

6 Step Process for Breaking Free From Emotional Traps and Addictions

Addiction. That's a heavy word, but I do want to devote a short article to the subject because I think it is worth a quick look. When I say addiction, I don't just mean traditional addiction to chemical substances like alcohol or other mind altering drugs. Research has found that some of the most addictive and indeed most powerful substances on the planet are, in fact, produced by our own bodies "in our brains. They are the chemicals that govern our emotions and our emotional reactions to different stimuli. I'm talking about [emotional addictions](#).

You've probably heard of endorphins, which are the "feel good" peptides. This was a buzzword that was all the rage in the 80s when the fitness craze first started. Endorphins are the body's natural pain killer and can have an opiate effect on us, inducing a feeling of "well-being". This hype led to the terminology "runner's high", which refers to that great feeling people can achieve when they repeatedly do strenuous exercise.

Now, that's all very well but you may be asking what it has to do with the context of this article. And the answer is this: just as you can become addicted to "fitness" because it gives you that "lift" that you associate with the release of endorphins, you can, in fact, become addicted to ANY chemical release in your body that is a hormonal reaction to stimuli – whether it's associated with a "positive" emotion or a "negative" emotion. And when I say "addicted", I really do mean addicted, physically. Those natural chemicals that are produced in your glands will lock onto the cells of your body and alter their performance and structure in the same way that any synthetic drug does.

The significance of this fact is simply that you can become addicted to a negative thought cycle or pattern of behavior and seek to repeat thoughts and actions that will cause a release of those chemicals in your brain "even if it doesn't feel "good". The cells of your body will crave the chemicals and you will feel compelled to induce a peptide release, which will give your body its "fix". This is why people can become entrenched in negative thought cycles which can be associated with feelings of "victim-hood", "shame", "guilt", "blame", "powerlessness", "overwhelmed-ness" or any other state.

Have you ever known someone who was always the "victim"? In the little things in life as well as the big, they were always being done some injustice? And they have a wealth of stories in their repertoire of instances where life was unfair? That's a pretty easy example and you can probably think of other, better examples "like someone who feels inferior no matter what, or someone who is always jilted by the opposite sex. From the outside looking in, it seems easy to see that their attitude is the foundation for their experience and they therefore seem almost driven to find ways of repeating and reaffirming those experiences.

I write all of this only to say that if you feel you are caught in a negative thought cycle or pattern, be it guilt, blame, anger or whatever else, you may be dealing with a chemical issue as well as an emotional one. Take stock of where you are and ask yourself if you might be caught in a chronic pattern, which is not serving you. If you find that you are repeatedly experiencing strong, unpleasant emotions or spiraling thought cycles over which you have little or no control, there is a good chance that you are dealing with an emotional addiction. The rule of thumb is, if you can't control it, you are addicted to it.

The good news is that you CAN break free from any negative pattern or cycle that has you entrenched. It will take some work, but it is definitely worth it! It is the only path to true freedom and empowerment. Recognition and ownership (taking personal responsibility for it) is the first and hardest step. Here is a list of things that I have found are crucial steps for breaking free of patterns. These are elements I have discovered based on personal experience:

1. **STOP** making excuses. As justified as you may be for allowing yourself to give place to blame, anger or whatever other emotion you are trying to break free from, you must take personal responsibility for your own reaction. When you find yourself saying, "I don't want to give in to anger (for example), BUT...", stop yourself. Don't allow yourself to make it ok on this occasion because this time it really is justified. Justified or not, giving in is giving your power away. Instead say, "That person or circumstance may be idiotic but thankfully I am bigger than that and I am calling my own shots." Get your power back.

2. **FIND** a new thought or belief that can replace the old, disempowering belief. You may need to introspect or meditate on this one for a time before you find something that will work. It needs to be something that will ring true for you. If you look closely at the core belief behind the negative emotion you are trying to release, there will generally be a fear attached to it. For example, if you are caught in a cycle of anger and rage, investigate the scenarios that call that anger forth in you and ask yourself what fear lies beneath the anger. It may be a fear of being abandoned or of feeling inferior. If you are caught in a victimhood cycle, it may be that you are afraid of being powerless and unable to take care of yourself or get what you need. Only you can know, but it will take some soul-searching to get behind it. Once you feel you have pinpointed the fear, talk yourself through it and establish a new belief based on the opposite premise. For example, if you suffer from feelings of inferiority, you can talk yourself through a new belief: "The truth is, others can only make me feel inferior if I allow myself to feel inferior, but in reality there is no such thing. I am neither inferior nor superior to anyone; nor is anyone inferior or superior to me. We all have good and bad in us; strengths and weaknesses. Right now I choose to focus on my strengths." Make up a short affirmation that summarizes the new thought. For example, "We ALL have strengths and weaknesses but I choose to focus on my strengths." Repeat this new affirmation to yourself many times a day. I have a list of affirmations that I made up and I say them ALL THE TIME. I've said them so often that they practically run on automatic pilot in my brain now – almost like a song you can't stop singing over and over.

