





# The Cocaine Book

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## Foreward

I've been referred to on more than one occasion as a *hopeless drug addict*, by family, friends, lovers, doctors, twelve step gurus, staff members at rehab facilities. My problem wasn't that I was unwilling to follow direction, or that I had any doubt how grave my situation was, but that the compulsion was simply too strong, the habit too pervasive. Psychopharmacology, humanistic therapy, Higher Powers – these simply didn't work.

The problem, in my eyes, was twofold: first, that the public at large and, to a great extent, the medical profession, believes that addiction is a self-inflicted wound, that addicts are second-class citizens, that we "should just stop doing it." Second, the people who have managed to get clean are either unwilling to examine it carefully (for fear they'll fuck it up) or have concluded that some benevolent deity has solved their problem. Because of this, there is a lack of cohesive information for

people trying to tackle the problem on their own.

I tried a couple different ways of putting this information together. One was to create a narrative, to use my own story. The other was to use a textbook approach. In both cases, I ended up with relevant material that didn't fit within the form. One thing I found when trying to find answers was that there was no one place to find answers, so I created this document, which is everything I've learned, a number of short pieces loosely arranged. While it isn't completely linear, it's relatively complete.

## **Philosophical Imperative**

Everyone has theories about what it means to be alive. Everyone has theories about who they are, what's right and wrong. Psychology, sociology, philosophy ... people will debate you until they're red in the face about the way things really are. But a drug addict has an imperative to understand himself, because his being will kill him if he

doesn't come to understand it properly, if he doesn't learn to manage it.

## **No Prescription**

There are no prescriptions for curing addiction. There is no cure. Addiction is not a disease; it's not something that can be removed, or that goes away. You cannot "treat" addiction because addiction is natural. *Addiction makes sense.* It's not unreasonable or irrational. The brain was neither designed to feel the sort of pleasure it derives from cocaine nor to have the ability to acquire such pleasure through practical means. Once introduced, why would it bother to pursue anything else?

## **Abstinence**

Quitting cocaine is something like going on a diet. Except you can never have a piece of chocolate cake, not once, not ever, for the rest of your life. Actually, quitting drugs is more like

celibacy, because, unlike food, you can live without sex. No sex, no masturbation, not once, not ever, for the rest of your life. And, by the way, the only one keeping you honest is you.

If these comparisons sound far-fetched, they are. Although using cocaine is like eating or having sex, in fact it's far more rewarding than both of those things. I routinely chose cocaine over food and sex. So maybe quitting drugs is like going on a diet *and* being celibate for the rest of your life. Except no one will ever be impressed that you're doing it; they expect you to do it. Mostly, they're just waiting for you to fail.

## **Extraordinary**

A drug addict who has mastered abstinence is an extraordinary creature. He represents both the frailty of man's savage nature and the strength of man's reason.



## Poorly Defined

*Addiction* is a non-word. It has no real meaning because it represents too many different things. For that reason (among others), it remains misunderstood, as do drug addicts.

Recently, addiction has been described as being a disease. The intentions behind this are admirable: it release addicts from a certain amount of culpability for their condition and creates a treatment model for health care workers to follow. Unfortunately, addiction is not a disease.

There is no bacteria or virus that causes addiction, obviously.

Genetic predisposition predicts addiction, but does not necessitate it (probably). Not everyone who would become an addict uses drugs to the point of becoming addicted.

Environmental conditions cannot cause addiction without predisposition (possibly). Not everyone who uses an addictive substance becomes addicted to it.

So what is addiction? A mental illness? It has obsessive/compulsive aspects to it. Perception of reality is disturbed. Emotional disturbance is common. The chemical balance of the brain is terribly skewed. An addict is pretty much helpless to do anything about it. However, the above symptoms disappear once drug use ceases. So ... addiction is something like an acquired mental illness, though it does seem to be predisposed. That's not a very helpful definition, however.

## **Addiction, Defined**

Addiction can be defined as the following:

1. Addiction is the predisposition to abuse drugs. It's not surprising that man has sought, and discovered, the means to artificially induce a state of happiness. What is surprising is the extent to which drug addicts incorporate these means within their lives, and the unwillingness that's met with any attempt to end that relationship.

2. Addiction is the chemical imbalance created

by abuse. This imbalance creates a dependency, a hunger, a need, to continue using drugs (in order to maintain the balance of the imbalance, if that makes sense).

3. Addiction is the motivation (as opposed to the desire) to acquire and use drugs, and the dominant position that motivation takes in relationship to other motivations in life. This is absolutely key.

## **Path to Addiction**

The path to addiction follows its definition:

1. An addict is born with a proclivity for abuse. Once he or she uses substances to a sufficient degree, they become infatuated with them. This would be a person who is either rewarded by drugs with a more intense sensation of pleasure than most people, or rewarded less by the life they're living.

2. Continued drug use creates a chemical imbalance. Cravings for the substance become

increasingly pronounced. From this point on, quitting becomes very difficult.

3. The addict begins using the drug regularly and out of necessity (due to craving), requiring them to compromise most, if not all, of the things in life which were once important to them. The more of their life that's sacrificed on account of addiction, the harder it is to achieve abstinence from the drug. This is what I call *The Motivation Problem*.

## **Why?**

Why do we become addicted? It's pleasurable (the best orgasm you've ever had, and it lasts for hours at a time) and fulfilling (every few minutes, you get what you want most out of life). If I could trade any one thing in my life for cocaine, I'd do it; the problem is, I have to trade everything for cocaine. I've spent years trying to figure out a way around this, but in modern-day society, you can't disappear for days at a time and expect to

maintain any semblance of a productive life.

## Goals

A man that dedicates himself to his wife and children is known as a "family man." If he dedicates himself to pursuing women, he's called a "playboy." Should career advancement be his goal, he's a "company man." However, should he choose to pursue cocaine, he's known as a "fiend" or "addict." This may seem natural to the outside observer, but morality has nothing to do with the process of motivation.

