an energy field inside you. Consciously feel that need to physically or mentally ingest or consume a certain substance or the desire to act out some form of compulsive behavior. Then take a few more conscious breaths. After that you may find that the compulsive urge has disappeared – for the time being.

Make the addiction part of your awareness practice in the way described above. As awareness grows, addictive patterns will weaken and eventually dissolve. Remember, however, to catch any thoughts that justify the addictive behavior, sometimes with clever arguments, as they arise in your mind. Ask yourself, “Who is talking here?” And you will realize the addiction is talking. As long as you know that, as long as you are present as the observer of your mind, it is less likely to trick you into doing what it wants.



Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.
The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.
(Jesus Christ, Matthew 26:41)

Happy is the man who doesn't give in and do wrong when he is tempted, for afterwards he will get as his reward the crown of life that God has promised those who love Him.
(James – New Testament)

The Sacred Pause

Because experience happens so quickly, habitual responses can occur before we know it. It helps to practice the sacred pause when things are easy, that way when we are tempted to break a rule we have trained ourselves to dwell in the sacred pause before we take action we will later regret.

Without the sacred pause our actions are often automatic and we live at the effect of our conditioned behavior. If we take a moment to pause and reflect, we can break the spell between past conditioning and automatic reaction.

In the space of the sacred pause, we can reflect on the consequences of the proposed transgression and we can strengthen our resolve to dwell within the circle of our Master's Will.

In the stillness of our sacred pause we can obtain freedom from the habit of repetitive behavior. (Jack Kornfield, modified)

When tempted to step outside the circle of Master's Will, mentally step back and observe the thoughts running through the mind. Label the thoughts. If we were Buddhists we might say, "I recognize you, Mara." An initiate of a Sant Mat Master might say, "I recognize you, Kal." Ask yourself, "Do I want perennial joy or passing pleasure? Do I want to please my mind, or do I want to please the Master?" This moment of reflection, of discrimination, creates a "sacred pause" between the thoughts and the act of transgression.

Discipline

Henepola Gunaratana – Sri Lankan Theravada Buddhist monk

Discipline is a difficult word for most of us. It conjures up images of somebody standing over you with a stick, telling you that you are wrong. But self-discipline is different. It's the skill of seeing through the hollow shouting of your own impulses and piercing their secret.

They have no power over you. It's all a show, a deception. Your urges scream and bluster at you; they cajole; they coax; they threaten; but they really carry no stick at all. You give in out of habit. You give in because you never really bother to look beyond the threat. It is all empty back there. There is only one way to learn this lesson though. The words on this page won't do it.

But look within and watch the stuff coming up – restlessness, anxiety, impatience, pain – just watch it come up and don't get involved. Much to your surprise, it will simply go away. It rises, it passes away. As simple as that.

There is another word for self-discipline. It is patience.

Let the mind and the Sat Guru stand before you. If you obey the Guru, you overpower the mind; but if you follow the mind, you turn your face away from the Guru. Whoever has the pain of love will choose to follow the Guru; but one who has no fear (of offending the Guru) will be carried away by the currents of the mind.

(Swami Ji)

Desire

Jack Kornfield,

The Wise Heart: A Guide to the Universal Teachings of Buddhist Psychology

Buddhist psychology describes the state of addiction as becoming a hungry ghost. No matter how much the ghost tries to eat, satisfaction becomes insatiable, thirst becomes unquenchable. For the hungry ghost, like an addict, a few moments of relief come with the drink or the high or the binge, followed by a pause and craving for more.



We use our desires to distract ourselves from discomfort. When an unconscious feeling of insecurity, boredom, or emptiness arises, desire follows. We open the refrigerator, turn on the TV, lose ourselves in distractions or busyness or addiction. We want another piece of chocolate cake to inspire us, a drink or a tidbit of gossip to make us feel better. Desires act like temporary painkillers – while they are harmless at first, we can become habituated. The more lonely and separate we feel, the more we turn to desires to compensate. We go through our day yanked by the chain of one desire after another until we finally lose touch with who we really are.

With mindfulness we can witness the arising and passing of desire. We can allow the body sensations, the feeling states, and the stories of desire to be graciously received without judgment. When desire is met mindfully, the energy of desire will often intensify for a time and try to overcome us. If we don't rush to fulfill the desire, but simply stay present, the discomfort will eventually pass. Then we can notice what follows: usually a sense of ease, a peacefulness in body and mind, until desire arises once more a short time later.

Time is a factory where everyone slaves away,
earning enough love to break their own chains.

(Hafiz)

Addictive Voice Recognition Technique: How to Overcome Addictive Behavior

Observe your thoughts and feelings, positive and negative, about drinking or using drugs or any other addictive behavior. Thoughts and feelings which support continued use are called the Addictive Voice (AV); those which support abstinence are you.

When you recognize and understand your AV, it becomes not-you, but "it," an easily-defeated enemy that has been causing you to engage in addictive behavior. All it wants is pleasure.

"I want a drink," becomes, "It wants a drink." Think to yourself, "I will never drink again," and listen for its reaction. Your negative thoughts and feelings are your AV talking back to you. Now, think, "I will drink/use whenever I please." Your pleasant feelings are also the AV, which is in control.

Recovery is not a process; it is an event. The magic word is "Never," as in, "I will never drink/use again."

Recognition defeats short-term desire, and abstinence soon becomes effortless. Complete separation of "you" from "it" leads to complete recovery and hope for a better life.

The only time you can drink is now, and the only time you can quit for good is right now. "I will never drink/use again," becomes, "I never drink now." It's not hard; anyone can do it.

AVRT is an insight into the nature of addiction which places you in complete control over the decision to drink or use drugs (or engage in other addictive behaviors).

Although AVRT is very, very simple, you have to know what you're doing, and learning it can be tricky at first. This is because your AV uses your own intelligence and personality in order to remain concealed from you. It is ruthless in its pursuit of pleasure, but it can also be quite subtle, forceful, seductive, persistent, patient, and has many other qualities. (<https://rational.org/index.php?id=36>)

Living Within the Circle of Master's Will

You are not your body or your mind, you are a conscious entity working in a body. You are a divine spirit, a drop of the Ocean of all Consciousness. Your body cannot satisfy a temptation without your consent. Your body speaks to you with suggestions, not commands. Observe your thoughts and feelings about your temptation. Thoughts and feelings which encourage a transgression are called the voice of Kal. Thoughts which support living in Master's Will are your higher self, the real you. When you hear an inner voice prompting you to indulge in a prohibited behavior, recognize it as Kal ("I know you, Mara"). "I want a drink," "I want to get high," "I want to eat forbidden foods" becomes "It" or "Kal wants to drink, get high, or eat meat." You come to recognize that your inner temptations are not you but your pleasure loving mind. You remember the words of the Beloved Master, "Mind is material, it will always drag you to the material things." You realize that these thoughts of transgression, these temptations, are nothing to get anxious about, they are just the mind (Kal) doing its job, doing its best to keep you from leaving Kal's domain. It is helpful to remember "I am not my mind, I am the beloved of the Beloved, committed to living within the circle of His Will."

The Structural Model of Addiction

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The Structural Model of Addiction is unique to Rational Recovery. This simple idea helps make sense of your addiction and shows you why you have been behaving so stupidly. Ridding yourself of disease-thinking can help you recover from substance addiction.

There is no evidence that addiction is or is caused by a disease. To the contrary, addiction is a natural function of a healthy, human body. The disease concept of addiction has become quite popular, mainly because it is the nature of addicted people to dignify their deplorable conduct. The disease concept of addiction is an example of the Addictive Voice concealing the actual reason people drink/use while it discourages individual initiative.

Brain chemistry, genetics, and personal “issues” are irrelevant to addiction and recovery. Our 2-part brain model, below, is simple, but for our purposes, not simplistic. There are no hidden causes for your addiction; you drink because you love to drink. You use because you love the way it feels.

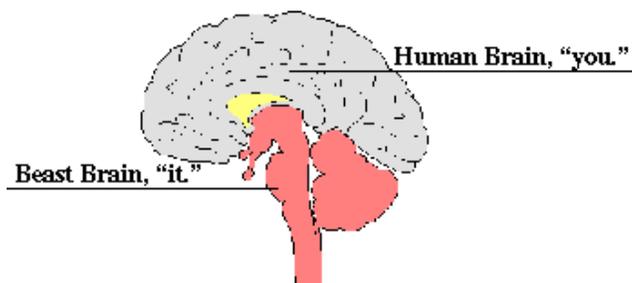
When the disease concept becomes part of your Addictive Voice, you will feel like a victim of circumstances rather than someone who is responsible for becoming addicted, for staying addicted and for immediately quitting your addiction – right now, for good.

In effect, you have two separate brains within your head — a human brain, which supports consciousness, and an animal/beast brain which supports life itself. The beast brain generates survival appetites which drive the rest of the body toward what it demands, such as oxygen, food, sex, and fluids.

These survival needs are all associated with physical pleasure, i.e., the better something feels, the more necessary it seems for survival. Alcohol and other drugs feel better than anything else, including food, sex, even breathing. Your survival drive has become a death drive in search of physical pleasure.

