

# What is Addiction and What Does Recovery Look Like

Information based off Facing the Shadow by Patrick Carnes and The Betrayal Bond by Patrick Carnes

**Definition:** “Addiction is a primary, chronic disease of brain reward, motivation, memory and related circuitry. Dysfunction in these circuits leads to characteristic biological, psychological, social and spiritual manifestations. This is reflected in an individual pathologically pursuing reward and/or relief by substance use and other behaviors.”

## **Addiction is the effect and trauma is the cause**

“Abandonment is at the core of addictions. Abandonment causes deep shame. Abandonment by betrayal is worse than mindless neglect. Betrayal is purposeful and self-serving. If severe enough, it is traumatic. What moves betrayal into the realm of trauma is fear and terror. If the wound is deep enough, and the terror big enough, your bodily systems shift to an alarm state. You never feel safe. You’re always on full-alert, just waiting for the hurt to begin again. In that state of readiness, you’re unaware that part of you has died. You are grieving. Like everyone who has loss, you have shock and disbelief, fear, loneliness and sadness. Yet you are unaware of these feelings because your guard is up. In your readiness, you abandon yourself. Yes, another abandonment.”

In order to heal from addiction we must **“always hold truth, as we can best determine it, to be more important, more vital to our self-interest than our comfort. Conversely, we must always consider our personal discomfort relatively unimportant, and indeed, even welcome it in the service for truth. Mental health is an ongoing process of dedication to reality at all costs.”** - M. Scott Peck, *The Road Less Traveled*

Healing from Addiction Steps:

### **1. Recognizing Self-Delusion**

Addiction is the need to escape from reality. Doing anything it takes to escape from reality (medicate, deny, ignore reality)

In order to heal we need to make a commitment to REALITY, no matter how uncomfortable or painful it is.

Write your story, what you think your problems are, what secrets you keep and what excuses you use for your behavior.

### **2. Understanding Addiction**

Addiction is an intimacy disorder. Because we have been taught that we cannot trust people we learn to trust in alcohol, sex, substances, and fantasies because they always do what they promise. Addicts engage in these processes and acts due to the mood-altering chemicals that are released in the brain that make us feel better. Addiction becomes the solution to loneliness, pain, and shame.

Key Features of any addiction:

**Impaired control** - Efforts to reduce addictive behavior repeatedly fail.

**Compulsive use despite harmful consequences** - The addictive behavior persists even though it damages the addict's relationships, employment status, or health, or even when it leads to legal problems

**Craving** - Addicts feel a powerful desire to engage in the addictive behavior.

**Denial** - The addict refuses to admit the devastating consequences of the compulsive behavior.

*Kinds of Homes:*

- Addiction typically comes from growing up in a family where addiction already exists. As children addicts learn to ignore problems, issues, emotions and act like everything is okay. Because of this they do not recognize the addiction around them as a problem.
- Growing up in a rigid, legalistic, authoritarian home is also very common for addicts. There is only one way to do things, no negotiation, and the children are required to make the parents happy or please the parents. This causes the children to either rebel or become "pleasers" and do everything "right" on the surface but develop a secret life that the family knows nothing about.

When the child is abused or neglected they conclude that they are not valuable and that they cannot trust others. If the child feels that they cannot trust others then they are in a constant state of fear and high alert. This causes anxiety and increases the need for relief (masturbation, sex, substance abuse, compulsive eating, etc.)

Abuse victims (addicts) also tend to distort reality and minimize the impact of what they experienced as a child or in that situation. They tend to believe that their childhood wasn't that bad.

**Addiction Cycle:**

Preoccupation - obsessing about the solution (addictive behavior)

Ritualization - behaviors that separate us further from reality so that we can't say no to the solution (addictive behavior)

Acting Out - engaging in the solution (addictive behavior) and experiencing relief

Despair - reality sets in and shame comes to the forefront. We promise ourselves that we will never do it again.

