

www.5stepstoaddictionfreedom.com

The Food Addiction Factors

David Roppo

How to free yourself from emotional, compulsive or binge eating without ever leaving home

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
SECTION I – FOOD ADDICTION.....	5
Conventional Insanity.....	6
Tao of Food Addiction Freedom.....	19
Food Addiction Factors.....	25
Shedding those Unwanted LBS.....	33
SECTION II – DYSFUNCTION.....	40
Square Root of Addiction.....	41
Part-time Parents.....	44
Controlling Parents.....	46
Verbally Abusive Parents.....	48
Physically Abusive Parents	50
Sexually Abusive Parents.....	52
Alcoholic and/or Drug Addicted Parents.....	54
Extended Dysfunction.....	56
SECTION III – ADDICTION FREEDOM.....	58
The 5 Steps to Addiction Freedom.....	59
Step One; Unearth & Eliminate the Square Root.....	60
Step Two; Remove Emotional Baggage.....	73
Step Three; Cure Wounditis.....	79
Step Four; Awaken the Power within.....	85
Step Five; Practice Random Acts of Kindness.....	92
Conclusion.....	95

Introduction

You are about to embark on an important journey of self-discovery and personal growth that will ultimately lead to freedom from emotional, compulsive or binge eating. You will gain a clear understanding of why you use food compulsively and/or destructively. Contrary to popular belief, food addiction is not a learned behavior or an incurable brain disease. Furthermore, you are not chemically addicted to sugar, fat or carbohydrates and you're not genetically predisposed to those foods. In addition, a Vegan, raw food, high protein or any other diet will not remove your food addiction. And finally, the Twelve-Step Program of Overeaters Anonymous or Cognitive Behavioral Therapy isn't likely to end your food addiction since they fail in excess of ninety percent of the time! Alternatively, I'm going to reveal the root causes of food addiction and teach you how to liberate yourself from them, so even the mere thought of bingeing or eating food compulsively becomes completely repulsive to you!

This book is divided into three sections. The first will explore conventional treatments, the way of addiction freedom, food addiction factors and shedding unwanted LBS. In the second, I will outline the "square root" or direct fundamental cause of food addiction. In the third, I will outline "*The 5 Steps to Addiction Freedom*," giving you a complete plan for overcoming emotional, compulsive and binge eating.

I believe, with the utmost conviction, that I'm offering you a potentially revolutionary program. If you make a commitment to apply the five steps in their entirety, you will achieve freedom from emotional, compulsive or binge eating!

SECTION I – FOOD ADDICTION

Conventional Insanity

“Insanity: Doing the same thing over and over while expecting a different result!” –

Albert Einstein

So, you're addicted to food! You've wandered into a quagmire of emotional, compulsive or binge eating, and there isn't any solid ground in sight. You're up sugar, carbohydrate or junk food creek with a boat full of guilt and two broken paddles that are just dripping with shame. You feel unhappy, depressed, anxious, inadequate, powerless, and you just can't seem to get off the water and out of the boat. You've tried willpower, but you just can't resist the food that's calling out to you. You've tried every diet under the sun, and you've lost a few pounds here and there, but you always gain it back – plus more! You've tried to exercise, but no matter what you do, you just can't seem to lose body fat or reign in your destructive eating habits. Just when you've hit a new low, and you believe that things can not get much worse, you find yourself sitting in a room surrounded by your family. From their facial expressions and letters their holding, you quickly conclude that you're in the midsts of an intervention. Yes, you've been bushwhacked! One by one, each family member reads their letter, pummeling you with a barrage of blame and shame. And, after you've been reduced to a sobbing, pitiful mess, they cart you off to the local chapter of Overeaters Anonymous. As you enter the building and make your way to the basement, it becomes apparent that you don't belong. Just as you start to feel a bit uneasy, the leader welcomes you and asks you to repeat the following phrase: “Hi!