The stigma of being an addict is almost as destructive as the drugs that did them in. Society has zero sympathy for drug addicts. From an outsider's point of view, we appear to be irresponsible, criminal, weak, crazy. That's because they understand themselves poorly.

Each of us thinks himself reasonable, morally sound, intelligent, his actions explicable, vindicated, because each man thinks with the

language of reason. Human perception, however, falls well short of thorough. In truth, a man is completely susceptible to the animal which is at the heart of him; while his mind might soar towards the stars, he stumbles dumbly around the world.

Someone who pursues ends in life that have no ill effects (money, family, friendship, security) will believe that, because their ends are rational, they chose them based on reason. In fact, they were taught and encouraged towards those ends, and were fortunate enough not to become infatuated with destructive rewards that surpassed them, such as cocaine. Drug addicts aren't irrational people ... rather, everyone is irrational when it comes to motivational pursuits. Those who pride themselves on their pursuits are ignorant to the frailty of their nature, believing that the logic behind what they were taught is the core of what they are.

## **Selfish and Insane**

Drug addicts are often accused of being

selfish and insane. Why else would someone choose to continue using a substance, when it's so obvious that they do so at the expense of everything else in their lives? But a drug addict has no interest in giving up what's important to them. Yes, we will often abandon old pursuits in anger, for they cause us pain/guilt/shame/remorse, but in truth, most addicts want the impossible—to keep what they had before, and just add drugs. When the rest of life falls away from them, it's more often than not an exterior process; the world will not tolerate the lifestyle of an addict, so it rejects his/her attendance in romantic relationships, friendships, employment, etc.

We're not blind, either. We would do something about it, but motivation is an unconscious process. It happily removes the job, the lover, the friend, from the list of things it must choose between when organizing time. When it comes to sacrifices, cocaine will always win.

## **Denial**

Addiction begins at the moment that the pursuit of a substance is done unconsciously. This explains, to a degree, denial: it's counterintuitive to think that a decision which has always been made consciously has become instinctive, compulsive. Particularly in a society that espouses the strength of will-power--this makes no sense whatsoever.

## **Path to Recovery**

The path to recovery follows the definition of addiction:

First, come to the conclusion that you can never use the drug again.

Second, return to mental stability. Restore chemical balance, eliminate craving, reclaim the power of choice.

Third, choose wisely when making decisions in life. Reclaim the ability and instinct to fulfill productive ends. Take on responsibilities. Be



accountable.

No God, no group therapy. Understand, then control. You must be willing to take up the fight against your own being, to win the chess game against your unconscious mind.

## **Inaction**

Successful abstinence is a question of inaction, not action. To maintain sobriety, this is measured not by what you've done, but by what you haven't done. By what doesn't happen, instead of what happens. By what you don't decide to do, instead of what you decide to do. By the will you don't exert, instead of the will you exert. One cannot will themselves to do nothing; one does nothing by not willing at all. Sobriety requires that you do nothing or, since you can't do nothing, that you do as little as possible. Patience, prudence, temperance, a tolerance for stasis, for boredom ... these are most valued assets.

## **Contrary**

Quitting cocaine is as contrary as a family man divorcing his wife and putting his kids up for adoption, a wealthy man giving away his riches and living a destitute life, a playboy taking a vow of celibacy, a learned man throwing away his books and watching reality TV. Quitting cocaine is as contrary as someone who loves animals starving them until they die.

## **Enlightenment**

Revealing the true nature of addiction, and being able to thwart it, is a path to great enlightenment, for the root of addiction is one of the great mysteries of life. Namely:

*Why is it that we choose to do what we do?*

## **Marionettes**

If you think of people as marionettes, which isn't hard to do considering the amount of coordination that's required to push us forward,

then an addict has found a way to twist up his strings, leaving his movements jerky and constrained, severe and obvious. Twisting strings is common to the ignorant and those who believe in the sanctity of malfunction.

Unfortunately for man, twisting strings can form knots that do not come undone. Although release from the duties of one's being may initially seem exciting, ultimately choosing to release yourself will be the last choice you'll make. For instead of having God, the nation, Truth as your puppeteer, death itself takes over. It's death that compels an addicts movements ... sadly he's swept towards a roaring river of darkness, pathetically herky-jerking on his way to its banks, head swung firmly backwards, gazing helplessly on the order he once abandoned and now desires, tears in his eyes, mouth wide open as he's swept into the vicious.

## **You've Been Hacked**

Cocaine has rooted your box. It overflowed

your pleasure buffers and now it's got control. It's a resource hog ... and it's re'nicing all your other processes so they never get to run. Many have already been killed off for lack of resources. Unfortunately, you don't have root, just a handful of sudo privileges, none of which can stop cocaine entirely. As for root, he doesn't answer his email ... some whisper that he's dead. You can no longer trust your output; it's entirely possible that your address space is being corrupted. You can't trust your log files, either, or your system commands: cocaine knows how to cover its tracks. Don't even think about rebooting; that's not a privilege you were given. I can't tell you how to do it, but you'd better figure out what's going on, and quickly: if you're not careful, the only fix will be to pull the plug.

# Hungry

## Cocaine

Cocaine is the best orgasm you've ever had, and it lasts for hours, even days, at a time. It starts with nirvana, proceeds to psychosis and becomes a mourning unimaginable.

## Rock

One hit and off goes the soul, on comes the *more*, and it doesn't stop until you're through. At which point you strive to douse your soul all over again. Rock cocaine's only payoff is more rock cocaine. It's an end in itself and to everything else. A coward's version of suicide? Maybe. Profound as fuck? Oh yeah.

## I Am So Fucking High

Speechless,        impotent,        bug-eyed        and  
terrified .. sexy.

## **Hunger**

Cocaine is a hunger that can never be satisfied; eating only makes you more famished.