### **Sexual Anorexia:**

Sexual inactivity is not recovery. Avoiding sex or being averse to sex will only increase your risk of relapse. Sexual anorexia has the same core beliefs as sexual addiction (unworthy, unlovable, defective)

**BALANCE IS KEY.** Seeing the world and situations in extremes (black and white) is a trauma response.

- Dread of sexual please
- Fear of sexual contact
- Despair after sexual contact
- Obsessive vigilance about sexual matters
- Avoidance of anything connected with sex
- Preoccupation with other people being sexual
- Distortions about personal body appearance
- Extreme loathing of body functions
- Obsessional self-doubt about sexual adequacy
- Excessive fear of sexually transmitted diseases
- Rigid judgmental attitudes
- Self -destructive behavior to limit, stop or avoid sex

### **3. Understanding Compulsive Sex**

What are your patterns?

What is the hierarchy in your sexual preferences?

What is the first way you try to find a sexual outlet?

What are the other alternatives that you use, in order?

- Fantasy Sex - Sexually charged fantasies, relationships and situations
- Voyeuristic Sex - Visual arousal. Visual stimulation to escape
- Exhibitionistic Sex - Attracting attention to the body or sexual parts of the body
- Seductive Role Sex - Seduction of partners. Conquest.
- Trading Sex - Selling sex for power. Gaining control of others by sex
- Intrusive Sex - boundary violation through sex without discovery or repercussions
- Paying for Sex - Arousal from paying for sex
- Anonymous Sex - High Risk sex with strangers
- Pain Exchange Sex - Being humiliated or hurt as part of sexual pleasure. Degrading another sexually is arousing
- Exploitive Sex - Arousal through exploitation of vulnerable people

#### 4. Accepting the Problem

Addiction is an intimacy disorder (as stated earlier.) Because of this others in the addicts life tend to not know the “real you.” And the addicts like it that way. They feel ashamed of their “double life” and fear that if anyone found out about it they would be rejected, viewed as unlovable or unworthy. The key to breaking this is intimacy disorder is by Telling Your Story. Opening up and being honest with your Support Group. When you learn that people CAN BE TRUSTED. When you let the SECRET out, the secret will no longer hold the same power over you. Others are now involved to support you, encourage you and call you out.

Telling your story is incredibly bonding for you and the people listening (when they are accepting and understanding.) It is important to start this process of telling your story in your 12 step group or support group, where you know it will be received well.

In order to do this you must first be able to accept the following:

- You have a problem
- You are unable to control your behaviors
- You have to ask for help from others in order to be successful
- You must focus on what you can do
- You must give up secrets and commit to reality
- Your addictive behaviors will continue until you can follow through with recovery

*This is a powerful step because it shatters the secret life, the need to always look perfect, and the perpetual shame. You discover that others will accept you for who you are, that imperfection is okay, and that others are going through the same thing.*

**BE AWARE:** This will not be easy. *Beware of self-sabotaging.* You will want to go back to old ways and this looks like finding fault in your therapist, support group, 12 step program, creating a crisis so you cannot continue/afford recovery etc.

#### 5. Responding to Change and Crisis and the Damage that has Been Done

Kinds of Change

- *First Order Change*

Making dramatic changes in your life. “The more things change, the more they stay the same.”

In this order of change the addict tries to recover on their own. They isolate themselves, lead a double life, and may be able to white knuckle recovery for a while but they are unable to make the necessary change and end up relapsing.

- *Second Order Change*

Taking the steps necessary to alter the way they function and the dynamics that they take part in in their life.

Learning that they are powerless to change their behavior by themselves and need others. They accept that they have a problem and begin therapy and a twelve step program.

### **Who Do You Tell?**

Tell Only People You Trust

Know Your Motives for Telling Them

Don't Feel the Need to Tell Everyone

Always Make Sure You Are Feeling Supported

Make Sure the Person You Are Telling Also Has Support

Do Difficult Disclosures with a Therapist

Expect People to Be Upset when You Tell Them

Talk to Your Sponsor or Group Before Telling Someone

### **What Does Restoring Trust Look Like?**

- Have patience with those around you
- Be willing to lose trust in order to gain it
- Restore and repair yourself first
- Accept the illness in the other (your partner)
- Admit mistakes right away
- Share spirituality
- Use the 12 step Amends Steps
- Accept that your relationship will never be perfect. We are all human.
- Be with other recovering couples
- Have fun together

### **6. Managing Life without Dysfunctional Sexual Behavior**

- Sobriety means developing boundaries

See Psalms of Healing's "Healthy vs Unhealthy Boundaries" guide and "How to Set Boundaries" guide.