My name is _____, and, I'm a food addict!" After being lowered a few levels on the scale of humanity, you really feel like mud? In fact, you feel even more shameful than you did prior to the intervention. Well, I can relate because that's exactly how I felt after attending twelve-step meetings, and I've never even had an addiction. Not an empowering experience to say the least. Of course, your other alternative would have been to engage in some (CBT) Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. There, you would have been whisked off to the land of stoicism and the river of denial through a time portal of disconnection, which conveniently buries emotional issues deep in the bowels of ones soul. As you meandered through the land of false identity, you would have struggled to suppress your emotional issues, avoiding the painful process of facing reality. Doesn't sound much like the promise land, does it? Last time I checked, disconnecting from and ignoring a problem, doesn't make it magically disappear!

Over the past several decades, these conventional methods of food addiction treatment have been extremely unsuccessful. In fact, the rate of failure often exceeds ninety percent. Despite that lack-luster performance, year after year, the mainstream continues to follow the same course.

Since their inception, traditional recovery programs have largely been based on the disease concept. However, to date, there is no empirical evidence to suggest that addiction is anything of the sort. Food addiction strays even furthest from the disease model. Oh, there are some disease theorists who attempt to define food addiction as a

disease, however, I disagree. Even insurance carriers have begun to reject that notion and are subsequently denying coverage for food addiction treatment. The mainstream wants to label food addiction as a disease, but it really doesn't fit that definition. Disease is defined as a physical malady that can be pathologically diagnosed and treated. This does not aptly describe food addiction since, to date, there's no pathology for diagnosing it, and it generally consists of atypical and often erratic patterns of behavior. In my opinion, food addiction, or any addiction, for that matter, should not be classified as diseases because they are not. Addiction is a life issue, which is generally rife with self-esteem, personal power, personal identity and true purpose problems.

Ninety-five percent of all conventional treatment options are based on two modalities; (CBT) Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and The 12-Step Program. (CBT) employs stoicism while the 12-Step Program advocates powerlessness. Neither of them authentically addresses "the root cause" of food addiction.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is a blanket-term for psychotherapy systems that define psychological dysfunctions as learned beliefs, interpretations and responses as problematic behavior. The therapy aims to influence or change those problematic emotions and behaviors. (CBT) is based on the assumption that most emotional and behavioral reactions are learned. Therefore, the goal of therapy is to help clients unlearn their unwanted reactions and to learn a new way of reacting. Many of the CBT principles adopt stoicism; the emotional indifference, especially

admirable patience and endurance shown in the face of adversity. The therapist's goal is to conduct treatment sessions in a way that promotes the persons self-esteem, dignity and self-worth while teaching him or her to unlearn problematic behavior and replace it with more helpful behavior.

No one would dispute the fact that addictive behavior is problematic; however, unlearning it is an impossible task because addiction is not a learned response! Experience has taught me that the root cause of addiction is the emotional trauma caused by family dysfunction. This emotional trauma directly impacts ones self-esteem and often leads to habitual behavior. Addiction is a self-esteem issue. Self-esteem is defined as having confidence in your own merit as an individual person. This is absent from an addicted person's psyche. Obviously, the goal is to restore it. But, how does one obtain a greater sense of self-worth or a high level of self-esteem? Is it a commodity that can be purchased, a fruit that can be plucked from a tree or a behavior that can be learned? Well, the proponents of (CBT) would have you believe that it's a learned behavior. In my opinion, self-esteem can not be learned, purchased or discovered through external modification or stimuli. Possessing confidence and merit, as a person, is a product of self-love, and that comes from within. However, self-love must be born in the fire of liberation! Liberation is defined as achieving freedom from traditional, socially imposed constraints. In regard to addiction, these socially imposed constraints are directly related to patterns of family dysfunction. Ironically, (CBT) principles are based on stoicism, which encourages a passive approach of patience and endurance in the face of adversity, rather than an active

method of liberation. But, how can someone gain his or her self-respect and embrace self-love by taking a stoic and passive approach to the dysfunctional patterns that caused the addiction to begin with? In my opinion, this approach is not only fundamentally amiss, but it has also contributed to the widespread abuse of antidepressants.