Your survival appetite is aimed at the wrong stuff, to be sure, but addiction is more a reflection of health than of a mysterious disease. The desire for pleasure fades among sick or diseased people, further suggesting that addiction is a reflection of health rather than a disease process. In RR, some call the human midbrain “the party center,” because of the bond between pleasure and addiction.

Of course, it is often quite stupid (self-defeating) to act on healthy desires or impulses, as in substance addictions.



We call your desire for the pleasure of alcohol and other drugs **the Beast®**. The Beast of Booze, or the Beast of Buzz, is ruthless in getting what it wants because it is about survival. It cannot speak, it cannot see, it has no arms or legs, and it has no intelligence of its own.

The Beast is utterly powerless to act on its own. Instead, it uses your thoughts and intelligence, sees through your eyes, creates strong feelings, and persuades you to use your hands, arms, and legs in order to obtain its favorite substance. It must appeal to you to get alcohol or drugs into your bloodstream.

Although your beast brain has no language ability, it uses your language and thinking centers to get what it wants. It is an animal mentality that can talk in your head. For example, if you wisely decide that drinking is bad for you, and that you will stop, you will soon hear that old, familiar voice telling you why you should continue drinking. You may even imagine a picture of what you want to drink. That is your Addictive Voice, the sole cause of addiction, expressing the Beast's demand for alcohol/drugs. Addictive Voice is to Beast as bark is to dog.

There are two parties to your addiction - you and your Beast, "I" and "it." You can easily recognize your Addictive Voice using the following definition:
Any thinking, imagery, or feeling that supports or suggests the possible future use of alcohol or drugs -- ever.

AVRT allows you to become acutely aware of Beast activity and dissociate from it so it can no longer instigate action. Then you may confidently decide you'll never drink again, and feel the grand relief of knowing your addiction is finally over.



Drunkenness is nothing but voluntary madness.
(Seneca)

Addiction is the number one disease in our civilization.
(Deepak Chopra)

Among all my patients in the second half of life there has not been one whose problem in the last resort was not that of finding a religious outlook on life.
(Carl Jung)

When you come in contact with Light and Sound Power within, you have not to adopt any virtues, but everything, all virtues, will come within you of themselves.
(Sant Kirpal Singh, www.ruhanisatsangusa.org/lok/occupied.htm)

Through the practice of listening to this Music, all sins, impurities and afflictions are removed...One enjoys heavenly bliss and dwells in his Original Home.
(Sant Kirpal Singh, *Philosophy of the Masters*, v. 4, 157)

As meditation deepens, compulsions, cravings and fits of emotion begin to lose their power to dictate our behavior.
(Eknath Easwaran)

Sant Kirpal Singh Ji

If you don't give up these worldly things you are not ready for this path.
(www.ruhanisatsangusa.org/best_use.htm)

When one gets the Naam's inner nectar, all worldly intoxicants seem ridiculous,
and when the seed of Naam sprouts, all other things become meaningless.
(ruhanisatsangusa.org/tghp.htm)

Even a little intoxication derived from steady daily practice
will start to erase the taste for outer pleasures.
(ruhanisatsangusa.org/thief_of.htm)

If at every moment you are consciously watching your behavior,
a calm consideration will replace a blind instinctive reaction to certain situations in life
where the choice lies between committing a lapse in behavior or avoiding it.
(*The Teachings of Kirpal Singh*, v. 2, 19)

So long as we do not sacrifice that to which we are most attached, at the altar of God's Love,
we cannot obtain Salvation.
(*Philosophy of the Masters*, v.2, 152)

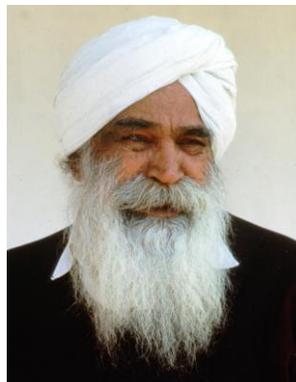
If only we would obey implicitly for six months,
we would see the magical change in our condition.
(*The Teachings of Kirpal Singh*, v. 3, 138)

One way of pleasing the Master is to live up to what the Master says
without regard to what your mind says or what your heart likes.
(*Portrait of Perfection*, 25)

Generally, you'll find we don't keep His commandments;
we simply modify something to our own interests or purposes.
(ruhanisatsangusa.org/comeback.htm)

Mind is very powerful. At the time of deliberation, it makes promises
but does not care to fulfill them when the occasion arises.
(*The Teachings of Kirpal Singh*, v.2, 22)

One hundred times and more we bow our heads and say "yes, yes, I will do it," but in action we
do just as we please. This indicates that as yet we do not truly understand the spiritual path.
(*The Teachings of Kirpal Singh*, v. 1, 61)



Question: Master, most of us here, before we came on the Path, have taken drugs. Will the fact that we have taken drugs adversely affect our spiritual progress?

Master: Surely. I tell you, we are conscious beings. We have to become more conscious. Anything which has gone to mar our consciousness - that will take you to the lower strata of life. That is killing yourself, I would say.

Disciple: A lot of us became aware of the spiritual life through drugs...

Master: Leave it, that's all. Don't take more poison, that's all. A little poison taken can be ...

Disciple: But our progress now will be affected by what we did before...

Master: Only if you put in more time (in spiritual practices) these things will be cleared. Put in more time. Don't leave off that effort. That's all right. Whatever poison you have taken in your stomach can be washed out. But stop taking more poison, that's all. What more is there?

(The Light of Kirpal, page 179)

Question: What should one do when one is not true to oneself, and in other words, knows better, knows what you should do, but doesn't do it?

Master: That's all right. Diary is meant for that. Keep your diary, I mean sincerely--be true to your own self. Don't deceive your own self. Everything comes up. If a man having a lamp in hand falls down in the ditch, then? Knowing is not sufficient. You must live up to it. An ounce of practice is worth more than tons of theories. We must live up to what He says. Diaries are for that purpose. *(The Light of Kirpal, page 108)*

Drugs and Spiritual Progress

Reno H. Serrine/ Sant Kirpal Singh/ Meher Baba

(Mr Serrine was the Vice President of the Ruhani Satsang and prepared this circular at the request of the Master Kirpal Singh Ji. It appeared in the June 1974 issue of Sat Sandesh)

In a reply from Master Kirpal Singh concerning the use of marijuana, LSD and other drugs by the initiates, he says:

“Drugs, opiates and intoxicants should not be partaken as these will not only affect your health adversely but shall be detrimental for your spiritual progress. You should please leave off all such drugs and learn to live without their use.”

In 1965, Meher Baba told a disciple:

“Go back to the U. S. A., spread my love among others, particularly among the young, and persuade them to desist from taking drugs, for they are harmful – physically, mentally and spiritually. In an age when individual liberty is prized above all achievements, the fast-increasing number of drug addicts forms an appalling chain of self-sought bondage! Even as these drugs hold out an invitation to a fleeting sense of ecstasy, freedom or escape, they enslave the individual in greater bindings.

“There is no drug that can promote the aspirant’s progress – nor ever alleviate the sufferings of separation from his beloved God. Love is the only propeller and the only remedy. The aspirant should love God with all his heart till he forgets himself and recognizes his beloved God in himself and others. Let those concerned know that if the student world continues to indulge in the use of LSD, half of the U. S. A. would soon become mentally deranged! Hence, a check must be strictly enforced and the use of these drugs be prohibited, particularly among the rising generation.”

Master Kirpal Singh states:

“It is amusing to note about the Utopiates (LSD, Marijuana, etc.) for producing hallucinations. You may please note that spirituality is the science of the soul, which (the soul) is a conscious entity in the body. The Way back to God as offered by the Masters is one of developing inner consciousness with the aid of Holy Naam (the Word). All suchlike outer aids resulting in temporary hallucinations, as stated by you, are certainly a mockery of the divine grace. You can well understand the vast difference between having a conscious and wide awake approach for proceeding within and that which makes recourse to these outer aids which are no less than opiates creating sensational vibrations. You will recall that the observance of a strict diet by avoiding all flesh food, intoxicants and opiates, is a basic essential for inner spiritual progress, for attaining a refined state of mind. We have to develop consciousness - the divine attribute of soul. For the achievement of (inner) consciousness, inner and outer piety and chastity are very much needed. The drugs are equally harmful, and should be avoided. They dull the brain and cloud the mind with vague feelings of distrust and confusion. You are advised to convey this piece of right understanding to all the dear ones who are on the Holy Path and to others who seek your counsel in this behalf.”

To control our departure from the right way, or the Path as we call it, the mind works in subtle ways to interrupt the abundant love of our hearts. We have to be constantly alert to catch our thought waves to mark their ebb and flow and bypass them by the process of concentration. Forget all about the mind and mental states because it is the memory of our experiences in the distant past and in the living present that interferes. We must learn to keep aloof and above them. Thoughts precede actions. To show steady progress, keep your mind tuned to the Master Power overhead. The mind is an instrument that stays with our soul until we are above the causal plane. That is why Simran is so important to all of us. It keeps us advancing to the center – to the center – to the Radiant Form of the Master. Then, His personal guidance is certain and assured!