Apparently, the body becomes increasingly capable of metabolizing cocaine every time it's used. Because it disappears more quickly in your system, craving appears more quickly. More cocaine is required to create less of an effect. For this reason, you can measure the extent of a person's addiction (and cravings) by the amount of cocaine they use per session.

## **Chemical imbalance**

Balance in the brain is based on the concentration of chemicals known as neurotransmitters. Using cocaine creates an imbalance of these chemicals; the brain adjusts itself to that imbalance. In this way, the brain of any cocaine user begins to expect cocaine to be there. When they try to quit, their brain complains about the lack of cocaine. As a result, they will

begin to experience symptoms: obsessive thoughts about using cocaine (cravings), dreams at night about using cocaine, sluggishness of thought, restlessness, depression, agitation and an inability to control anger.

## **Glutamate**

One common hypothesis for restoring balance in a cocaine addict's brain is to regulate a neurotransmitter called dopamine, for the use of cocaine floods the brain with dopamine. There are a handful of such drugs that work on the dopamine system, e.g. Wellbutrin. I've found that these are ineffective.

What researchers have postulated recently is that by regulating glutamate, another neurotransmitter whose supply is exhausted with the abuse of the drug, the imbalance will be corrected, and the craving process will cease. I've found this to be true.

[http://www.nida.nih.gov/NIDA\\_notes/NNvol20N3/Modafinil.html](http://www.nida.nih.gov/NIDA_notes/NNvol20N3/Modafinil.html)

[http://www.nida.nih.gov/NIDA\\_notes/NNVol19N3/Brain.html](http://www.nida.nih.gov/NIDA_notes/NNVol19N3/Brain.html)

Modafinil, a prescription drug whose use is intended for treatment of narcolepsy, chronic fatigue disorder and ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder), regulates the amount of glutamate in the brain.

NAC (N-Acetyl-Cysteine), an amino acid that's available in any health food store, has the same effect.

Both of these resolved my cravings extensively and immediately. No more dreams about coke, no more obsessive thoughts, increased mental sharpness, a generally more pleasant and stable mood. Best of all, they only took a few days to start working.

For a chronic cocaine abuser, the difference between quitting with and without glutamate regulators is the difference between going on a diet and going on a starvation diet. Both will work, but only one can last. While your mind is locked into obsessive thinking patterns, you are unable to cope with the other challenge of beating addiction that has to be dealt with, namely The Motivation Problem.



You cannot win in those circumstances.

## **Comorbidity**

If a preexisting mental condition exists (known as comorbidity), e.g. depression, ADD, bipolar disorder, and the use of cocaine in some way alleviates the symptoms of that condition, then both the preexisting mental condition and the imbalance caused by cocaine abuse must be treated before any success in solving The Motivation Problem can be achieved. For example, if a depressed person becomes addicted to cocaine, and abuses that drug for a long period of time, moderating glutamate levels via NAC/Provigil will not be enough; the depression must be solved as well, with prescription drugs if need be, or it (the depression) will trigger cravings that are just as deadly as the ones spawned by cocaine imbalance.

## Hope

The most that any addict can hope for is to regain the power of choice when it comes to using drugs. What they do with that privilege is up to them.

# **The Motivation Problem**

In my life before cocaine, I woke up each day pretty much focused on what I was going to do, what my commitments were and, in a general sense, what direction I was pointed towards. But I never really had a goal—there was no “why” to my life. The pursuit of money didn't fascinate me entirely, nor women, nor family, nor tradition. A paycheck, a lay, the smile on a child's face, being told that somebody loves me—these were pleasant vistas on a steady drive towards death, not ends in themselves. Cocaine changed all that. It's the only thing I've ever done that satisfied me completely, that seemed worth the trouble. And then it wasn't ... but there was no going back.

## **Overview**

Using cocaine requires an extraordinary amount of compromise. At one time or another, I was forced to choose between cocaine and the following:

Self respect / self esteem

Mental stability

Financial stability / growth

Employment stability / career development

Housing stability / comfort within the home

Social status

Friendships

Romantic relationships

Ability to think / create

Health

Physical security / safety from violent  
individuals

Status as a law-abiding, unincarcerated  
individual

My experience is that it's impossible to use cocaine regularly (or in my case, at all) and tend to any of the above with any consistency. I've known people who managed to use cocaine and retain friendships, hold a job, not go "off the deep end." I've even managed to do that, at varying degrees of success for varying degrees of time. But not

anymore.

What happened to me, and I believe what will happen eventually to anyone who uses cocaine regularly, is that any or all of the above will be sacrificed for the continued use of cocaine. The ultimate result of this is that all that matters is the continued use of cocaine. There are streets filled with people who have gone this far.

You can get hooked on coke like you get hooked on cigarettes. It can be a habit, and nothing more. It's very difficult, but if you abstain for long enough, ignore the cravings for long enough, the problem will disappear. What happens with cocaine, though, that doesn't happen with cigarettes, is that dope becomes an individual's primary motivation. It steadily displaces everything that was once important to them, seemingly without guilt. Along with the amount of drug used at a sitting, the progression along this path is an excellent measurement of "how addicted" a person is.

## Sobriety

Once you compromise something important to you on behalf of dope, which is an inevitability if you continue using it, that motivation dies—sobriety itself won't bring it back.

I can remember when what motivated me was displaced by cocaine, though I didn't realize it at the time: I remember when I stopped pursuing romantic relationships, when I stopped thinking of work as anything but a means to buy cocaine, when independence became something worth risking, when managing finances became irrelevant. My repeated mistake after quitting was attempting to live as if relationships, career, independence, money, still held sway over me, as if by putting myself back on track to attain them, I'd naturally choose to do so.

In fact, even though cocaine was something I no longer “wanted” to do, using cocaine was still what *motivated* me—my mind kept going through the motions to acquire and use it, even though it was no longer interested in dealing with the repercussions

of being high. It fell upon me to discover new motivations, to essentially recreate my purposes from scratch, a very slow and oftentimes exasperating process. Until I found new passions, until I took new responsibilities that I had no intent of discarding, I lived in a purgatory of anhedonia, feeling like a boat that had mistakenly been set adrift.