Addiction counselors who employ (CBT) generally combine it with the support of a 12-Step Program, which tends to feed the stoic approach of (CBT.) This increases the levels of emotional distress. The model outlines depression as a fundamental and psychological dysfunction that creates feelings of hopelessness and powerlessness. Ironically, the 12-Step Program promotes self-incrimination and powerlessness. Bombarding group members with shame and guilt, this program instills the inferior beliefs of personal shortcomings and defects of character, which is completely counterproductive to increasing self-esteem.

In summary, the primary purpose of (CBT) is to teach addicted people to modify their problematic behavior by unlearning and replacing it with more helpful behavior. This is supposed to lead to an increase in self-esteem. But, taking a stoic approach to a problem that requires liberation and empowerment is absolutely absurd and hypocritical. The very concept of (CBT) undermines and contradicts the psychotherapy community's basic understanding of self-esteem. I wonder if the proponents of (CBT) deal with their own emotional issues by using a stoic approach to, essentially, sweep them under the rug! As I stated earlier, ignoring a problem does

not make it magically disappear. The pile under the rug keeps growing until one falls flat on their emotional face!

The 12-Step Program of Alcoholics Anonymous has been in existence since 1935 and has been credited with helping millions of people overcome drug and alcohol addictions. However, much of that so-called success has been widely disputed. In fact, several studies have contradicted that success. R.G Smart, from The Dept of Behavioral Science at the University of Toronto, concluded that the rate of success is 3 to 7 percent. Although, further examination of these findings would indicate that a very high percentage of those deemed successful will become addicted to antidepressants!

The 12-Step Program is largely based on the concept of powerlessness, which, in my opinion, is completely counterproductive to addiction recovery. In essence, addiction is a life and spiritual problem that is riddled with self-esteem issues. Therefore, it makes absolutely no sense whatsoever to tell an individual who is struggling with addiction that they are powerless. When's the last time you've ever seen anyone increase their self-esteem by feeling powerless? Without question, there is a spiritual component to addiction, and (AA) Alcoholics Anonymous should be credited with uncovering that truth. However, very few participants, if any, make that spiritual connection in the 12-Step Program. On the contrary, most transfer their behavior to another addiction such as religion or even AA itself! In an effort to give you a complete understanding of the 12-Step Program, I have categorized each of the

twelve steps. The 12-Step program that is used in Overeaters Anonymous has been derived from the original Alcoholics Anonymous program. In the section ahead, I will reference both (OA) and (AA) regarding the 12-Step Program, however, they are one in the same.

1. Counterproductive

In my opinion, the steps that fall into this category are not only ineffective, but they are also damaging to the recovery process. Remember, addiction is a self-esteem issue, so why teach someone self-incrimination, powerlessness and victimization?

2. Feasible

I believe the steps in this category are plausible when applied to the addiction recovery process, but I strongly disagree with the context and application. The basic foundation of each step is critical to recovery success.

In the following groups, I have provided a highlighted analysis of each step.

Counterproductive

1. “We admitted we were powerless over food - that our lives had become unmanageable.”

One of the basic reasons you are addicted to food or compulsions is the fact that you allowed someone to strip you of your self-respect and personal power. So, do you honestly believe that making an admission of powerlessness will help regain it?

2. “We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.”

There is a higher power that is greater than oneself, but that power has already given you the tools needed to restore your sanity. If you ask God, or the higher power, to restore your sanity, eventually, you will realize that he has already empowered you to do this for yourself!

3. “We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.”

This step often breeds victimization that generally causes a transfer of addictive behavior from substance abuse to the habitual practice of AA ideology or religious doctrine. Surrendering your will to God does not mean that he will hand you a life of happiness on a platter. If you go to God as a beggar, surely, you will remain in poverty. Likewise, if you go to Him as a victim, you will continue to be victimized. Consequently, passive surrender is totally ineffective. Dynamic surrender or active receptivity is the correct approach. Once again, God has given you the power to change your own life, but you must take the necessary action to make it happen.

5. “We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.”

It's ok to admit to your wrongdoings. However, that admission quickly turns into guilt, self-incrimination and victimization when you combine it with powerlessness!

There are positive lessons to be learned. However, you will never find them if you remain stuck in the rain of victimization. On the other hand, if you adopt a positive, symbolic perspective, you will see a silver lining in the dark cloud of addiction.