Every action has a reaction and flesh-eating involves contracting fresh Karmas and thus helps to keep the inexorable Karmic wheel in motion for we have to reap what we sow. We cannot have roses if we sow thistles. The above prohibitions apply equally to all kinds of alcoholic drinks, intoxicants, opiates and narcotic drugs, as they tend to dull our consciousness and make us morbid. (*The Teachings of Kirpal Singh, Self-Introspection & Meditation*)

One falls often, no doubt, but one becomes a good rider only after many a fall.
(ruhanisatsangusa.org/listen.htm)

To fall in sin is manly, but to remain there is devilish.
(*The Night is a Jungle, 168*)

Question: Do those who take drugs such as LSD and have certain experiences, are they valid experiences?

Master Kirpal Singh: No, no. They are hallucinations. Any thought reverberating, that brings forth a hundred times more, mind that. Why do we stop such intoxication, any intoxication; because we are conscious beings. Anything that makes the subconscious a little morbid we are not to use. That results in the death of soul. You follow me?

Question: Drugs result in the death of the soul?

Master: The death of the soul, yes. Consciousness is lessened and naturally they have to go on to the lower planes. That is what all this intoxication starts.

Question: What about taking LSD then?

Master: It is still more death of the soul.

Question: There's a great deal of talk that LSD is the foundation or a basis of a religion of the future or at least an improvement on the kind of religion that is now existent.

Master: No, no, no. It is deterioration. Definitely going down to beastlihood. Their consciousness is marred. Animals are also conscious. Even a snake is conscious but they have a different degree of consciousness. Man's consciousness is very evolved. But if you use suchlike things your consciousness is affected. If you are intoxicated by such means your consciousness is affected, and you will have to go to the lower planes.

Question: Do those who come to you from a background of drug experience start then with a very definite handicap?

Master: Surely, sometimes at initiation they are given a double sitting. They are made to sit twice. Hitherto, men were prepared for initiation: those who came to the Master had to live with Him for months. When they were ready, only then they were given something. Now the times have changed. Who can live with the Master for months and months? So some things are given all at once at the start. Then it should be maintained by self-introspection. It is wonderful, of course, how we can have this on the very first day. All do get something. Some more, others less, that's another thing; but they do get it. It's a special gift of God. In the Iron Age, the worst of times, still God's grace is more, so that many may be saved.

(<http://www.ruhanisatsangusa.org/pdf/LightKirpal.pdf>)

Do not dwell upon past happenings or try to recapture their past pleasures,
for in that way the mind is fed surreptitiously.

(The Teachings of Kirpal Singh, v. 3, 26)



Hazur Baba Sawan Singh

The first step that leads us towards our Home is detachment from the world. The transitory carnal enjoyments must be gradually discarded, for so long as they persist, the soul finds it impossible to attach itself to Nam. As you keep firmly rejecting material gratifications, your love for the world will go on decreasing. Estranged from voluptuous sensations, the mind will automatically incline towards the spiritual side, for its nature is ceaseless activity. After getting initiation from a Master, it is the duty of the disciple to learn what pleasures are taboo and which ones do not urgently need to be curbed. Developing love for the Master and listening to His discourses constitutes your own work. As you rise above worldly temptations and lie in complete surrender at His feet, you become free from all sins and weaknesses that impair.

(Discourses on Sant Mat, 11)

Our mind, we should never forget, is Satan incarnate, and an inveterate enemy of the soul. It does not wish the soul to gain emancipation from its overlordship, and does everything it can to prevent this. In other words, you may call it an imp of Satan – an active agent through which Lucifer spreads mischief and trouble. *(Discourses on Sant Mat, 266)*

The use of liquor is bad. It unsettles the mind, and an unsettled mind brings in its train all the evils which one in a normal state avoids. *(Spiritual Gems, letter 80)*

Suffice it to say, therefore, that people abstain from adultery, meat, eggs and intoxicants, particularly alcohol, and practice the Sound Current, go in, turn out the evils and take charge of their house, and thereby qualify themselves for observing the doctrine in practice; which means tolerating the weaknesses in others on the strength of the love and harmony generated by going within, and lifting them up more by example than by precept. *(Spiritual Gems, letter 202)*

Overcoming and giving up outward tendencies, stilling the mind and dying while alive is not easy. The inner gate opens only when the outer gates are closed. There is no other way to get in. People wish to continue to run out through the outer gates and also wish to get into the inner. This is impossible. Two things cannot happen at the same time. One is to be given up to achieve the other. *(The Dawn of Light, letter 79)*

Have you come across a mother who would give poison to her children? Meats, eggs and alcohol are poisons, and he who uses them will suffer. There is no escape from it. Go in and see with your own eyes what tortures the users of these have to bear, whether initiates or non-initiates.

Those who indulge in these are disciples of senses and not of the Master. Their attention works on the sense plane. All their talk about the Master, in or out, or about their spiritual progress is sham. "Quick little petition to the inner Master," is a huge deception. The inner Master is not so soft and easy to reach! It is true He is merciful, but it does not mean that the wrongdoers and the wayward would escape punishment.

The Saints do not hand over their initiates to Kal, but the initiates have to suffer for their misdeeds. Suffering purifies, and only the pure enter the eye center. *(Spiritual Gems, letter 84)*
<http://www.drtmastering.com/mediaseva/books/Reality.pdf>

If a man who beholds a lesser happiness beholds a greater one,
let him leave aside the lesser to gain the greater.
(Buddha)

Habits

'Tis easier to prevent bad habits than to break them.
(Benjamin Franklin)

Never suffer an exception to occur till the new habit is securely rooted in your life. Each lapse is like the letting fall of a ball of string which one is carefully winding up, a single slip undoes more than a great many turns will wind again. Continuity of training is the great means of making the nervous system act infallible right.
(William James)

The successful person has the habit of doing the things failures don't like to do. They don't like doing them either necessarily. But their disliking is subordinated to the strength of their purpose.
(E.M. Gray)

When we have practiced good actions awhile they become easy; when they are easy we take pleasure in them; when they please us we do them frequently; and then, by frequency of act they grow into habit.
(Tillotson)

Once a habit demands something and its request is not fulfilled, the next time you will find it weaker. But once you fulfill its will, the next time you will find it fall on you with much greater force.
(Isaac of Syria)

We love our habits more than our income, often more than our life.
(Bertrand Russell)

Habituation puts to sleep the eye of our judgment.
(Montaigne)

Habits are at first cobwebs; at last, chains.
(English saying)

Bad habits are easier to abandon today than tomorrow.
(Yiddish saying)

Habit will reconcile us to everything but change.
(C. C. Colton)

A bad habit never disappears miraculously, it's an undo-it-yourself project.
(Abigail Van Buren)

Habit converts luxurious enjoyments into dull and daily necessities.
(Aldous Huxley)

Habit, if not resisted, soon becomes necessity.
(Saint Augustine)

Men's natures are alike; it is their habits that carry them far apart.
(Confucius)

As long as habit and routine dictate the pattern of living,
new dimensions of the soul will not emerge.
(Henry Van Dyke)

Our habits, our addictions, our devotions, are either stepping stones or stumbling blocks.
(Fred Van Amburgh)

Habit is either the best of servants or the worst of masters.
(Nathaniel Emmons)

It is very important to realize that we are creatures of habit. Every time we think a certain way,
seek a certain good, use a given motive, a habit is forming and deepening in us.
Like a groove that is being furrowed, each repetition adds a new depth to the habit.
(John Powell)

Research has shown that it takes 31 days of conscious effort to make or break a habit.
That means, if one practices something consistently for 31 days, on the 32nd day it does become a
habit. Information has been internalized into behavioral change which is called transformation.
(Shiv Khera)

It seems, in fact, as though the second half of a man's life is made up of nothing but the habits he
has accumulated during the first half.
(Fyodor Dostoyevsky)

Habits formed in early life and early education press upon us as we grow older.
(U. S. Grant)

The only habits you never conquer are the ones you put off doing something about.
(Wess Roberts)

Building up character is building up of habits.
The changing of character is a changing of habits.
Habit is second nature. Character is first nature.
(Swami Sivananda)

Habits work more constantly and with greater force than reason.
(John Locke)

When habit is once formed, impulse is powerless against it.
(George B. Cheever)

We first make our habits, and then our habits make us.
All habits gather by unseen degrees.
(John Dryden)

Motivation is what gets you started. Habit is what keeps you going.
(Jim Ryun)

If you do not pour water on your plant, what will happen? It will slowly wither and die. Our habits will also slowly wither and die away if we do not give them an opportunity to manifest. You need not fight to stop a habit. Just don't give it an opportunity to repeat itself.
(Swami Satchidananda)

Fiery lust is not diminished by indulging it, but inevitably by leaving it ungratified. As long as you are laying logs on the fire, the fire will burn. When you withhold the wood, the fire dies, and God carries the water!
(Rumi)

Habits are formed by the repetition of particular acts. They are strengthened by an increase in the number of repeated acts. Habits are also weakened or broken, and contrary habits are formed by the repetition of contrary acts.
(Mortimer J. Adler)

Excellence is an art won by training and habituation. We do not act rightly because we have virtue or excellence, but we rather have those because we have acted rightly. We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit.
(Aristotle)