## **Autopilot**

The part of you that *thinks* is not the part of you that *acts*. Can we willfully control what we choose to do, and what we do? Certainly, but our consciousness was not given the ultimate responsibility for action.

People were designed to run on autopilot. If we had to consciously make every decision in life, it would exhaust us. Whether we take credit for it or not, much of what we do is done without thinking about it beforehand; we notice far more than we plan or form intent. And this works perfectly well, as

long as what we pursue in life is in our own best interests. When it isn't, we are faced with a serious problem.

## **Oops**

The brain was not designed to unlearn what motivates it. It's as if God never thought that anything pleasurable would be detrimental to a man, or that he'd become obligated to act towards his own demise.

## **Willpower**

Willpower and motivation are divergent entities. We do not apply willpower over our selves; we apply it towards our motivations, both consciously and unconsciously. Addicts don't continue to use drugs because they're not trying; they're trying hard, but they're trying to use drugs, oftentimes without realizing it.

Staying sober is like curling. One does not impose their will over themselves, they incline the



stone in a better direction by staying aware of the big picture, carefully adjusting its trajectory with minor adjustments in their life. Sweep! Sweep!

## **Mistaken**

Not only are the majority of our decisions made without thinking, many of the ones that we think we've reasoned out are in fact made unconsciously. We become aware of them before acting and believe we thought them up, when in fact they were made unconsciously.

## **Falling Off the Wagon**

Oftentimes, you'll see people fall off the wagon just as they seem to be getting better. The reason? Addiction saps the strength of people: emotionally, physically, mentally. After the use of drugs ceases, this energy begins to be restored. The more energy the body has to spend, the more it can allot towards what motivates it. And what is a person who is recently clean most motivated to do?

Use drugs.

## **The Deadly Process**

Motivation:

Brain experiences pleasure (or diminished pain) repeatedly due to a stimulus.

Brain decides that stimulus warrants repeated pursuit.

Stimulus joins a list of other pursuits that motivate an individual.

Collisions between conflicting motivations are resolved by a) the quality of pleasure and b) what decision has been made previously.

If this decision isn't obvious, the collision is settled consciously. If one motivation is repeatedly chosen over another, the loser in the debate is discarded, and subsequent decisions are made unconsciously.

## **Evolution**

If you believe in evolution, the motivation

problem makes a lot of sense. Human beings are superior to animals in the complexity of our consciousness. It's possible that an animal doesn't even have a consciousness. What, then, compels an animal without a consciousness, without rational thought, to do what it does? Instinct. Desire. Habit. Learned behavior. Although our consciousness has developed to the point where we can use reason to make our decisions, much of what we do is still accomplished unconsciously, like an animal, based on instinct, desire, habit and learned behavior.

Perhaps we're not as different from apes as we'd like to think. And perhaps evolution is not finished, after all. It's entirely possible that, as man continues to develop, addiction will steadily fall away, then disappear. That our destiny is to become a purely autonomous being, to have a wholly self-determining mind.

## **Distinct**

Motivation is a distinct process from addiction. It's coerced by cocaine into inspiring the downward spiral, but its process is not distorted in any way. We prioritize the use of cocaine in our lives in exactly the same way that we prioritize falling in love, tending to our household, caring for our children, enjoying time with friends, working towards career goals.

## **Fascination**

I find cocaine fascinating. Others find my fascination misguided, and a little pathetic. But when they start blathering on about women, wealth and consumer goods, I find their fascination misguided, and a little pathetic. Don't let the masses fool you: nothing is sacred unless you make it sacred (or someone bombards you with influence).

## **Displacement**

The motivation to use cocaine can be

displaced, just as the motivations that it surpassed can be displaced. Until this happens, an addict will continue to act with an intent to use. **Displacement occurs only when one motivation is repeatedly sacrificed for the sake of another.** Unfortunately, displacement of high-order motivations is a subconscious process. The only way to reprogram yourself is through repeated action.

## **Impulsive**

The repercussions of an addict's single-mindedness are extraordinary. With the loss of each enduring pursuit, of every responsibility, the addict becomes increasingly short-tempered, reactionary, short-sighted, compulsive, impatient. This may be due to the removed importance of anything but cocaine, which gratifies extensively and immediately.

I've been troubled on numerous occasions by temptations unrelated to drugs—it seems as though complete recovery requires abstinence from anything

instantly gratifying, as if the mind can no longer function in this manner without putting the body at risk.

## **Bad For Bad**

I started out as an alcoholic. A blackout drinker ... I chased the next beer like I chased the next hit. Then I started using cocaine (*my drug of choice*) seriously ... and I didn't drink like that anymore. One compulsion traded for another: motivation works the same when it trades out bad for bad.

## **Nihilism**

You cannot continuously compromise something and still believe that it's important to you. For example, I kept getting fired because I couldn't provide a consistent effort; this ruined a promising career path. Soon I found myself debasing the whole idea of having a successful career. *The motivation to use cocaine eventually displaces all other*

*motivations.* Soon life itself has no meaning.

## **Compulsion?**

Moderation is achieved through balance, a constant cycling between motivational pursuits. When one aspect of life is pursued to the detriment of all others, as is the case with cocaine, as can be the case with sex or money or gambling, this imbalance appears as a compulsion.

## **White Knuckles**

Trying to quit by focusing the will, sometimes referred to as “white knuckling it,” actually exacerbates the problem. As strength is delegated to pursuing motivation, an addict's imperative to use becomes stronger in turn. “Trying not to” doesn't help because it doesn't make the imperative to use any less valid within the subconscious mind, nor does it reduce its priority. Unfortunately, these areas of the psyche aren't under conscious control. Of course, not trying to quit accomplishes

nothing as well, so addicts continuously apply their will against the problem when they can spare the energy, spending the rest of their strength attempting to hold off the forces which will eventually take them down.