### **What does boundary failure look like?**

Boundary failure usually stems from a compounded problem in the addict including family-of-origin issues and the addictive system. The following patterns affect the addict's ability to establish a relapse-free sobriety plan

- Achievement

**Being an overachiever** - professionals such as doctors, attorneys, executives, clergy, and entrepreneurs. Their commitment to excellence and success is what drives them. They are typically either constantly stressed, have a problem with compulsive working, never have time for friends or family, and their sense of worth is measured only by wealth, power and recognition.

This is often a result of parents who were successful, trying to settle the score with someone, they are trying to be better than others or they are seeking “special child” status.

**Being an underachiever** - underachievers often come from families that are successful. Because they are surrounded by success the only way for them to receive recognition or attention is to fail. These addicts typically become the family “problem” or in other terms the scapegoat.

If this is you, ask yourself this question, “who in my family benefits from me being unsuccessful and unhappy?”, “what are the benefits for them?”, “what would happen if I became successful?” This pattern revolves around failure and the addicts start to believe that they deserve it. They feel betrayed and victimized and believe that they deserve some relief.

**Both overachievers and underachievers have the belief that they deserve it (the solution, the addiction).**

- Self-esteem

**Specialness** -

Children should be made to feel special. However, in some families specialness becomes a problem. A child can become favored, “the golden child”, or be protected from consequences or exempt from rules and tasks. A child can also become the “surrogate spouse” for the parent, meeting the needs that should be met by their spouse. This child becomes the “man of the house” or “woman of the house.” Because of this special treatment, being catered to, protected, etc. addicts can become oblivious to the needs of others and be focused on just meeting their own needs. They place themselves at the center of all things, becoming self-absorbed and unaware of the impact on others.

**Neglected** - Because of abuse or neglect some will sabotage anything in their life that is good because they do not believe they deserve it. Their self-esteem is eroded and they are programmed for failure.

Being self-absorbed or filled with shame has the same result which is having a distorted view of your place in the world.

- Accountability

Addicts typically resist being held accountable because of how rigid or controlling their families were. Some grew up in families where there was NO accountability and they are unable to admit mistakes. There are still some that are accountable only in appearance and by doing the “right” thing yet have a secret life.

**Sobriety will work only if there is complete accountability which means a commitment to HONESTY.**

- Self-care

Neglect in childhood is common among addicts. Because of this they do not know how to take care of themselves as adults.

Other times addicts had parents who did everything for them and that is why they do not know how to take care of themselves. They can become entitled with a grandiose sense of self expecting their needs to be catered to and for others to rescue them.

- Conscience

For a lot of addicts they have violated their own value system and they feel guilt or shame. Having a conscience means that you are aware of the things that you want to protect or that you love.

Recovery requires that you acknowledge those things and commit to protecting those values and things that you love. You will fight to protect what matters to you and do everything in your power for it.

- Realism

Learning from your mistakes. Committing to reality. Accepting your own limits.

- Self-awareness

Addicts can sometimes be so ashamed about themselves that they avoid anything that requires them to acknowledge their feelings, needs or being alone with themselves. They feel so defective and unworthy it is unbearable. Because of this they can sometimes mock therapy or self-help because it is simply too painful. It is easier to dismiss.

Sobriety comes only with self-awareness, self-realization and being able to accept and sit in the uncomfortable feelings and painful truth.

- Relationships

Isolation is something that most addicts struggle with. Whether the addict is introverted or highly extroverted, they tend to hide their most vulnerable parts. However, there is no way out of the shame without opening up to and connecting with others.

- Affect

Affect refers to our emotional lives. When someone shows a lack of emotion therapists can refer to it as a flat affect. Emotional skills are equally as important as problem solving and intellectual skills, in order to handle difficult emotions, anxiety and expressing feelings.

Addicts are prone to using rage to manipulate and intimidate in order to get their way. The reason for this is most addicts were punished for having feelings, or taught that feelings were not acceptable. Because of this the addicts feeling life was shut down. Anger and rage is usually the first emotion that we feel but hiding below are all the vulnerable feelings we do not want to share or do not recognize.