The hell to be endured hereafter, of which theology tells, is no worse than the hell we make for ourselves in this world by habitually fashioning our characters in the wrong way. Could the young but realize how soon they will become mere walking bundles of habits, they would give more heed to their conduct while in the plastic state. We are spinning our fates, good or evil, and never to be undone. Every smallest stroke of virtue or of vice leaves its never so little scar. The drunken Rip Van Winkle, in Jefferson's play, excuses himself for every fresh dereliction by saying, "I won't count this time!" Well! He may not count it, and a kind Heaven may not count it; but it is being counted none the less. Down among his nerve-cells and fibers the molecules are counting it, registering and storing it up to be used against him when the next temptation comes. Nothing we ever do is, in strict scientific literalness, wiped out. Of course this has its good side as well as its bad one. As we become permanent drunkards by so many separate drinks, so we become saints in the moral, and authorities and experts in the practical and scientific spheres, by so many separate acts and hours of work.
(William James)

... there is no quicker way of growing old than undue indulgence in regular habits. Indeed it seems probable that the reason why so many people die sooner than they should is because they have organized their lives in such a way that there is nothing left for them to do. Change, as is well-known, is not only a law of Nature, but the very breath of existence. And if you rule change out of your life there no longer seems any reason why you should continue altogether.
(Franklin Lushington)

If you deliberately plan on being less than you are capable of being, then I warn you that you'll be unhappy for the rest of your life.
(Abraham Maslow)

The biggest human temptation is to settle for too little.
(Thomas Merton)

Julian Johnson

The Path of the Masters

While we sojourn in this dark region of matter, we have to deal with the negative power. With him we must contend in our struggles for spiritual freedom. It is his duty to try to hold us here, while it is our duty to try to escape. The resulting struggle purges us and makes us strong, and fits us for our homeward journey. This everlasting fight, this struggle in a welter of pain and blood and heart cries, is designed by the supreme Father to purge us and make us clean, ready for our homeward ascent. Let us never become discouraged. All of this is designed by the Father for our benefit. It is much as if one enters a gymnasium to take exercise. If we meet these difficulties in the right spirit, we shall greatly profit by them. The idea of pain and struggle is to purge us and inspire in us a longing to rise above the regions of pain and shadow.

Ultimate Fulfillment May Require You to Make Many Painful Sacrifices.

Leon Seltzer, excerpts

Surrendering to immediate, self-indulgent attractions or enticements inevitably leads to your becoming subservient to them. And as a consequence, the likelihood of achieving longer-term goals is seriously undermined.

Self-discipline is what reflects your commitment to hold fast to certain values and priorities--whether it's a pledge to follow through on a promise, fulfill an obligation, or promote some personal or professional interest.

At any moment your actual desire to do what you know should be done may be minimal. In these instances the only thing enabling you to drive yourself forward is your word to yourself, your core principles, and your determination to act responsibly - regardless of your present mood or disposition.

Self-control and self-discipline are indistinguishable. Without them, the behavior you might be prompted to engage (or indulge) in will almost certainly culminate in later regret.

I believe it can actually be quite gratifying to deny yourself some immediate enjoyment in that you've demonstrated to yourself sufficient strength to "achieve" this denial. As ironic as it may seem, realizing that you were able to show really good judgment--and restraint--in refusing to pay the overly high price of partaking in a particular pleasure can be unusually satisfying.

Doing what you've pre-determined is best for you - rather than permitting yourself to constantly get sidetracked by what immediately seems more pleasurable - will grant you far more satisfaction and joy in the long run. (<http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/evolution-the-self/201111/self-discipline-can-it-verge-masochism>)

Every conquering temptation represents a new fund of moral energy. Every trial endured and weathered in the right spirit makes a soul nobler and stronger than it was before.

(William Butler Yeats)

Self-respect is the fruit of discipline;
the sense of dignity grows with the ability to say no to one's self.

(Abraham Joshua Heschel)

Sant Ajaib Singh Ji

Excerpts from a booklet entitled *The Reality of Drugs and Alcohol*,
published by Sant Bani Ashram

On the one side we want the Shabd to be open to us, and on the other side we are not ready to give up any worldly pleasures. We want to enjoy wine and all the worldly things; we do not want to give up any of those. But still we expect that Master should shower all His grace on us, and He should open the Shabd to us.

Ever since this creation was created and ever since the great Rishis and Munis have come into this world, no Rishi or Muni, no great Saint or Master has ever said that you should get into any kind of addiction. Nobody has ever advocated the use of any kind of intoxicant. Everyone has always said that we should abstain from using intoxicants.

I would like you to know, that when we use any kind of intoxicants or when we get addicted to any kind of addiction, it has a very bad effect, a very adverse effect on the power of our thinking; it weakens our brain.

In the beginning when we get attached or attracted to any kind of an addiction we feel as if we are swinging in a very high spirit; we feel that we are going up very high. But later on, when that addiction becomes a very normal routine thing, we ourselves start hating it.

By intoxication I do not mean only drinking alcohol, I mean the intoxication of anything, like using opium or heroin or any kind of drug, marijuana or things like that, or any kind of thing to which you are addicted and which gives you false intoxication. One should try and give up all those kinds of intoxications.

I will tell you from my own experience, it does not make any difference whether one is a young man or an older man. When people come to me, if they have consumed the drugs or if they have been using any kind of intoxication, it shows very clearly in their eyes. It doesn't take me long to understand and realize that the person has taken intoxicants or that the person has been using drugs.

There is a lot which I can say on this subject, and you have already heard so much about what the teachings of the Masters say about intoxication and addiction to drugs and other things. To sum up:

Guru Nanak Sahib said, "The intoxication of opium, marijuana, and the other things – when you take those things – it intoxicates you for a day or two – (Either it will go away the next morning or the next day.) "But the intoxication of the Naam – if you taste it once it doesn't go away; it always remains with you." If you want to be addicted to something, work hard, go within, because you have already been given the Naam. Go within, work hard, give the intoxication of Naam to your soul. Get your soul addicted to the intoxication of Naam so that day and night, your soul will always enjoy the Naam.

So I would like to advise you only one thing in the end, that if you really love yourself, if you really love your health, if you really want to progress on this Path, you should give up all kinds of intoxication and all kinds of addiction you are into. You might have heard all these kinds of

things, so many times, from me, and from going to the meetings, and from the counselors, but I think that now you should repent and you should make up your mind that you will give this.

Question: When a dear one has a drinking habit what can we tell him, or what can we do to help change his habit?

Sant Ji: You should lovingly advise him, you should lovingly make him realize the condition of those who are addicted to such intoxicants. Usually you would have seen in the people who are addicted to drinking or smoking marijuana or using other drugs, how after some time their lungs stop functioning, and how it has a bad effect on their brain and their mind. They even lose their power of thinking.

Nowadays in the shops where they sell wine in India, on the bottles of wine it is written that it is poison. Even after reading that it is a poison, it is up to the person whether he should drink that poison or not.

Guru Nanak Sahib says, "After killing all our good intellect the wine makes one a donkey. He doesn't have a tail or long ears, but there is no difference between the donkey and the one who is drinking."

Guru Nanak Sahib has referred to this wine as blood in His writings. He says, "If we get a drop of blood on our clothes, they become dirty. What is the condition within those who always drink this blood? How can they remain pure?"

In the present time we are forgetting the teachings of the Saints and Mahatmas. Guru Gobind Singh has written, "Those who are in the habit of drinking, their seven generations are destroyed." Because one generation after another gets the habit of drinking, and in the end everyone in the family starts drinking.

I would say that those who are addicted to the intoxicants, in fact, they are getting the punishment for the bad karmas of their past lifetime, because their relations with their family members do not remain normal; they always have fights with their relatives. Their health does not remain good, they cannot think clearly, and also they lose a lot of their money. Those who do not have this habit, who are not addicted to any intoxicants or drugs, they have their good health, they are honored, they are popular among their family, and even in their neighborhood they are glorified.

So if you have any relatives, any brother or sister who has this bad habit, you do not have to fight with them. When they are not intoxicated, when they are in a normal state, at that time you should lovingly tell them the bad qualities and the consequences of being addicted to these intoxicants. You should tell them lovingly.

If you will oppose them at the time when they are drunk, or when they are intoxicated with drugs, at that time they will not listen to you. They will oppose you more.

Sant Satgurus do not apply any force on us, they do not impose anything on us. They lovingly tell us through the satsangs that if you will give up your bad habits one by one and if you will go on living up to the words of the satsang, and along with that if you will do the meditation of Naam, then all these bad habits in which you are involved, you will get rid of them one by one very easily.

Question: Master, how do you break an addiction to either food, alcohol, or a drug, when it has taken over a person so much that one feels helpless, even in the face of Simran, and remembrance of the Master, and you cry out for help but you feel helpless?

Answer: Those who have an addiction, those who have become the slaves of their mind, and those who have surrendered to their mind, only they are addicted to things. But those who have pity on their own selves and have love for the Master, they can get rid of their addiction, because no addiction, no bad thing comes to you by itself; it is you who go to them.

There was an initiate of Master Sawan Singh Ji, who used to drink alcohol. Once he told Master Sawan Singh, “Master, I cannot leave this addiction of alcohol because it does not leave me.” Master Sawan Singh Ji laughed and said, “Well dear one, tell me, does the alcohol not leave you, or do you not want to leave the alcohol?”