## **Sex, Money, Success**

Sex, money, success: the three most reinforced motivations in American society. I fell out of love with all of them while using cocaine; there was no way to maintain their pursuit, not in any meaningful way. Now sober, I wonder how meaningful any of them truly are; they all seem dehumanizing, not at all gratifying. Welcome to the matrix.

This perspective may be the greatest gift addiction has to offer, but it also makes finding new pursuits very difficult, which is a dangerous situation. The failures of a nation become one's personal problem.



## Positive and Negative

Motivation does not appear to be a rational process ... and it isn't. There's no weighing of the scales ... motivation is pure positive reinforcement, it's pure pursuit; what's considered attainable in life is never sought through avoidance. This explains why addicts continue to use, why they continue to want, why they are forced to say "no" a million times. Our minds are telling us to *Get It! Get It! Get It!*

Aversion to negative consequences works both on a subconscious level (If I drive my car into a wall, I will hurt myself) and a conscious one (If I sleep with my secretary, my wife my find out, divorce me and I'll have to give up half my money). The difference between the two appears to be the complexity of the consequence; if there is no obvious danger, it's up to the rational mind to intervene and prevent the action from taking place. The consequences of drug use are generally not obvious, and so require conscious intervention.

This is what makes vigilance paramount to recovery (and what makes recovery so difficult).

## **Exhaustion**

When we're exhausted, whether it be physically or emotionally, it's easier to allow our unconscious mind to make decisions for us. In the case of addiction, this prevents rational thinking from keeping us out of trouble. Hungry? Angry? Lonely? Tired?

## **Sum Total**

No single motivation will convince a cocaine addict to quit: not family, not health, not self respect, neither love nor career. However, the sum total of these motivations, all of which will remain unfulfilled if using were to continue, should be enough.

## **Whither Prudence?**

The influence of adverse consequences on decision-making is inversely proportional to the

pleasure of the action which is being considered. The more pleasurable the motivation, the less the negative consequences of pursuing it will be considered during decision-making. It's possible that addiction is simply a weakness of negative feedback, that addicts can not convince themselves of the obvious because their ability to consider negative repercussions is retarded.

## **Complex**

Human behavior is a complex problem. What we are doing at any given moment and what we choose to do in the following moment are the result of several different competing motivations, some reasonable, some not, some intelligent, some not, some beneficial, some not so beneficial.

## **Truisms**

There's a truism that "we judge ourselves by our intentions, while others judge us by our actions." We can take this one step further. Not

only do other people judge us by what we've done, we act based on what we've done before. It's as if there's an invisible spectator at the center of our being, who watches us carefully, then chooses what we do based on what he's seen us do before, ignoring completely our noble intentions. This reminds me of another truism: we are truly "creatures of habit."

# Psychological

## Arrested

One of the stranger facets of human being is the persistence of emotional distress. Emotions are reactions; events precipitate them. When something "extreme" happens to us, we experience an emotion of some sort ... anger, sadness, joy, what have you. The strength and duration of this emotion are predicated on the event that inspired it; if a parent dies, there is quite a bit of sadness. If your home team loses, there's not as much. This is all very straightforward. What makes emotions complicated is that we can arrest them, stifle them, stuff them away. There are many reasons for doing this, but the reason is unimportant compared to the effect.

An emotion that hasn't been fully experienced appears to be stored in the mind so that it can be fully experienced at a later point of time. It's as if a timer is set at the moment a traumatic event

occurs ... the amount of time we spend reacting to that event, emoting, keeps the timer ticking. At some point, we no longer have an emotional response to the event. However, if we choose to avoid reacting, to avoid the emotional response, our mind doesn't simply discard the event. It stores it, so that we can recall what happened and experience the emotion to its conclusion at some later point of time. Until we do so, this event/emotion pair remains in our mind and affects us in an adverse way. Only by remembering the event, and experiencing the emotion to it fullest, will it dissipate in our memory. Until then, we are nagged by its presence.

## **Splinters**

Cocaine significantly distorts perceptions and emotions. I'll never be as terrified as when cocaine made me paranoid; I'll never be as depressed as when I was coming down. Unfortunately, distortion makes these sensations no less relevant

in my mind. And no less forgettable.

The further down the spiral you fall, the more likely something disturbing is going to take place when you're high. When one is consumed with trying to manage their addiction (the unmanageable), they can't follow these emotions through to their conclusion. They shrug them off, forget them ... but they never go away. Instead, disturbing memories accumulate in your mind, waiting to be revisited so that the corresponding emotions can be experienced to their conclusion. My early sobriety was peppered not only with disturbing memories, but the emotions associated with them.

Think of a splinter. A splinter hurts when it goes in; it hurts a little just by being there. It hurts when you nudge it. What hurts the most is pulling a splinter out; it hurts a little even after it's gone. Until a splinter is pulled out, though, the pain will never go away completely, though sometimes it seems easier just to leave it be. The memories of the horrible things that happened when I

used cocaine remained lodged in my mind until they were revisited, just like splinters remain lodged in the flesh until extracted. The effect of these mental splinters is not easily quantifiable, but it's certainly adverse.

When thinking back on a disturbing past event, my emotional state changed to however I felt when that event took place – fear, shame, anger, sadness. This process was profoundly disturbing, but I believe necessary. By rethinking those events, reexperiencing them, although they remained unpleasant in the mind, the emotional/physical reaction to them was alleviated. Replaying them removed their influence. It removed the splinter.

Most of the time, these memories arrived on their own. Just sitting quietly brought them into consciousness. During the first few months, this was happening several times a day ... thankfully, it slowed down considerably over time.

I believe that this process can not complete successfully until mental balance is reached,



until preoccupation with cravings comes to an end. It seems that the mind, once it's no longer consumed with finding and consuming cocaine, begins to tend to itself "psychologically." Traumatic memories are recalled in an effort to remove their influence. Returning to the metaphor, it starts pulling splinters.