3. **AS SOON AS** you realize you are spiraling down that familiar but unwanted path – and in the beginning that may not be until an hour or even a day later – **STOP** and force yourself to replace the old, familiar thought pattern with your new belief. Repeat it to yourself over and over. I can tell you that in the beginning, this will cause an inner dialogue of struggle because your brain

will keep going back to the old thought pattern and tell you that the new belief is untrue based on your past experience. You won't be able to help it because it is a deeply entrenched habit. Keep going back to the new belief. Do it again and again, every time you catch yourself engaging in the old thought pattern. It may seem like a tennis match in the beginning and you may feel like you're going a bit mad, having this internal argument with yourself. Don't give in. Just keep doing it, no matter what. You will simply have to persevere and "willpower" your way through this. That's how breaking free of any addiction is. It's worth it!

4. **DISTRACT** yourself if you find the above process (internal argument) going on for too long or you are unable to let go. Put on your favorite music or movie or go to a place you love to be and just **GET YOUR MIND OFF OF IT**. The worst thing you can do is to continue in the negative thought cycle. So if you can't seem to turn the locomotion of thought around, just think about something else – something good or funny, something that takes your mind off of it.

5. **DO NOT** beat yourself up for falling into the old pattern. This will only lead to further negative downward spiral. It's ok that you can't let go of the old pattern within 2 minutes, 2 days, weeks, months or whatever. When you have a setback, as soon as you become conscious of what's going on, **STOP** the negative thought cycle and set your intention to getting back on track. Just let it go

6. **CELEBRATE** when you feel you are making progress – no matter how small the progress! Give yourself some sort of reward for your success. In the beginning, it may be that you reward yourself simply for being able to distract yourself and let the thoughts go. That's fine. In the beginning, that **IS** progress! Find a way to recognize and acknowledge every little improvement because that is your proof that you **CAN** do it and it will set you up for going further next time. It is a matter of convincing yourself that the new belief **IS** true. It will fuel the flames of self-improvement and self-empowerment as you prove to yourself that you can get your power back and be deliberate and intentional in the way you live your life!

I will warn you that if you are caught in a negative pattern of behavior that is a duo – that is, with someone in particular where you play your part and the other plays his (or hers) – it will require extra effort to break yourself free because the other party most likely has his own addiction going on. He will therefore try very hard to keep you in your pattern so you can continue to give each other your "fix". When you take stock of your emotional repertoire to pinpoint negative emotional addictions, try to ascertain at the same time if there is a co-dependent relationship going on. If so, prepare yourself for the fact that the other will fight to keep you feeding the addiction. Whenever the unhealthy interaction between you kicks off, you will need to find a way to get out so that you can centre yourself and get on track.

Try to remember that "fixing the other guy's addiction" is **NOT** your responsibility, it's **HIS**. It won't really serve you to try and tell him to sort out his addiction or to try and fix both yours and his at the same time. Trying to fix someone else's experience can only end in frustration and tears. Only he can choose to get out of any emotional trap that he may have and he will have to come to his own realization and conclusion about that. Your job is **YOU** and your own self-empowerment. The best that you can offer anyone else is your own example of being empowered and living deliberately. When they see it, they will want some for themselves!

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Becca Kline is a freelance writer, blogger and platinum level expert author. Contributing to several niches including autism spectrum, parenting, personal development, personal empowerment and spiritual growth, her primary intention is to inspire others to grow beyond their current paradigm and reach their highest potential, one step at a time. Becca's professional background spans 3 countries (and languages) and includes over 20 years in finance, operations and marketing with several large international companies. Skilled in personnel management, motivation, training and process improvement, Becca has developed and run a number of training programs for employees on a variety of topics and processes. Privately, Becca is raising two magnificent sons with Asperger's Syndrome (autism spectrum disorders). Putting her knowledge and skills in personal motivation to use, she has developed unique and powerful techniques and processes for unlocking the potential of these extraordinary individuals.