Master Sawan Singh said, “You see that the alcohol does not come to you by itself; it does not say, “You come and drink me.” It is you who always go there; you go and buy the alcohol, and then you yourself drink it. Then how can you say that this alcohol does not leave you? So it is you who have to leave this addiction.”

Master Sawan Singh Ji said, “Those who are addicted to alcohol, whenever they remember alcohol, only then do they get the desire to buy it and drink it.” So if you want to leave any kind of addiction, just don’t remember that thing, don’t think about it. Then it will not be difficult for you to give it up.

The other part of the question says that even in the face of Simran and remembrance of the Master, one cannot leave the addiction. Excuse me for using these strict words, but I will say that those who say this, are speaking nonsense and nothing else. Those people who say this do not have any knowledge of the importance of Simran. Simran gives you so much intoxication, Simran gives you so much belief, that if you are doing the Simran sincerely and wholeheartedly, then you will not feel addicted; then you will not feel the need of doing any other addiction.

When disciples say, “We cannot give up this addiction even by doing the Simran” – they do not try. They do not try enough to give up the addiction, and they do not do the Simran sincerely. Those who do not have any love for their health, who do not have any love for their brains, only they say this and they are in a great deception. They even deceive other people; and those who hear that even by doing Simran we cannot give up addictions are also in a deep illusion. They do not have any understanding, any idea, how powerful the Simran is. You people have this Simran of the five words given to you by the perfect Master, behind which the meditation, hard work, and sacrifice of the Master is working. The Simran which you have received is very high and very powerful.

Everyone should give up the bad habits, but an addiction is broken only if you want to break it, and only if you break it. Satsangis need good health, good bodies, because if your health is good then you will be able to sit for a longer time in meditation, and you will be able to concentrate better. A satsangi should understand the importance of the Naam, the importance of meditation. He should try his best to go within, and connect himself with the Shabd Naam as much as possible.

Kali Yuga will spread the snares of hemp, tobacco, and opium; People will reside within their limits, forgetting everything else.

Now Kabir Sahib says that Lord Kal has come in this age, and he is carrying many snares. He has brought the snares of the intoxicants, the snare made out of hemp, the snare of tobacco, the snare of opium, and many other bad snares. And we are always trapped in one of those snares – we don't have means to get out of that trap; and in that condition, how can we spare any time for meditation?

King Babar was addicted to hemp and opium, and somebody told him that Guru Nanak's eyes were always shining, and he was always intoxicated. So King Babar thought that he might also be using some of those intoxicants. When King Babar met Guru Nanak he offered him hemp, saying, "You use this because we have made this in a very beautiful way, and this is a very good thing to use." Guru Nanak Sahib replied, "O King Babar, the intoxication of hemp or opium comes in the morning and goes in the evening; after the intoxication is gone, one feels very bad in the body. But the intoxication of Naam remains forever; it never leaves."

Hemp, marijuana, wine, and tobacco:

Kabir says, Until one leaves them he cannot have the darshan of the Beloved.

Now Kabir Sahib is neither sparing nor taunting anyone, but He is saying in very strict words that unless you give up the intoxication of hemp, opium, tobacco or wine, you cannot have the darshan of the Beloved. Unless you give up all these, you cannot progress in your meditations and there is no question of seeing the Beloved.

A Muslim Fakir has taught that wine is the mother of all evils, because all the evils appear when wine is drunk. Once there was a King who wanted to know what the most evil thing in the world was – that from which other evils come. He was curious to know. So with the counsel of some of his people, he built a very big city, around which he built a very big wall, with four doors in it. And at each door he put one or another thing to test the people. At one door he put a cow, at another door a prostitute, at the third door meat, and at the fourth door big containers full of wine. He told the guards to watch the doors, and everybody was told they could only go through the doors by enjoying whatever was kept at the door they were going through.

There was one good man who wanted to leave the city. First he went to the door where the cow was kept, and the guard told him that if he wanted to get out, he had to kick the cow. He was a good man, a learned man, and he remembered that in the Hindu scriptures it is written that it is a grave sin to kick a cow, so he thought, "I will not go through this door – I will go through another door." But when he had chosen another door, he saw that the prostitute was there. He thought, "It is not good to enjoy with that woman. In the Hindu scriptures it is written that that also is a very bad sin." Then he went to the third door and he saw that there was meat there, and he decided, "This is the worst sin in the world – to eat meat after killing the animal." So he decided to go through the fourth door.

When he saw the containers full of wine, he thought, "What is wrong in drinking wine? It is made of mead and sugar and there is nothing wrong in that." So he drank the wine, and after drinking the wine, he got intoxicated, and you know that when the intoxication comes, one loses one's intelligence, so he went mad. After drinking the wine the desire came into his mind to eat the meat, and when he ate the meat, the desire of lust came to him and he enjoyed with that woman. After enjoying with the woman, he was still intoxicated with the wine and he thought of going to the fourth door, and as you know, if one is intoxicated with wine, he will always find the road very narrow: even if the road is wide, still he will find that it is very narrow. So, even

though that door was very wide, still he thought it was narrow, and he kicked that cow many times, saying, “Why are you staying here? You are in my way.”

So in that way he committed every sin after drinking the wine, and the next morning, when he realized what he had done the night before, he repented, and he thought that if he had gone through any one of those doors except that wine door, he would have had only one sin to his account; but because he first went through the wine door, and drank that wine, he did all the sins. So all evils come after drinking wine.

Once a man came to Kunichuk to see our Master [Sant Kirpal Singh], and he told Master that his doctors had told him that wine is a very good thing for the digestive system, and that after drinking wine, one can have a very restful sleep, therefore he could not give up the wine and get initiated.

Master lovingly replied, “You just think that if in your next life you could come in the body of a bullock, where you will not find any good food and nobody will give you any digestive aids, then how will you digest your food and have a good sleep then?”

When Master explained that to him lovingly, he understood, and he got initiated, and he left off his drinking and other addictions.

Master Sawan Singh used to say that meat and wine cannot do any good to the human body.

*The soul addicted to intoxicants never crosses the ocean of life.
Kabir says, Think it over and give them up.*

Now Kabir Sahib speaks in very strong words. He says that the man who is addicted to any intoxication, how can he progress in meditation? There is no question of his progressing in his meditation. Only he can be called wise who, giving up all this intoxication, meditates wholeheartedly on Shabd Naam.

There is one more thing that I would like to tell you. It has nothing to do with the Satsangs, but it has a lot to do with your body. You know that nowadays the wave of drugs is flowing, and everywhere people are involved in the use of drugs. The people who sell drugs say that if you use them you will be able to achieve concentration of your mind, get relaxation, and things like that. In the temptations of those words, people start using drugs, which is very destructive for their mind and for their body also. By using drugs, you will not get any relaxation or concentration of the mind, you will spoil your body and damage your brain and your consciousness. It can do much other harm to you. You have the Naam with you; you have the Simran with you. There is no medicine other than the medicine of Naam which can bring relaxation to your mind, or help you achieve concentration of your mind. You should do Simran because you have Simran, and it is the only thing which can help you achieve concentration.



The Masters test the disciples again and again to see how much the disciple can sacrifice,
how much loving devotion he has, and to what extent he still remains
under the influence of mind.

(Sant Kirpal Singh, ruhanisatsangusa.org/tghp.htm)

Sant Darshan Singh Ji

From: *The Secret of Secrets*

Chapter 19 – Drugs

There is a very good reason why the highest spiritual Masters have been telling us not to take hallucinogenic drugs. Such drugs rob us of our consciousness, when we have to not only maintain it but have to expand it to the fullest by separating it from mind and matter. Drugs, just like alcohol, stand in the way of our attaining the ultimate goal. They actually have an adverse effect and, therefore, should be avoided. Some people who take these drugs say they experience Light and get a feeling that they are flying in the air. But how long does it last? And how much benefit do they really get from that?

I have seen friends who went to a marriage party where some people, just out of fun, mixed hashish in their food. They came back, and I saw them eating like gluttons; each one of them took a meal which would normally be eaten by ten persons. Under such conditions, people ruin their consciousness and go on eating with no self-control. If someone starts laughing they will all start laughing; if someone starts weeping they will all start weeping. I have myself seen them in that state – laughing or weeping for hours and hours. Under the influence of drugs some of them become really morose, some even start fighting each other. But even for those who are reasonably happy, when they regain their normal consciousness they find that they have to go through adverse side effects; their bodies ache, they feel isolated, they suffer depression. Can you wonder that the moment they are out of the so-called intoxication produced by these drugs they have an urge – it may even be a compulsion – to take these drugs again? It is the same with a patient who is under heavy medication: the moment he doesn't get his pain-killing injection you'll find him restless, argumentative and uncooperative. So these drugs are bad; they are bad for the body, they are bad for the mind, they are bad for the soul – they stifle the soul. They destroy the vital functioning of the entire system.

There has been a lot of literature published on L.S.D. I have seen some of the people who used to come to our Beloved Master [Sant Kirpal Singh] who had been heavy users of this drug. Some of them had become mental misfits. Those who advocate the use of these drugs call them mind-expanding, but do they expand your consciousness? Do they free you from your problems? Do they pave the way to permanent happiness? When we go for an operation, the doctors give us some anesthetic. We lie there unconscious; we are helpless. But on the spiritual Path we have to develop consciousness. Instead of developing consciousness, those who take drugs mar their consciousness, they deplete their consciousness. The Beloved Master called it the death of the soul.