6. “We’re entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.”

Let’s get a few things straight; we are all connected, we are all created equal, and we are all children of God. Therefore, we do not have personal shortcomings and defects of character! Why tell someone, who already has a low self-esteem, that they have personal shortcomings and defects of character?

7. “We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.”

Neither God, nor the higher power, will remove anything, but he or it has given you the power to change your own circumstance!

8. “We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.”

This step directs participants to make amends with those affected by their habitual behavior. I have absolutely nothing against apologizing when it’s appropriate. If you’re wrong, say you’re wrong and move on. But, you can not adopt an apologetic persona while allowing abusive and toxic behavior to continue. Otherwise you will never restore your self-esteem.

9. “We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.”

This parallels step eight, which I have discussed above.

10. “We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.”

It is imperative to live ones life in truth since lies and deceptions are inherent in addictive behavior. I do agree that evaluating personal behavior is a prelude to ultimately changing it. However, when you combine this step with the concept of powerlessness, most participants engage in self-incrimination rather than self-evaluation. If you liberate yourself from the root cause of the addiction and empower yourself accordingly, taking a personal inventory merely becomes a gentle tool necessary for growth.

In my opinion, the following steps may be beneficial with some modification:

Feasible

4. “We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.”

Self-reflection is a key to addiction freedom, however, when it’s described as taking a moral inventory and combined with the term defects of character, it becomes a precursor to blame and guilt! I believe self-reflection and discovery should be pursued in a positive sense by searching for ones personal identity, life purpose and spiritual lessons.

11. “We 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.”

The goal of the 12-Step Program is a spiritual awakening, although most people find it difficult to make this connection because they feel victimized by someone else’s behavior. Meditation is not only a critical component to making contact with your true self or higher consciousness, but it is also the key to awakening your true personal power and abstaining from addictive behavior. But, the vast majority of 12-Step Program participants confuse spirituality with religion. They are two distinct practices. Religion is a community effort, whereas spirituality is a personal journey. One can do both, however, there is no escaping the personal journey. The practice of outward ideals is not, and never will be, a substitute for inner righteousness!

12. “Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to compulsive overeaters and to practice these principles in all our affairs.”

This step suggests being of service to ones fellow man. When it comes to AA, though, that concept is usually limited to helping others overcome addiction. I believe this step is often used as a method of recruitment for AA. People who have adopted victimization seek camaraderie with those that suffer from the same affliction. So, the more the merrier! I have a different take on service – one that promotes acts of random kindness. It’s the small stuff that makes a difference. Things like; holding a

door open for someone, offering a kind word to a child, or helping an elderly person.

These random acts of kindness fuel unconditional love and promote selflessness –

two components that are non-existent in addictive behavior.

In addition to the primary models of (CBT) and the 12-Step Program, there are other variations that are largely based on correcting or improving one's relationship with food. Strangely, some proponents of this hypothesis have even christened their food addiction with common names. Yet, others tend to make food the focal point for recovery. This is the equivalent of scrying (crystal ball gazing) in a glass of beer in an attempt to unveil the secrets of overcoming alcoholism! It's not about the food, but rather why you are using it destructively. The very notion that gazing intently at a plate filled with meat and potatoes is somehow going to lead to addiction freedom is utterly preposterous. Attempting to reconcile one's theoretical relationship with food only strengthens and perpetuates improper behavior while diminishing personal power. When you consider that overcoming addiction requires empowerment, you soon realize that this is absolutely counterproductive and only exacerbates the problem. The very fact that you even have a relationship with food is a problem! Food is sustenance. We need it to nourish ourselves, to live and to survive - nothing more, nothing less! Honestly, it's not about the food! Consequently, you should not have an intimate relationship with chocolate cake, ice cream, potato chips or candy. If you do, you are using it as a tool for managing emotional distress.