We need to start labeling our feelings, no matter how basic, joy, pain, sadness, anger, fear, anxiety, etc. This will allow us to start to gain clarity on our feelings.

Sobriety - (90 days of sobriety)

***Sobriety is a time out, not an end***

The reasons for sobriety are as follows:

- Cooling off period (damage control)
- Allows for the addict to learn how to handle emotions without the sexual crutch
- Repressed childhood memories start to emerge
- Stimulates healthy sexual interest
- Provides an important context for defining what sobriety is, what relapse is and what healthy sex is.

## **7. Managing the Physical Impact of Your Addiction**

Get a physical examination in case of physical problems or illnesses. This is an act of caring for yourself.

Facing the withdrawals - (14 to 15 days)

- Fatigue
- Tenseness, nervousness
- Insomnia
- Headaches
- Shakes
- High sexual arousal



- Low sexual arousal
- Body aches
- Increased food appetite
- Genital sensitivity
- Itchy skin
- Chills, sweats
- Nausea
- Rapid heartbeat
- Shortness of breath

### Addiction Neuropathways -

All addictions create road maps that activate the brain that are the basis for addictive disorders. The triggering of brain chemicals such as dopamine, adrenaline, endorphins and testosterone. Each of these chemicals can be highly addictive. There are four major pathways that are involved in addiction:

#### Arousal -

The arousal pathway is about pleasure and intensity. Methods of stimulating arousal pathways are high-risk sex, high-risk relationships, compulsive burglary and shoplifting, “on the edge” business occupations and anything to do with violence. Fear can be part of the arousal template as well, when addicts can only achieve orgasm when they are being hurt, or when they are in danger in some way.

#### Numbing -

The numbing pathway provides a calming, relaxing, soothing or sedative feeling. Compulsive masturbation, alcohol, drugs, shopping and overeating are some of these behaviors. It is common to engage in high-risk adrenaline inducing situations followed by a numbing behavior.

#### Fantasy -

The fantasy neuropathways goal is escape. This includes psychedelic drugs like LSD, shrooms, marijuana. Combining obsessive behaviors or preoccupation with rituals can create a tranced state.

Common fantasies are “the big win”, or the “cosmic relationship” that will save you.

#### Deprivation -

The deprivation neuropathways goal is control. Anorexia, sexual anorexia, and anorexic spending are some common behaviors. "Doing without is the surest way to defend against the terror."

Deprivation is typically paired with the belief that there is not enough money, food, sex, that they are not enough (too fat, skinny or unattractive.) Part of the terror is the belief that something bad will happen if their needs are met.

When addicts find that their needs can be controlled, and they activate this neuropathway, they develop a sense of superiority, sense of righteousness, better than others feeling and judgemental attitude. These are comforting thoughts to have especially when you feel in control.

Research has shown that when the body prepares itself for starvation it releases endorphins that provide a euphoric feeling.

Deprivation often pairs with addiction or excessive behavior, creating the binge and purge cycle. (Act out - Out of control behaviors, Acting in- extreme control)

### **What are Arousal Templates and How to We Change Them:**

Arousal templates are created based on family messages, early sexual experiences, church influences, childhood abuse and media influences.

Our sexual preferences, what we are attracted and what we consider erotic, make up our arousal template.

Arousal templates include

- Objects and situations,
- A variety of feelings,
- Eroticized anger,
- Power and restoration of self,
- Humiliation, vengeance and retaliation,
- Perversion,
- Obsession,

### **8. Creating Your Support System**

- Get involved in a 12 step program
- Find a good meeting that works for you
- Surrender to the recovery process
- Get involved in Couples Recovery (if in a relationship)
- Be of service to others

### **9. Deepening Recovery for Profound Life Change**

Research has shown that the addicts who were able to succeed in recovery had the following:

- A primary therapist
- They were involved in a therapy group
- Went to regular Twelve Step Meetings
- They worked with other addicts in the group
- They worked to clarify and resolve their family-of-origin and childhood issues
- Their families were involved early in therapy
- If they were in a relationship, the couple went to a Twelve Step couples group
- They developed a spiritual life
- They actively worked to maintain regular exercise and good nutrition