And how can these chemicals have a good effect on your body? These toxins build up in your body, you get addicted to them and can't do without them. And the moment the effect wears off, adverse side effects take over. You can't work properly, your mind doesn't function, your body takes time to readjust itself.

So anything which robs you of your consciousness is bad, and that is prohibited, because we have to increase our consciousness. That is why the Masters prohibit the use of liquor as this also dulls your consciousness. In India, also, boys and girls have started taking drugs. The condition in colleges is very bad. It is becoming a problem for parents and doctors alike. So many people who were taking L.S.D. and other drugs used to come to the Beloved Master. They took quite some time in breaking away from this habit. Anything which is habit-forming, which

weakens your consciousness, stands in the way of the ultimate goal of your life which is to liberate your soul, a conscious entity, from the clutches of mind and matter. And once the soul shakes off these shackles, only then can it traverse into the higher regions and commune with God, who is All-consciousness.

So by taking these drugs, instead of expanding your consciousness you dull it; this is why these drugs are to be avoided. I have met a number of people, at least a hundred, who take drugs, and I have met many more – mostly writers and poets – who also drink alcohol. It is the general belief that poetry is produced when poets are intoxicated with wine. I have asked many of them whether they actually produce poetry when they are inebriated, and each one of them emphatically said, “No!” Mostly people start drinking, taking drugs and even smoking just for fun, just for company’s sake. But later they take them in an attempt to forget their worries. All these people from the literary field have told me that they might start a verse or two, but then the influence of the wine starts acting and they become oblivious to themselves. The lift they seek slumps into drowsiness. How can they write poetry, which is an expression of the soul, which is an expression of super-consciousness, under these artificial conditions?

My brother-in-law is a medical officer in charge of the Indian Institute of Technology, so I have been able to meet a number of the students there who take drugs. None of them remembers anything about his condition when under the influence of drugs. I know some people who have passed through drugs say that they experienced visions, and Light, but this may be due to the reactions of their past. It is well-known that some people see Light even before they come to the feet of the Master; that is the result of their past karmas. It is not the result of any drugs. No drug will bring you into contact with the Light of God which is manifesting in the higher regions.

I have been in the literary field all my life, so literary people have often asked me how I write my poetry. I always say that real poetry is not a product of intoxication produced by wine or drugs; it is born of intuition. It is a gift of God. It is an expression of the higher consciousness. Nothing of permanent value can be an expression of dulled consciousness.



Longing for this “something more” is, I believe, the reason people smoke weed; having lost the baby-sense, people turn to THC to open their minds to the bottomless fascination of the world. “I tell you the truth,” Jesus said, “unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” But changing is hard, and chemicals can seem to bypass the need for it. It’s not for nothing that the body’s neurotransmitter that the cannabinoids in marijuana mimic is called “anandamide”; *ananda* is Sanskrit for “bliss.”

(Scott Robinson, <http://www.elephantjournal.com/2010/11/why-people-smoke-weed/>)

How to Build Self-Discipline

Peter Clemens

Discipline is freedom. You may disagree with this statement, and if you do you are certainly not alone. For many people discipline is a dirty word that is equated with the absence of freedom. In fact the opposite is true. As Stephen R. Covey once wrote, “the undisciplined are slaves to moods, appetites and passions.” Self-discipline involves acting according to what you think instead of how you feel in the moment. Often it involves sacrificing the pleasure and thrill of the moment for what matters most in life. If you struggle with self-discipline, the good news is that it can be developed. The following are what I have found to be the five traits of self-discipline:

1. Self-knowledge

Discipline means behaving according to what you have decided is best, regardless of how you feel in the moment. Therefore the first trait of discipline is self-knowledge. You need to decide what behavior best reflects your goals and values. This process requires introspection and self-analysis.

2. Conscious Awareness

Self-discipline depends upon conscious awareness as to both what you are doing and what you are not doing. Think about it. If you aren't aware your behavior is undisciplined, how will you know to act otherwise? As you begin to build self-discipline, you may catch yourself being in the act of being undisciplined. Developing self-discipline takes time, and the key here is you are aware of your undisciplined behavior. With time this awareness will come earlier, meaning rather than catching yourself in the act of being undisciplined you will have awareness before you act in this way. This gives you the opportunity to make a decision that is in better alignment with your goals and values.

3. Commitment to Self-Discipline

If you struggle with commitment, start by making a conscious decision to follow through on what you say you're going to do – both when you said you would do it and how you said you would do it. Then, I highly recommend putting in place a system to track these commitments. As the saying goes, “What gets measured gets improved”.

4. Courage

Self-discipline is often extremely difficult. Moods, appetites and passions can be powerful forces to go against. Therefore self-discipline is highly dependent on courage. Don't pretend something is easy for you to do when it is in fact very difficult and or painful. Instead, find the courage to face this pain and difficulty. As you begin to accumulate small private victories, your self-confidence will grow and the courage that underpins self-discipline will come more naturally.

5. Internal Coaching

Self-talk is often harmful, but it can also be extremely beneficial if you have control of it. When you find yourself being tested, I suggest you talk to yourself, encourage yourself and reassure yourself. After all, it is self-talk that has the ability to remind you of your goals, call up courage, reinforce your commitment and keep you conscious of the task at hand. When I find my discipline being tested, I always recall the following quote: “The price of discipline is always less than the pain of regret”. Burn this quote into your memory, and recall in whenever you find yourself being tested. It may change your life. (<http://www.pickthebrain.com/blog/self-discipline/>)

How to Break a Habit in 12 Steps

Reader's Digest

We all want to be healthy, strong, energized, and happy. So why do so many of us have habits that take us in an opposite direction? Simple: Losing a habit requires change. And of all the things we do in a day, changing is by far the hardest.

You know this, and so do the experts. We recently took a deep exploration into the science of bad habits, reading the wisdom of countless experts, researchers, and gurus on the subject. What they say is both obvious and eye-opening. Here, the 12 guiding principles for breaking a bad habit:

1. **Acknowledge**

Rationalization is the art of coming up with facts to defend something that is indefensible. The moment you can *see through the smokescreen of your rationalizations* and admit that something you do is compulsive and harmful is the moment you can start to take action.

2. **Isolate**

Part of the rationalization process is seeing your habit as the inevitable result of other things in your life. For example, "I binge on ice cream because I'm frustrated, because my job is lousy, because I have a bad boss." This leads to the very wrong conclusion that the only way to stop binging on ice cream is to get a new boss. No one denies that your life will be better by improving your work situation. However, the problem at hand is eating too much ice cream, period. *By isolating the action you want to change, you can address it directly — and succeed more easily.*

3. **Pair**

Isolating a habit makes sense when the perceived trigger of causes is long or complicated. But research shows that sometimes, it does help to tackle a few bad habits at the same time, if they are closely linked. For example, if you watch lots of TV and snack too much while doing it, then attack both habits at the same time. You'll have a greater chance of success this way.

4. **Want**

Facts are weak motivators. For example, knowing that your daily butter and bagel is increasing your heart-disease risk by 17 percent likely won't get you to give it up. To change, you also need the support of your heart and soul. *Only when your desire to end a habit is deep and strong will you have the drive and willpower to succeed.* So seek deeper, more emotional reasons to make the change. Ponder the future you want, and the joys that await you. Let them motivate you to act.

5. **Rebel**

Research suggests that one of the main reasons we persist with bad habits is that so many other people have them too; they are cultural norms. That makes sense: It's hard to say no to fast-food burgers, French fries, and soda when everyone around you is eating them. But they are bad for you. The message: *Pay no attention to social norms.* You are not defined by them. Do what's right for you, rather than worrying about fitting in. Chances are others will respect you for your choices not shun you. An even better strategy: Spend less time with people who have bad habits and more time with people who have the good habits you want to develop.

6. Honor yourself

The research is clear here too: People who try to make a change due to guilt or frustration often fail. People who respect and like themselves — and who are generally happy with who they are — are more likely to succeed. *So challenge your bad habit from a position of personal strength and confidence, not a perspective of failure or weakness.* Remember that you have countless good habits and qualities, and only a handful of ones that warrant change.

7. Plan

Once you've got yourself in the right state of mind to take on a bad habit, you need to do one more thing before taking action: *Plan your approach.* Will you stop cold turkey? What day do you start? Will you keep a journal of the process? What awards for success will you grant yourself, and when? Who else will you involve in the process? A clear, detailed plan helps provide the rigor and discipline to succeed.

8. Act

So far, we've talked about the mindset changes that precede taking on a bad habit. But don't let internal factors hijack the process. It's easy to overthink the changes you want to make. Take action! *Experts say that most habits can be broken if you can go 30 days without them.* Focus simply on this: no partaking in the habit for one month. Then focus on 30 more days.

9. Replace

The easiest way to break a habit is to replace it with a new one. Begin by identifying the payoff your bad habit was providing—relaxation, escape, reward, satisfying a hunger, or just filling time. Make sure your replacement fulfills that need as well, but in a healthy way. Change your evening bowl of ice cream to an evening bowl of strawberries. Change your after-dinner TV habit with an after-dinner walking habit. Change your 2 p.m. can of soda habit with a 2 p.m. cup of tea. Remember: All habits aren't bad, just the unhealthy ones.