In conclusion, the mainstream theorist profess that addiction is a disease, which is caused by a physical dependency linked to changes in brain chemistry. Ironically, to treat that hypothetical disease, 95% of the time, conventional recovery employs (CBT) and the 12-Step Program. These modalities address emotional and spiritual issues. So, is it a disease or an emotional and spiritual issue? At the very least, this is a bit hypocritical, is it not? Furthermore, when you consider that the success rates of these models are less than the rate of spontaneous remission, one could conclude that the conventional approach to addiction recovery is absolute INSANITY! There is a better way or “Tao of Addiction Freedom,” though, and it doesn’t require conventional treatment, whatsoever. In fact, you can beat your addiction, and transform your life, without ever leaving home!

Tao of Food Addiction Freedom

If you are searching for a magic bullet that will eradicate your habitual behavior, sadly, your quest will prove to be an exercise in futility. On the other hand, if you are ready to learn some valuable life lessons and have a desire to evolve consciously and spiritually, then there literally is no limit to what you can accomplish or create.

Whether you're aware at this point or not, you are a co-creator. I say co-creator because each and every one of us has the power to develop a partnership with the divine or universe to co-create our own reality and fulfill our true life purpose. I call this a (LLDP) "Limited Liability Divine Partnership." God is not liable for your misconduct, improprieties, failures or negligence. But, as long as you maintain and strengthen your relationship, he will forgive them and give you the freedom to keep trying until you get it right. And, if you are willing to embark on a journey of self-discovery and personal growth, not only will addictive behavior become repulsive to you, but you'll also find the meaning, purpose and happiness you've always longed for.

Looking beyond conventional treatment and the disease concept, in all honesty, an addicted individual primarily uses food to manage emotional distress, anxiety and/or depression. Therefore, food addiction freedom is largely dependent upon addressing those issues. To get the job done, you must employ **Liberation** and **Empowerment**. Both are critical components to recovery, however, liberation must always precede empowerment. At the risk of mimicking a Baptist Preacher, "You must walk through

the fire of liberation before you can rise from the ashes!” In essence, it is extremely difficult to become empowered if you are stuck in emotional bondage. Accordingly, the “Tao of Addiction Freedom” begins in the fire of liberation.

Liberation is defined as setting someone free from traditional, socially imposed constraints. In this case, those constraints are various patterns of family dysfunction, which I will outline in the next section. For those who struggle with addiction, using food, substances or compulsions provides an emotional escape from dysfunctional and often toxic behavior. To remove the need to escape, you must face the issues that have caused your distress. This may sound simple! And, in relative terms it is, but overcoming addiction does take courage. I won't mince words about that. If you choose to find that courage, I guarantee, you'll never look back! As a coach, I have never seen an addicted individual get to the promise land and decide to turn around. On the contrary, most folks ask themselves why they didn't take the journey sooner!

The other primary component, empowerment, is defined as giving someone a greater sense of confidence or self-esteem. This, obviously, is the opposite of powerlessness, which is the main tenant of the 12-Step Program. When you understand that addiction is a self-esteem issue, it is absolutely absurd to teach an addicted individual that they are powerless. This only exacerbates the situation or causes the individual to transfer their behavior to another substance or compulsion such as antidepressants, religious practice, or even (AA) itself. In other words, they just trade masks or adopt another crutch to prop themselves up. To become empowered you must embrace self-love.

However, without your self-respect, that will prove to be a daunting task. Honestly, if you don't have self-respect, what do you really have? Moreover, how can you even begin to love yourself? Can you begin to understand that the components of liberation and empowerment are closely entwined? You really can not have one without the other. Consequently, your actions on the outside must match your emotions on the inside. If you want to have more confidence, esteem and a higher degree of self-love, then you must "take the bull by the horns!" Stand up and liberate yourself from dysfunctional behavior. Learn to use that little word. You know; the one that is probably non-existent in your current vernacular and has gotten lost in pleasing others or overlooked for the sake of garnering your family's love and affection. You know that word, right? NO!

There are, indeed, many subcomponents to empowerment such as self-esteem, self-love, personal power, personal identity and true life purpose, although they are often unattainable without liberation. You can not simply convince yourself that you are confident, worthy and empowered by affirming it, but many people try. In the past, there has been a plethora of inaccurate and disingenuous information published regarding positive affirmations. Today, I'm going to cut through all the jargon and give you the simple truth. Bottom line, an affirmation is a tool or amplifier. It can be an effective tool, but it is still just a tool, nonetheless. And, if you attempt to use that tool, without addressing your core fears and insecurities, you will fail! Think of it like this. Affirmation is the tool, or hammer, but if you attempt to swing it with a broken arm, you won't drive the nail. I'm going to show you how to build a strong arm by

using an allegoric exercise.

