



Healing Substance And Process Addictions

Addictions and Self-Judgment

By Dr. Margaret Paul

Are you caught in addictive behavior and unable to find your way out? Discover the underlying cause of addictive behavior and how to move toward healing.

Charles is caught in a self-destructive cycle that causes much pain and immobilization. It is a cycle that many people are stuck in.

The negative cycle starts with some form of self-judgment:

"I'm a failure. I will never really amount to anything."

"I've made so many mistakes that I will never be able to get my life back on track."

"I've blown it again - I will never be able to stop drinking."

Self-judgment is the opposite of self-acceptance. It is the opposite of being a kind and trustworthy loving Adult with yourself. Self-judgment is a form of control: the wounded self hopes that by judging yourself you can get yourself to change and do things "right."

But the real result of self-judgment is pain. Your Inner Child is in pain from being emotionally beat-up by the self-judgment.

For Charles, as for many other people, this pain leads to acting out with addictive behavior - overeating, drinking too much and smoking. Charles uses these addictions to numb out the pain from his self-abusive thoughts. Then, when he wakes up the next day feeling hung over, having gained another pound, Charles beats himself up again:

"I'm such a jerk. I have no self-discipline. I had resolved to stop drinking and I really blew it. I'm just a useless blob. No wonder my wife divorced me. I shouldn't even be on the planet." Charles continues to cause the very pain that leads to the addictive behavior, continuing the self-destructive cycle: self-judgment -- pain -- addictive behavior -- self-judgment -- pain -- addictive behavior, etc.

This cycle will not change until the behavior that triggers it - self-judgment - changes. Yet Charles is deeply addicted to the self-judgment as well. We all tend to get addicted to whatever gives us a sense of control over our feelings, actions, and the outcome of things. Charles believes that judging himself will ultimately give him the control he wants. Yet the real result is powerlessness and despair.

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How can Charles change this? In order to shift this cycle, Charles needs to change his intent. He needs to shift his focus from controlling to kindness. He needs to become a trustworthy loving Adult with himself - an Adult who is reliably kind with himself. He needs to accept, with deep compassion, his judgmental, addictive, wounded self. Instead of judging himself for judging himself and for his eating, drinking and smoking, Charles needs to get himself off the hook.

He needs to recognize that the part of him who judges, drinks too much, eats too much, and smokes is a scared, hurt, wounded child or adolescent who learned early how to avoid pain. The original pain came from his judgmental and abusive father, but now the pain is coming from treating himself just as his father treated him. As long as his wounded self is in charge, Charles will continue this painful cycle.

When Charles moves into acceptance of his wounded self, he will start to treat himself in the way he always wished his father would treat him. His wounded self is starving for kindness, compassion and understanding.

In a session with Charles, I advised him to focus on kindness toward his wounded self. Most of us know what kindness looks like. We know how to be kind to others when we want to be. Charles had spent much of his life being kind to others and trying to get others to be kind to him, rather than focusing on being kind to himself.

No matter how kind others are to Charles, if he is beating himself up with his self-judgments, he will continue to be in pain and act out addictively to avoid the pain. All the kindness in the world from others cannot ameliorate the pain that Charles causes from his own self-judgments.

Kindness toward oneself is a moment-by-moment choice. Anytime we feel anything other than inner peace, it is because we are not thinking and behaving in ways that are kind and caring to ourselves.

Healing Addictions

By Dr. Margaret Paul

If you devote yourself to the practice of Inner Bonding and develop a spiritually connected loving Adult, your addictions will naturally and gradually disappear.

Kenneth consulted with me because he was scared. In his mid 50s, he was looking at the rest of his life, knowing that he didn't want to live it the way he had for the past 56 years. With two failed marriages, he was very lonely and afraid of ending up alone the rest of his life.

Kenneth was a successful businessman, but nothing else in his life was successful. He had lived his life intent on avoiding pain - with his many addictions. He was addicted to alcohol, sex, attention, busyness, and anger. Along with his two failed marriages, he had many other failed relationships due to the anger and blame that inevitably surfaced when the woman failed to fill the empty, scared, abandoned place within him. He went from woman to woman trying to find the "right" one, who could take away his fear and fill his emptiness.

While Kenneth was raised with religion and believed in God, he had no personal sense of connection with a Higher Power. He had long ago stopped praying. As a result of having no spiritual connection, he had no loving Adult and no way of seeing his true essence, his core Self. He thought he was his ego wounded self, and felt deeply inadequate. Since he had been using women for so long, he believed he was a bad person.

Kenneth's various addictions were the only ways he knew to survive. Without a spiritually connected loving Adult, his wounded self was doing the best he could.