10. Enlist

There's a reason so much of corporate America long ago shifted to a team orientation; *groups of people sharing the same goal succeed better than individuals who go it alone.* Pick your team members carefully—your spouse might or might not be one—and empower them to help you achieve your goal with reminders, praise, distractions, even backrubs. And remember: The hallmark of good teamwork is communication. For your personal team to be engaged, you need to talk openly and frequently with them, just as you would with a corporate team.

11. Reward

Successes big or small should be celebrated. Heartfelt praise is often the most powerful reward—whether from others or yourself. But there's no reason you can't dangle the promise of a material reward for interim successes. Just don't reward a month of no ice cream with a bowl of ice cream. Make the reward something entirely unrelated, like a new outfit or a night out.

12. Forgive

When you slip up, forgive yourself. Start the next day fresh and fully committed to beating the habit. No one is keeping a scorecard. Yesterday's mistake is history. Learn from it, and move on. People who are committed to breaking a habit don't throw up their hands in defeat after a few lapses. Rather, they apply themselves even more. <http://www.rd.com/health/wellness/how-to-break-a-habit-in-12-steps/print-view/>

How to Break a Habit in Ten Steps

1. **Commit to a goal**

Although it may seem obvious, it is important to understand that the first step in breaking a bad habit developing a true desire for and commitment to changing your life. Many people embark on the path of breaking a habit without being certain that they really want to change. Breaking habits is a difficult task, so if you aren't fully committed to it you are likely to fail.

2. **Understand your habit**

Most habitual behaviors are patterns that have evolved because they have been rewarded in some way. They make it easier to perform a common task, or to deal with various emotional states, resulting in a "reward" in the form of neurochemicals that trigger our brains' pleasure centers. Many bad habits come about as a means of dealing with situations that cause stress or boredom. To break a habit, it is important to understand the nature of the reward it has been providing.

For example, for many people smoking provides a relief from stress. Overeating results in reward from the flavor of the food. Procrastination temporarily provides free time to engage in more fun activities.

To determine the most effective way to break a habit, it will be helpful to determine the situational and emotional context that triggers the habit. Having this understanding will allow you to develop other, healthier means of achieving the same rewards that the bad habit provided.

3. **Make a plan**

Once you understand the situation that triggers your habit and the reward you receive for engaging in the undesirable behavior, you can make a plan that involves goals for behavior change and strategies for minimizing habit triggers. Studies show that having a clear, specific plan greatly increases your chances of success in breaking habit. It helps break down unwanted behaviors and also helps create new patterns of action. You should include in your plan mechanisms for keeping yourself accountable, in the form of rewards for successes and feedback from others who support your goal of breaking the habit.

4. **Visualize success**

In your mind, repeatedly practice breaking the habit by imagining scenarios in which you engage in desired behaviors rather than the bad habit. Imagine situations in which you would be tempted to engage in the undesired behavior and choose a better option. This helps reinforce positive behavior patterns.

For example, if your goal is to eat less junk food, imagining yourself in your kitchen preparing a healthy meal, and sitting down to eat it. Some people find it helpful to write down "scripts" of their desired behavior and read them every day.

5. **Practice awareness**

Be conscious of when you are tempted to give in to bad habits. What are the situations that lead to the undesired behavior? What are the sensations in your body or thoughts in your mind that promote the undesired behavior? Understanding them without judging yourself will help you resist. Don't suppress thoughts about the habit. If you try not think about something, ironically, you will start to see it everywhere and become overwhelmed.

Trying not to think about smoking, for example, will only lead you to hypersensitive to anything that reminds you of smoking. You are much better off to recognize your craving and the situations that promote it, and deal with these issues head-on.

6. Change your environment

Research suggests that sometimes our environments can cue us to perform certain behaviors, even if we're actively trying to stop. Breaking a habit, then, is partially a matter of reducing situational triggers until you can develop new ways of dealing with them. Novel situations promote more use of the parts of your brain that are geared toward consciously making decisions, rather than slipping into automatic behavior patterns. A good way to avoid bad habits is to find a way to change your scenery and see if your bad habit becomes less tempting.

For instance, if you like to smoke out on your patio, remove the chair you sit in and replace it with a plant. If you tend to overeat at the same location at the dining room table, move to a different seat or rearrange your furniture such that you're facing a different direction than usual when you eat. Subtle changes to the environment can make a habit less rote and force your mind to reassess what's happening.

7. Create barriers to the habit

If you can create obstacles that make the habit more difficult or unpleasant to engage in than some other course of action, this can help you break the routines that have reinforced this habit in the past. Here are a few suggestions:

Tell supportive people about your plan to break your habit, and invite them to call you out on your slip-ups. This will create consequences for succumbing to temptation. Or, even better, find someone else who wants to break the same habit as you, and quit together, keeping each other accountable.

Anything you can do to break up the sequence of events that normally leads to the undesirable behavior is also a good idea. For example, if you are trying to stop smoking, keep your cigarettes in another room. If you are trying to stop logging on to Facebook during working hours, disconnect the internet or use one of the available apps that blocks access to sites like this. Even though these obstacles can be easily overcome, they are sometimes enough to break up the behavior pattern that leads to the unwanted behavior.

Create small "punishments" for lapses. For example, you can use the same rationale behind a swear jar: every time you slip back into the habit, put a dollar (or more) in a can or jar. Set an amount that you'll hate to cough up whenever you give into the urge, and stick to it. When you've successfully kicked the habit, spend the money on a reward or donate it to a charitable cause. Or, if you are trying to stop overeating, add 10 minutes to your workout every time you overeat. A punishment related to the behavior will probably be most effective.

8. Reward your successes

Because habits are created when a behavior is rewarded in some way, a great way to create new habits is to reward yourself for good behavior. The most successful reward will be one that comes immediately after the desired behavior, and which is something you genuinely want or enjoy.

For example, if you are trying to break the habit of being late for work, you could reward yourself with a cup of gourmet coffee each day you arrive on time, until the reward is no longer needed.

9. Find a placeholder

Try to replace your habit with something new and positive in your life. The key is to have a plan for an alternative action to take when tempted to engage in a bad habit.

For instance, if you're trying to stop smoking, eat a sucker, do breathing exercises, or walk around the block when you would usually light up. Filling the void left by your old habit with another activity will help you avoid backsliding. Try to make sure the alternative action isn't boring or unappealing. If you can make your new habit something you actually want to do, something you enjoy, or something that results in some obvious (and ideally immediate) positive outcome, it will be easier to make the switch.

10. Be patient

Behavioral conditioning is a long process, and breaking a habit takes time, so you have to stick with it. Conventional wisdom and self-help books have suggested that it takes 28 days to break a habit. The reality is more complicated, as recent studies have suggested that how long the process takes depends on both the individual and the habit, and can range from as few as 18 days or as many as 245.

Even though this process varies between individuals, it is probably safe to say that the first few days will be the hardest. Some neuroscientists suggest people go through a "withdrawal" period during the first two weeks, as our nervous systems struggle to deal with a change in the chemicals triggering the "reward" centers of our brains.

Tips:

When the going gets rough, think about what will happen in the future when you have finally overcome your bad habit. Believe in yourself. Telling yourself you can't do something is a bad cognitive habit that needs breaking! If you start to criticize yourself, add the word "but" and follow it up with a positive statement, e.g. "I totally screwed up, BUT everybody makes mistakes sometimes."

Take on one habit at a time, two at most. Any more than that and you'll feel overwhelmed. Some people find gradual reduction of habitual behavior to be easier, others find it easier to quit "cold turkey," stopping entirely all at once. Figure out what works for you, even if it means you have to make a couple of attempts. (<http://www.wikihow.com/Break-a-Habit>)



This happiness consisted of nothing else but the harmony of the few things around me
with my own existence, a feeling of contentment and well-being
that needed no changes and no intensification.
(Herman Hesse)

The world is happy with the intoxication of wine,
but I have drunk deep from the fountain of love and devotion.
Day and night I am intoxicated with its bliss.
(Mirabai)

Meditation

Research supporting Meditation for Addiction:

A growing body of research supports meditation as an effective addiction recovery technique. For example, one study found that recovering intravenous drug users felt meditation was one of the best therapy tools to help them overcome their addiction. Researchers who examined incarcerated substance abusers found that those who were taught how to meditate had lower levels of relapse and more positive outcomes after release than those who received only conventional recovery treatments.

Research suggests that meditation also helps people with alcoholism and drug addiction when it's incorporated into a practice that includes physical exercise. For instance, yoga sessions that include meditation have been shown to be an effective part of addiction recovery. In another study, recently-abstinent cocaine addicts who learned qigong, a Chinese practice that incorporates meditative techniques, reported fewer cravings and other addiction-related symptoms than those who received a placebo treatment

How Meditation Works

Meditation is effective because it rewires critical pathways in the brain. In one study, people who meditated for approximately 30 minutes daily for 8 weeks showed an increase in gray matter in the parts of the brain associated with learning, memory, self-awareness, and introspection. In addition, brain imaging revealed that participants also showed a decrease in gray matter in areas linked to anxiety and stress.