## **Anesthetic**

Cocaine's medicinal purpose is as an anesthetic. When applied to a wound, it numbs it. Cocaine is also effective as an emotional anesthetic. Feeling bored, lonely, afraid, guilty, angry, ashamed? Cocaine can take you from the deepest depression to the height of pleasure in seconds. This effect is not soon forgotten. Lingering emotions from the dope fiend lifestyle can create unwelcome emotions, and with them the desire for an anesthetic. This is why we have the 4th through 10th steps:

4. Made a searching and fearless moral

inventory of ourselves.

5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

The idea behind these is simple: by avoiding wrongdoing, admitting missteps, eliminating resentment and rectifying wrongs wherever possible, strong negative emotions such as anger, guilt, shame and fear are sidestepped, which removes the desire for emotional anesthesia.

Unfortunately, the 12 Steps impose religious concepts such as penance, divine forgiveness and supplication; these confuse the issue and intent behind very productive approaches. They also imply a weakness of character that I'm not convinced exists; people routinely screw each other over who aren't addicted to drugs. People on drugs may do so more frequently, but it's out of necessity.

One's ability to withstand strong emotions in sobriety likely varies on how often they used cocaine to numb similar sensations, and how troubled they are by them generally. What seems clear is that one is more susceptible to them in the early stages of sobriety, which is unfortunate because that's when they will have to face most of them. This is yet another reason that eliminating the use of cocaine from one's life is incredibly difficult.

## **Reasons**

The reasons why one starts to abuse drugs can often be psychologically explained: peer pressure,

social anxiety, emotional disturbance resulting from childhood.

However, once you're addicted to cocaine, that's the only reason you continue to use it. *Addiction is its own reward; it's every reason why.* One cannot fix their addiction by coping with the psychological basis of its beginnings. Though they should remain aware of what they are ... if they still exist, they could draw them back in, should they overcome the motivation problem.

# Imagination

## Romanticizing Life

The world is brutal: it's filled with death and shit and piss and vinegar. It's enormous, and complicated beyond measure. Our psyches are unfit to understand the world at large, to sustain any sense of well-being with the terrifying things that surround us. And so we have been blessed with the ability to understand the world poorly, to recast what we see around us in a different shade of blue.

But while romanticizing life is a necessity for artists, it kills addicted people every day.

## The Imaginative Type

There are certain types of people who are more inclined towards imaginative thinking than reality-perception. "Dreamers," "left-brained" people, "creative types"--often these associations are made with artists, but this type of mind is not limited to artists, it can be found across a range of

professions—a “big picture” person, someone with the ability to abstract concepts and make associations between abstract concepts, the ability to perceive systems as a whole as opposed to piecemeal examination—these traits are to be found in any number of people. They all describe a mind that's more inclined towards imagination than what's taking place in front of it.

It's also a mind that's susceptible to addiction: less likely to see circumstances, more likely to become infatuated with the rush.

## **Blindfold**

Imagination: a blindfold that never comes off.

## **Stigma**

*Big talker, flake, a dishonest person, talks out of his ass:* I've heard all of these condemnations, primarily from people who felt wronged after I failed to follow through on some

plan that I'd thought up, then committed to, then reneged on. What they didn't understand, didn't care to understand, and certainly wouldn't excuse, is that my mind is always changing course, that I'm always making decisions, even when those decisions have no chance of coming true. Now, when I make them, I have every intention of following through. But it doesn't happen. It's as if the part of my brain that acts exists in a different person than the one who decides what to do.

The wall between my imagination and "cogent planning self" has been breached. I've managed to convince myself that every daydream is something that could happen, should happen, is going to happen.

## **Suture**

*Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His Will for us and the power to carry that out.*

Addiction can be psychically sutured off by eliminating the imagination's influence on life, acting solely under the momentum of surrounding events ("God's will"), giving oneself a motivational lobotomy.

## **Hypnotic**

I often find myself imagining and perceiving at the same time. In fact, I've found my imagination imposes itself on my perception. This is problematic, for reality is where consequences lie, and consequences keep people from making self-destructive decisions.

When coupled with desire, our imaginations spawn rich fantasies. The stronger the desire, the more intense the fantasy. With desires as strong as the desire to use cocaine, our dreams can impose themselves on reality while we walk through the world, suspending our ability to make decisions rationally, placing us in a hypnotic state. On more than one occasion, I found myself on the way to



purchase dope, at the dealer's house buying dope, or sitting in a hotel room doing dope, wondering how I ended up there.

## **Aftermath**

### **Being Conscious of The Unconscious**

When we think about ourselves, we generally think of the part of us that experiences life ... the part that remembers, that figures things out, the part that speaks and feels emotions. We can refer to this as our conscious mind.

However, our conscious mind doesn't always determine what we do. This makes sense, actually ... if we were forced to think about everything we did, we'd become exhausted pretty quickly. Instead, once we've done something repeatedly, we tend not to think about it before doing it again. If we spend enough time in the same routine, we seldom think about what we're doing; it all seems to happen automatically. This doesn't mean we don't notice that we're doing something, or

that it can be done without paying attention, but that it doesn't require us to make a conscious decision in order to get it done. We can call the part of us that performs tasks automatically, without forethought, our unconscious mind.

One of the interesting things about being alive is that our conscious mind does not have direct access to our unconscious mind. In fact, changing the way in which we behave requires extraordinary effort, because we were designed to run on autopilot. And for most people, this works out well: we grow comfortable in our routines, enjoying the occasional irregularity of life, and watching things change around us over the course of our life.

However, if you're addicted to cocaine, this approach does not work. Using cocaine programs you to use more cocaine. Cocaine is such an intensely-pleasurable experience, at least for a few hours, that the brain will constantly choose it over other more-productive tasks, even tasks that are necessary

for long-term well being. The unconscious mind, that invisible person who lives inside of you, making decisions based on what you've done already, will focus itself quite happily on doing cocaine, the same way it once focused on career, love, money, what have you. To your unconscious mind, cocaine is a reasonable decision.