Instead of focusing on abstinence regarding his addictions, our work was focused on developing his loving Adult. Kenneth was able to imagine an older, wiser part of himself - his Higher Self. He was also able to tune in to the very wounded part of himself - a six-year-old whose father had died in an accident and whose alcoholic mother had abandoned him to his aunt. This six-year-old little boy was always terrified of being abandoned and alone, and had learned to use various addictions to ameliorate the pain of abandonment.

Kenneth would continue to feel this terror of abandonment until he developed a loving Adult and stopped abandoning himself.

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Due to being in so much pain, Kenneth was highly motivated. He read all the Inner Bonding books, attended an Intensive, and had weekly phone sessions. Within the first few weeks of doing Inner Bonding, he decided to stop drinking, and was surprised at how easy it was. In the past, he had not been able to sleep unless he was fairly drunk, but now he found that if he held his inner little boy with loving kindness, he became calm enough to sleep. He discovered that sex was not what this abandoned little boy needed. When Kenneth started to attend to his own feelings and to the many ways he had been abandoning himself, his need for constant sex and attention went away. When he was no longer making women responsible for making his little boy feel safe and loved, he found his anger at women disappearing.

His compulsive busyness was also disappearing, due to his emerging inner peace. As he practiced being a loving Adult, he started to be able to see his beautiful essence - his caring, curious, creative and spontaneous true Self. No longer believing that he was a bad person, he no longer had to avoid his feelings with his various addictions. He was able to separate out his programmed and frightened wounded self from his true Self, and he now knew that he was not his wounded self.

Kenneth's addictions naturally and gradually disappeared as he learned to take loving action in his own behalf through the practice of Inner Bonding.

"I Just Can't Handle My Feelings"

By Dr. Margaret Paul

Discover what core painful feelings you are avoiding with your addictions and how to manage them in a loving way.

Lisa, like many of us, grew up with parents who completely avoided their feelings, and she was repeatedly discouraged from feeling her own. Her parents never role modeled managing their own emotions, so Lisa never learned how to take responsibility for hers. As a result, she

was very afraid to feel her feelings, believing that they would overwhelm her.

"I just can't handle my feelings," she said in one of our phone sessions. "They are too intense for me. So I buy things instead. And it's getting to be a huge problem, as I'm getting into major debt, which is causing me a lot of anxiety. And the more anxious I feel, the more I spend. I don't know how to get out of this vicious cycle. From reading your articles on the Inner Bonding site, I realize that I'm deeply addicted to spending - and to food and wine and anger. I use all of these when intense feelings come up that I know I can't handle."

"Lisa, do you know what the feelings are that you are avoiding?"

"No. I've tried to figure that out and I can't seem to get to it."

As we explored further, it became evident that Lisa was avoiding the most difficult feelings to feel:

- Helplessness over others and situations
- Loneliness
- Heartache/heartbreak

Lisa discovered that she got angry whenever she felt helpless over others and situations, and she would eat, drink and spend when she felt the loneliness that comes from not having others to connect with, or not being able to connect with the people she was with. When people were mean to her or to others, her heart hurt.

"Yes, those are the feelings that I can't handle. I think I feel lonely on and off throughout the day. "

"Lisa, I also feel lonely on and off throughout the day. Probably most people do without being aware of it. This is a core feeling - a feeling from life, as opposed to the wounded feelings that we create by our own thoughts and actions. We have so many addictive ways of avoiding our feelings, that most people have no idea that they are avoiding feeling with their addictions."

"What am I supposed to do when I feel these feelings?"

There is a powerful way of managing these core painful emotions:

- You need to be conscious of what you are feeling. You need to practice getting out of your head and getting present in your body. Staying in your head is another addictive way of avoiding feelings.
- Once you are aware of the feeling, you need to acknowledge it by naming it, simply saying, preferably out loud, "I'm feeling lonely right now," or "My heart hurts right now," or "Right now, I'm feeling that awful feeling of helplessness over another or over an outcome."
- Move into compassion for the feeling. Imagine holding your inner child - being present with him or her with deep compassion for the feeling. Sit with the feeling for a few minutes, breathing deeply into the feeling, being fully present with compassion.
- Ask what this feeling is telling you about a person or situation.
- Ask your Guidance what would be the loving action toward yourself with this person or in this situation, and take the loving action.
- Ask God/Spirit/Higher Power to take the feeling from you and replace it with acceptance and peace. Imagine the feeling flowing out of your body and going into Spirit, while the feelings of peace and acceptance are flowing in.

You will discover that when you fully embrace your feelings with kindness, tenderness and gentleness, you will learn what they are telling you and be able to release them fairly rapidly. This is what will enable you to heal your addictions, as you will no longer need them to avoid your painful feelings.