

BREAKING ADDICTION

"I'd rather have a bottle in front of me than a frontal lobotomy"
- Dorothy Parker

In my work with clients in *The Awakening Intensive* I often frame transformation in terms of breaking addiction. We often think of addiction in relationship to a substance, but the dynamics are the same in the habits of mind, behavior and feeling states.

What discriminates addiction from simple preferences is their compulsive nature. We may prefer chocolate, but if only vanilla is available we are not likely to suffer unduly. Anything we are addicted to is covering up something in us that we have not faced in ourselves. Instead of facing the pain/fear/shame, we attempt to sooth and anesthetize ourselves with some habit that will push the unwanted experience out of our consciousness. Addictions are substitutes, and as such, can provide temporary relief but never real satisfaction. As Werner Erhart said, "You can never get enough of what you don't really want."



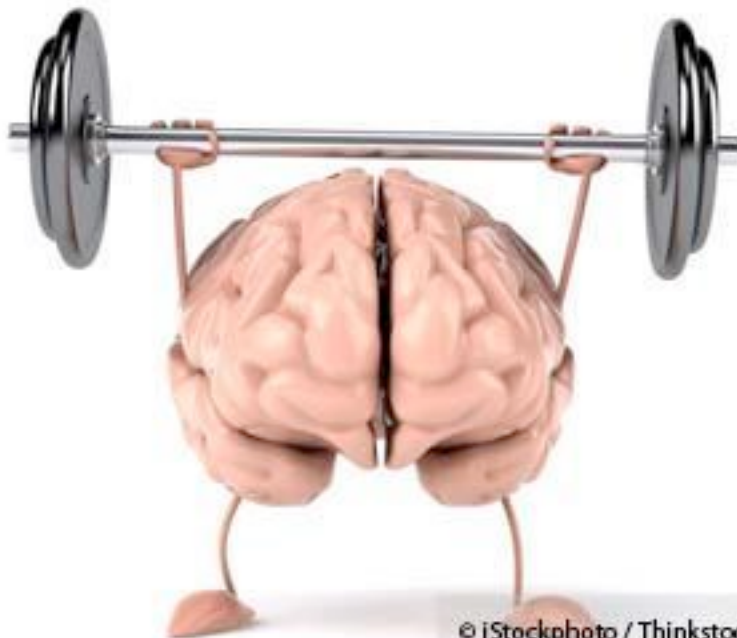
THIS SEEMS TO HAVE MORPHED FROM AFFECTION INTO SOMETHING ELSE ENTIRELY.

The dynamic of moving beyond addiction - whether it be to substances, food, shopping, gambling, addictive relationship, compulsive sex or our habits of thinking and "story" of deficiency - take us to the same point.

We eventually come face to face with the strong desire to indulge the addiction. We feel the pull, and our desire to indulge, in its rawest form. The bottle is in front of us. This is the crucial point - to break free of addiction we must fully experience the pull of desire and stay present to it. In Gangaji's words,

With addiction there has to come a point when you see that the desire is out of your control. Maybe the addiction is physiological. Maybe it has been practiced for so long that it has its own groove. But what is in your control, absolutely, is the willingness to not move when the desire appears. The willingness to neither indulge nor repress but to not move in the fire of this impulse. Because the addiction to mind or to habits can be so strong that there is the sense if you don't feed the addiction, you will die. Eventually, through the maturity of the soul, there is a willingness to say, "Okay, if I die I will die. But I am not going to follow this demon down this road again."

Staying present to the addictive desire will be experienced as a burning. It is actually the "burning off" off the attachment to the addiction - what is referred to in Eastern tradition as the burning of karma). What will then emerge into consciousness are the emotional states that have been "managed" or controlled by the behavior. Staying present to these will result in them burning off as well which will be followed by a deeper revelation of Essence, your authentic self. Being willing to face yourself in this way when necessary is the admission price of inner freedom. The reward - you get to live more fully in your authenticity!



ACTION STEPS

1. Begin to notice areas in your life that are compulsive (when I'm anxious I eat, or sleep). Notice this in behaviors, also in the habitual places in the mind you return to (I can't have it, I'm not enough).
2. Make a conscious choice for one week to not indulge in the behaviors or thoughts. This may not be easy. What happens if you don't indulge that thought or behavior? What begins to show itself?
3. At the end of the week give yourself a wonderful reward of something you really want other than the addiction.