Your task, as someone who needs to quit doing cocaine, is to reprogram your unconscious mind. The only way to do this is to use your conscious mind to figure out what your unconscious mind is doing, then apply yourself towards changing its task list.

## **90 in 90**

Most of our decisions are made based on what we've done in the recent past ... this explains why newcomers to 12 step programs are encouraged to do "90 meetings in 90 days" and why many meetings are held during evening hours: in essence, they are imprinting themselves with a routine that replaces drug taking.

## Out of Control?

Even if he's able to subdue his motivation to use cocaine, an addict will be tormented by the idea that his life is out of control, and that he must make drastic changes to "make things right."

Anytime we suppress what's important to us, we must suffer the protestations of our unconscious mind. We begin to question the legitimacy of our choices; we look to reestablish our former "balance." We are often troubled by an impending sense of doom, even as we get back on track to a healthier and more productive lifestyle.

## God's Will

If I allow myself to plan only what will occur today, to act on nothing except what takes place in front of my face, I can effectively short circuit addiction. This is what they call *God's will*. *God's will* is the set of events that take place naturally, sitting still, within the tide of life. My will is the collection of events that I set into

motion, to further along something that I've planned. Because doing something as self-destructive as using cocaine will never "just come up," acting solely within the confines of immediacy effectively prevents relapse, God or no God.

## **Stasis**

The temptation to use drugs may not have a thing to do with getting high. The frustration of not pursuing what you want is as compelling as the desire to be intoxicated, particularly if you feel bored and ineffectual (which most people do early in sobriety).

It's exceptionally difficult to live one's life with a primary goal of avoiding pain. Even those who have suffered greatly will eventually tire of stasis; until they're successful at finding new goals to apply themselves towards, dope will remain an attractive alternative. Getting high is about more than just being high ... it's a lifestyle. It requires planning and commitment, coordination and

action. Until it's replaced, the unconscious will consider it a judicious use of time.

## **New Pursuits**

An addict can silence his cravings and derail the motivation to use but ultimately his success depends on whether he creates a life that's sufficiently rewarding to stave off a return to the high life.

Until the motivation (not the desire) to use drugs is supplanted by more productive (less destructive) motivations, such as friendship, career, love or fiscal responsibility, the recovering addict will continue to feel compelled to use drugs, and will likely engage in drug-seeking behavior, to some degree.

It is very frustrating, especially to someone who once vigorously pursued healthy goals, but the process to incorporate these pursuits into life is very time-consuming, even and especially if they were once important to the addict. If, for example,

an addict once sacrificed his friendships to continue using cocaine, he cannot expect to be motivated to establish friendships merely by quitting the drug. Only by participating in activities that have establishing friendships as a goal, and by participating in these activities repeatedly over time, will this person begin to unconsciously apportion time to maintaining friendships. Until that occurs, he will have to consciously motivate himself to participate in those activities, which will, to him, seem like a waste of time.

For this reason, the more a person sacrifices on behalf of their addiction, the more difficult it is to stay sober for a long period of time. Too, someone who wasn't passionate about much in life before they became addicted (a young person, for example) will have trouble to a sober lifestyle. They simply aren't motivated to do anything but use drugs, even if they no longer desire to be intoxicated, even if they're very aware of the

consequences. Truly, sobriety is more about living than it is about quitting.

## **Dope or Death**

When thinking of the future, sometimes only dope and death seem like fated circumstances.

Depending on far you took your addiction, sobriety might appear to be a life with nothing to pursue, nothing to look forward to, a life of survival and nothing else. As bizarre as it may sound, suicidal thoughts are more prevalent among those who have achieved sobriety than those still mired in their addiction. Why? Because without dope, there's nothing to pursue, there's no reward, nothing that needs tending to, nothing to satisfy. The world seems cold and devoid of purpose. Without goals, there's nothing to hope for. Without hope, there's not much to live for.

Until purpose is regained, one may find themselves choosing between dope and suicide, hoping to abstain from both but wondering why they bother



to persist.

## **Persistence**

The world will make a place for you if you persist in interacting with it.

## **Decision Making**

The fewer decisions you make, the better. Why? Because abstinence in itself does not reprioritize the addicted mind.

## **Self Respect**

When the need for self-respect is lost, the worst of it begins. When it's regained, the worst of it is over.

## **Confined**

Any living situation that confines the will, whether it be imprisonment, halfway house, exile or otherwise, is extraordinarily helpful in bridging the period between first abstinence and resumption of healthy routine. The more decisions one has to

make, the more life management he is responsible for, the more freedom he has, the more at risk he is to himself. As abominable as this might sound, it happens to be true. Also true is that this confinement must provide the opportunity to build a life again, to adjust to that life, to make that life a routine. This is a difficult find.

## **Approach**

The same mental approach that mollifies a Christian, that makes citizens useful to overlords and pencil pushers, will keep an addict from using drugs. The “forecasting” portion of the human psyche is neutered, leaving both the pious and immoral rolling gently in the tide, acting only on what's set in from of them, concerned only with what will take place during the course of that day, never planning a getaway, never planning an ascendancy.

For an addict, this portion of the psyche has been compromised by the desire to use, meaning any effort on the part of his “planning mind” will

result in intoxication. By living his life "one day at a time," by following "God's will," as opposed to his own, an addict prevents himself from creating scenarios where he gets to use. The success of this approach depends on a) his being able to deduce the difference between decisions he's planned and decisions that are being made for him, b) the physiological effects of the drug no longer compelling him and c) the life afforded by the community surrounding him being sufficiently beneficial.

## **Community**

A person fools himself if he believes his fortunes completely self-determined; only a willful lack of participation will prevent him from assuming the fate afforded by the community. "The will of the community" is the inertia of events produced by collective action—this explains why large cities are more energizing than small burbs. Without the actions of other people, we grow stale on our own

malaise.