By changing how their brain processes self-awareness, introspection, anxiety, and stress, addicts can reasonably evaluate everyday situations, and react to them more appropriately – without the help of drugs or alcohol. Meditation's positive effect on stress and anxiety is especially important because both are frequent triggers for relapse.

In general, meditation is a practice that allows a person to focus on any number of things. For example, addicts may use it to slow down their breathing and calm their nerves then they're feeling anxious or stressed. This helps reduce the negative feelings that compel alcoholics and drug addicts to reach for substances. It may also be used to connect in spiritual ways during recovery. Many individuals use meditation to connect with a higher power through prayers or mantras. Feeling connected to a higher power has helped many addicts stay on the path of recovery.

Meditation may also reduce the cravings that can trigger a relapse. For instance, a recovering alcoholic can meditate when she finds herself in the parking lot outside a bar. Calming the mind for a few minutes may provide the distance needed to make a reasonable and healthy decision about whether to step into that bar or find the nearest AA meeting.

(<http://www.elementsbehavioralhealth.com/featured/meditation-for-alcoholism-and-drug-addiction-recovery/>)

If you really want to rid yourself of present bad habits you have no greater recourse than meditation. Every time you meditate deeply on God, beneficial changes take place in the patterns of your brain.

(Yogananda)

There is a sound of truth vibrating within - a song which is sung in every being. There is a great attraction in hearing this Sound, through which all other attractions will fade away - one becomes free of them.

(Sant Kirpal Singh, *The Teachings of Kirpal Singh*, v. 2, 166)

The 12-Step Program

Louis A. Ritz

From: Chapter 12 - Neurotheology: The Brain and the Science of Meditation
Meditation as Medication – Sant Rajinder Singh

While our intent here is not to have an in-depth discussion of addiction, the 12-Step Program represents a potent therapeutic intervention that demonstrates the link between spirituality and health. Alcoholism is a vexing problem that has plagued humankind for centuries. It is becoming more evident, in recent years, that there may well be a biological basis for alcoholism and other drug addictions. The brain circuitry of addiction involves the so-called “reward pathway” or “pleasure pathway.” It appears that most addictive, chemical substrates directly or indirectly activate this pathway to generate an exaggerated subjective experience of pleasure or reward – ultimately at a huge cost to the individual.

The 12-Step Program is a spiritual intervention, considered to be the most effective self-help program dealing with addiction. The major spiritual aspects of the 12-Step Program include acknowledgement of the need for a higher Power (however defined by an individual), humility, atonement for shortcomings, infusion of prayer and meditation into the lifestyle, and – as a natural outcome of spiritual development – service to others struggling with the same malady.

The appropriate cure is not simply a detoxification, but a transformation of an individual based on spiritual action. While addiction is a biologically-based disease, like diabetes, it can be confronted with a spiritual solution. Similar to diabetes, the disease can be managed on a daily basis with a spiritual outlook. Indeed, it might be argued that many of our physical health concerns have a spiritual answer. While psychosomatic therapies are familiar to us, addiction requires something that reaches even deeper – what we might call “theosomatic interventions.” It is suggested [by Sant Rajinder Singh, *Empowering your Soul through Meditation*] that the power of the soul supersedes the efficacy of the brain’s network of neurons that are a biological factor in addiction. The power of the soul can best be invoked by meditation.



Paramhansa Yogananda

People want to escape sorrow not by overcoming it, but by avoiding it. They attempt – by drinking, or empty laughter, or excessive sleep, or other diversions – to forget that any such efforts to escape actually threatens their peace of mind. They “drink to forget” as the saying goes. This is a terrible practice. Although you may forget your problems for a little while, and may even feel a brief exhilaration during that escape, avoiding troubles doesn’t mean they avoid you! They are with you still. Your escape, therefore, is illusory. It only blunts the mind, and makes it more difficult for you to deal with your troubles effectively, when circumstances force you to.

Alcohol doesn’t clear the mind – it addles it. The mind becomes like an automobile with dirty spark-plugs. Its engine misfires. Don’t drink, even for the sake of a little fun.

Drunkenness is Satanic ecstasy.

The “Cons” of Psychedelics

From: *Remember - Be Here Now*
Baba Ram Dass (Richard Alpert)

The group of psychedelics include LSD, marijuana, peyote, mescaline, psilocybin, and hashish.

The “cons” of psychedelics are as follows:

1. You still come down. The experience is not permanent. Coming down brings despair.
2. Because the psychedelic agent is external to yourself, its use tends to subtly reinforce in you a feeling that you are not enough. Ultimately, of course, at the end of the path you come to realize that you have been Enough all the way along.
3. The intensity with which the psychedelics show you “more” makes you greedy to be done before you are ready. This attaches you to the experience of “getting high” which, after a period of time, becomes a cul-de-sac. The goal of the path is to BE high, not GET high.
4. Many people who use psychedelics primarily experience astral planes where their ego is present. Thus they often attempt to use the powers available in such an astral plane in the service of their own ego. This creates additional karma for them – for it is action which comes out of attachment. Many messianic trips are of this nature. Sometimes such individuals get stuck at one or another astral plan and lose contact with the gross physical plane. In the West such beings are usually hospitalized until they find their way back to the physical plane. Of course, what in fact has happened is that they have not gone far enough. For the psychiatrist is attached to the physical plane (denying the reality of other planes) in the same way that the patient is attached to the astral plane (denying the reality of other planes including the physical). The only true reality includes all these planes and is beyond them all at the same time. This is known as the paradox of Mahamudra – the paradox of two-in-one.
5. Using violent methods as one’s upaya [method], such as strong psychedelics or kundalini yoga*, severe fasts, etc., lead to an unevenness in the individual’s vibrations. This creates waves in the environment because the person is not quite able to keep it all together. You should be able to remember your zip code even as you drift in intergalactic ecstasy. Keeping it all together is hard.
* Kundalini yoga is a powerful method, and should be undertaken only under the guidance of a competent teacher.
6. Psychedelics are, for the most part, illegal. This means that in order to use them you must break the law. Breaking the law involves risks which create anxiety and paranoia. Anxiety and paranoia are not good states of mind in which to pursue one’s sadhana. Furthermore, breaking the law means that you must function within the polarity of “we” and “them.” Only a very advanced being can do this without attachment.
7. There is at present [1978] no conclusive evidence that psychedelics are damaging to the physiological organism. The research on chromosome damage has been largely political in nature. There may be energy depletions and subtle physiological effects not yet measured. Most of the physiological reactions are psychological in origin and usually are the result of fear or anxiety.

You have to decide what your highest priorities are and have the courage –
pleasantly, smilingly, non-apologetically - to say 'no' to other things.
And the way to do that is by having a bigger 'yes' burning inside.
(Stephen Covey)

We seldom get rid of an evil merely by understanding its causes, and for all our insight,
obstinate habits do not disappear until replaced by other habits. No amount of confession
and no amount of explaining can make the crooked plant grow straight;
it must be trained upon the trellis by the gardener's art.
(Carl Jung)

The real tragedy is the tragedy of the man who never in his life braces himself for his one
supreme effort, who never stretches to his full capacity, never stands up to his full stature.
(Arnold Bennet)

Many of life's failures are people who did not realize
how close they were to success when they gave up.
(Thomas Edison)

A saint is a sinner who never gave up.
(Yogananda)

Being defeated is often a temporary condition.
Giving up is what makes it permanent.
(Marilyn vos Savent)

Defeat is not so bad as the admission of defeat.
(Baba Sawan Singh)

One mistake after another is also true practice.
(Dogen)

Those who seek the easy way do not seek the true way.
(Dogen)

Many of the insights of the saint stem from his experiences as a sinner.
(Eric Hoffer)

As a child learning to walk falls a thousand times before he can stand, and after that falls
again and again until at last he can walk, so are we as little children before God.
(Hazrat Inayat Khan)

Failure is the foundation of success,
and the means by which it is achieved.
(Lao-tzu)

The spiritual path is one of falling on your face, getting up, brushing yourself off,
turning and looking sheepishly at God and then taking the next step.
(Sri Aurobindo)

Kabir declares that if you wish to meet the Lord, you must give up all liquor, opium, bhang, tobacco. That is the precondition. O readers wise, learn of the evils of strong drink: it turns a man into a very beast, and hard-earned cash he squanders on doing this. The soul that takes intoxicating drinks will never be taken across to the shore of true salvation. Kabir proclaims with a loud voice and beat of drum: consider this statement carefully; abandon all intoxicants.

(Kabir)

Our greatest glory is not in never falling,
but in rising every time we fall.

(Confucius)

I know the path: it is straight and narrow.

It is like the edge of a sword. I rejoice to walk on it. I weep when I slip.
God's word is: "He who strives never perishes." I have implicit faith in that promise.
Though, therefore, from my weakness I fail a thousand times, I shall not lose faith.

(Mohandas Gandhi)

Far better is it to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs, even though checkered by failure... than to rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy nor suffer much, because they live in a gray twilight that knows not victory nor defeat.

(Theodore Roosevelt)

I once had a thousand desires,
but in my one desire to know You all else melted away.

(Rumi)

All I can do is engage with complete sincerity.
Then, whatever happens, there is no regret.

(The Dalai Lama)



May your soul be happy; journey joyfully.
(Rumi)

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