You may recall the old SNL skit called “Daily Affirmations” that was performed by Al Franken. He played a motivational, self-help character by the name of Stuart Smalley. The character was intended to be a spoof on individuals who are obsessed with 12-Step Programs and become addicted to the actual act of going to therapy. Stuart became quite famous for directing folks to look in the mirror and affirm the following: “I’m good enough, I’m smart enough, and doggone It, people like me!” I’m going to take Stuart Smalley’s skit a bit further. For the sake of teaching you how to use affirmations effectively, let’s add a second mirror. So, now you have two mirrors. How about if we call the first mirror (PAM) for Positive Affirmation Mirror and the second (FEM) for Fear and Ego Mirror?

OK! Let’s begin by defining the goal. For this particular example, let’s pretend that you are attempting to overcome personal identity and self-esteem issues. To get started with the exercise, I’d like you to walk over to (PAM) and look directly in the mirror. Next, repeat the following affirmation three times: “I’m good enough, I’m smart enough, and doggone It, people like me for who I am!”

To proceed, walk over to (FEM) and look directly into the mirror. As your gazing into your eyes, a voice suddenly emerges from the subconscious abyss. It’s your ego, and he’s, by no means, an optimist! Immediately, he begins to pummel you with the following barrage of negativity: “You’re not good enough, you’re stupid, and

doggone it, no one likes you! Don't you remember when you flunked that English exam in the fourth grade? If you were smart enough, you would have passed the test. Who are you kidding?"

OK! Now, head back over to (PAM) and repeat the following affirmation three times:
"I'm good enough, I'm smart enough, and doggone It, people like me for who I am!"

Next, walk back over to (FEM,) and get ready to brace yourself for the following:
"You're not good enough, you're stupid, and doggone it, no one loves you!" Don't you recall when Sam dumped you back in the eighth grade for Tina? Heck, if you were pretty and lovable, he would never have dumped you. Fact is, you've been dumped your whole life! Come on, get serious!"

Are you beginning to grasp the concept? This counterproductive cycle can be repeated indefinitely without dealing with the ego. At the end of the day, you can verbally affirm anything you'd like, but it won't come to light if your subconscious, self-limiting beliefs are standing in the way. If you want to strengthen your arm, you must relinquish your fears and insecurities. You've got to take a course of action that is a direct and opposite response to the fear, and that is where liberation comes into the picture. For example, if you've been struggling with personal identity issues, you've probably spent most of your time pleasing others, often at your own peril. Basically, stop appeasing others and start pleasing yourself! At the end of the day, you're no good to anyone else if you're not good to yourself. When flying on a plane

that is in crisis and the oxygen masks drop, what are the instructions given? Doesn't the flight attendant direct you to put the mask on first – even before you think of helping another? Yet, we treat our relationships with family and friends so differently. We often please them at our own expense. Ultimately, this leads to a reduction in self-esteem. If you question your intelligence or worthiness, this is likely a result of not only your own actions, but also the unfettered opinions of others. Stop pleasing others at your own expense and stop listening to such verbal garbage by kindly informing the guilty party or parties that it's inappropriate. And moreover, tell them that you don't really care what they think! Truthfully, it only matters what you think. Facing the demons outside will pave the way for facing the one within – your ego! And, that is where the process of empowerment, personal growth and conscious evolution begins. In section three, I will provide an exact plan or road map for stepping into your true power. And, believe me; you are far more powerful than meets the eye!

Food Addiction Factors

As in every type of habitual behavior, the basis for food addiction is the emotional trauma caused by patterns of family dysfunction such as abuse, control, part-time parenting and alcoholic or drug addicted parents. Inevitably, these patterns destroy self-esteem, personal power and identity, which results in emotional distress, anxiety and depression. In an effort to manage emotional issues, those addicted use food as a psychoactive tool and/or diversion. Therefore, the primary component to food addiction is the use of food as a tool to manage emotional pain. But, in addition, there is generally a secondary component in the equation, which is orchestrated on a subconscious level. I call these components "The Food Addiction Factors!"