## **Real For Unreal**

Cocaine floods the brain with neurotransmitters, activating regions that naturally produce sensations such as satisfaction, love, sexual excitement. The rational mind is not accustomed to these sensations occurring without stimulus, and so it seeks reasons for the satisfaction, the love, the sexual excitement. This is why, while intoxicated, everything seems OK to the user, fated, optimistic; even the harshest realities become acceptable and hope rises in the most ridiculous notions—this makes the artificial feelings of satisfaction relevant. Conversations are started with strangers, very personal information and/or ideas are shared, promises are made, amorous pledges—these to balance out the artificial sensations of love. Pornography, prostitutes, risky sex—these are pursued so that the rational mind has justification for sexual

excitement. Real explanations are sought for unreal feelings.

When real stimuli for unreal emotions are consistently sought, reality becomes a poor excuse for itself, not very meaningful, interesting, truthful. The world stops making sense. If, in fact, it ever did.

## **Perilous**

Sober life is often difficult, but far easier than coping with an active compulsion. Easier, but less fulfilling. Cocaine is the ultimate reward. It gave me a purpose, a far more tangible purpose than what life offers today ... just get high! When I got high, if I managed to avoid jail, death, or some other catastrophe, I had fulfilled my purpose, my life had meaning. And what's the meaning of life today? Money? Love? Duty? Family? I remember gazing fondly on the pile of power which became my life and I start to think—why bother with sobriety? Why bother with a life that promises nothing and

only provides occasional rewards, rewards that can never surpass the sensation of the first hit, never even come close?

This is a very perilous manner of thinking, accurate though it may be.

## **First Day Of Rehab**

They should tell you the first day of rehab that you will never feel pleasure the same way again, that you're best off trying to forget it. They should tell you that nothing will ever reward you like a hit of crack or a shot of dope. They should tell you that you are going to have to pursue your own rewards, and make them important to you. Instead, they make you pray and quibble endlessly about regrets.

## **The 12 Step Solution**

The 12 step solution: subjugate the will completely. The third step instructs that the will should be handed over to a higher power, and in turn

a request is made that the higher power will hand a new will back, a new set of instructions. If you assume that nothing external is taking place here, what happens first is that the newly sober addict subordinates himself, leaving his will, every action he takes, subject to scrutiny. If that were all there was to the program, it would never work. The second part, in which the addict convinces himself that another will exists, another set of instructions, and that these instructions will be given to him if he keeps himself from acting prematurely--this is the basis of the 12 step program. Having taken these steps, an addict now questions his or her every motivation, and assumes that by zeroing out as much of his desire as possible, something new will be put in place. What would that be? Vague suggestions are offered by the program ... charitable works, going to meetings, etc. ... but in reality all an addict is doing is loosening their grip over themselves by suggesting that there is another way to live, namely without

the will that got them into trouble.

## **Conflicted**

Oftentimes, a decision can serve both productive and destructive purposes. For example, taking a vacation provides both needed rest and the opportunity to get high without consequences; trying to figure out what to do in these situations is very troubling--anytime addiction can assert itself, my entire being becomes conflicted.

The answer? Only results count: even if I take a vacation without using, my addiction's intent is disturbing. If I go on vacation and get high, it doesn't mean my intent to rest was misguided or unnecessary. Addiction is only a motivation; while it's often troubling, even crippling due to mental torment, it means nothing in and of itself. Only using will kill me, hurt me, get me thrown in jail. Planning to use is just an idea, masturbation to destruction.



## **Profundity**

Addiction's profundity is pure side effect. Addicts become wizened through a departure from moral thinking, for a moral thinking drug addict would die of shame. So we release ourselves, and in that release we become aware of relevant truths unavailable to our sober and responsible neighbors.

## **Love**

The best chance of success in defeating addiction is afforded to those for whom love is life.

# Table of Contents

Foreward.....	1
Philosophical Imperative.....	2
No Prescription.....	2
Abstinence.....	3
Extraordinary.....	3
Poorly Defined.....	3
Addiction, Defined.....	4
Path to Addiction.....	5
Why?.....	6
Goals.....	6
Selfish and Insane.....	7
Denial.....	8
Path to Recovery.....	8
Inaction.....	9
Contrary.....	9
Enlightenment.....	10
Marionettes.....	10
Hungry.....	12
Cocaine.....	12
Rock.....	12
I Am So Fucking High.....	12
Hunger.....	12
Chemical imbalance.....	13
Glutamate.....	13
Comorbidity.....	14
Hope.....	15
The Motivation Problem.....	16
Overview.....	16
Sobriety.....	18
Autopilot.....	19
Oops.....	19
Will Power.....	19
Mistaken.....	20
Falling Off the Wagon.....	20
The Deadly Process.....	20
Evolution.....	21
Distinct.....	22

Displacement.....	22
Impulsive.....	23
Bad For Bad.....	23
Nihilism.....	23
Compulsion?.....	24
White Knuckles.....	24
Sex, Money, Success.....	25
Positive and Negative.....	25
Exhaustion.....	26
Sum Total.....	26
Whither Prudence?.....	26
Complex.....	27
Truisms.....	27
Psychological.....	28
Arrested.....	28
Splinters.....	29
Anesthetic.....	31
Reasons.....	32
Imagination.....	34
Romanticizing Life.....	34
The Imaginative Type.....	34
Blindfold.....	35
Stigma.....	35
Suture.....	35
Imposition.....	36
Fantasy.....	36
Aftermath.....	38
Being Conscious of The Unconscious.....	38
90 in 90.....	39
Out of Control?.....	40
God's Will.....	40
Stasis.....	40
Temptation and Frustration.....	41
New Pursuits.....	41
Dope or Death.....	42
Persistence.....	43
Decision Making.....	43
Self Respect.....	43
Confined.....	43

Inertia.....44

Community.....46

Real For Unreal.....46

Perilous.....47

First Day Of Rehab.....48

The 12 Step Solution.....48

Conflicted.....49

Profundity.....49

Love.....50