Yes, on the primary level, food is used as means of coping with unresolved emotional issues, but on a secondary level there is another agenda or factor. These "Food Addiction Factors" are very powerful since they are embedded deep in the mind. Do not underestimate this! The very same dynamic is largely responsible for most failed, weight loss attempts. I'm sure you've seen others exercise and eat properly yet still find it impossible to lose body fat. In fact, this may have happened to you. Bottom line, if your mind is telling your body it needs to store fat, all the exercise and proper eating will fail. It must be a comprehensive approach - mind, body and soul! I have outlined each of the "Food Addiction Factors" below. In an attempt to give you a greater understanding of how these factors play a role in food addiction, I've provided corresponding examples - taken directly from my subscriber and client bases. The names have been changed to protect their anonymity.

Security - The Linus Syndrome

Linus van Pelt is a character in Charles M. Schulz's comic strip "Peanuts." Linus is best friends with the main character, Charlie Brown. He is also the younger brother of Lucy van Pelt. Although quite advanced intellectually, Linus struggles emotionally and is rarely without his blue, security blanket. In fact, he coined the term "security blanket." Linus's relationship to his blanket was one of intense emotional attachment, which was confirmed by the weakness and dizziness he experienced when deprived of it.

Now, of course, Linus is a fictional character. However, when it comes to eating addictions, food is often used as a security blanket. In other words, food is used as means to gain body fat, which serves as a barrier of protection from other people or even society.

As an example, Sandy, a forty-two year old teacher grew up in an abusive household. Sandy's father was often physically and verbally abusive towards her, which crushed Sandy's self-esteem. Sandy lived most of her childhood in a state of oppression. She struggled constantly with finding ways to protect herself physically and emotionally from her father. As a result, Sandy found comfort in food, and she learned to use it and, ultimately, body fat as a means of security and protection. In other words, if I'm bigger, I'll be less vulnerable to emotional or physical compromise.

To overcome her food addiction, Sandy must face the core issues that stem from her father's dysfunctional behavior. She must also begin to restore her self-esteem and personal power by adopting principles, establishing boundaries and embracing righteousness, justice and truth. As she liberates herself from the dysfunctional patterns, she must take the action required to restore her confidence and reclaim her personal power.

Self-Confidence – Bigger, Better and Bolder!

Food addiction and obesity is often used as a confidence builder. Of course this is a distorted view of what true self-confidence really is, however, for those who have been verbally and/or physically abused, it often becomes a solution. Sure, it's a false, distorted and destructive one; however, in the eyes of compulsive or binge eater, it's a solution nonetheless. As an example, Randy's grew up in a household rife with verbal and physical abuse. In order to survive, he learned to avoid confrontation by withdrawing. Without any support from either parent, Randy learned to find comfort in food. He also discovered that the larger and more obese he became, the more reluctant his father was to inflict abuse. This prompted Randy to program his subconscious mind, which gave his body permission to put the obesity pedal to the metal!

To overcome his food addiction, Randy must address his father's verbal and physical abuse. Most importantly he must discover the true meaning of self-confidence and self-esteem by learning to set boundaries and speak his will. Then and only then, will

using food as a coping tool and obesity as a means of projecting confidence become unnecessary.

Avoiding responsibility – It’s not my Job!

Compulsive overeating and/or binge eating is sometimes used as a tool to avoid responsibility. As an example, Tim’s mom has controlled him for most of his life. She used money, finances and material items as a means of manipulating and oppressing him. Consequently, his self-esteem has suffered, and he has become completely dependent on someone else taking responsibility. He quickly learned from his mom that gaining more weight and becoming increasingly unhealthy results in more money and less work. This pattern has become engrained in his mind, which has caused him to apply it to other areas of his life. On an energetic level, Tim has programmed his subconscious to tell his body to gain body fat because that eliminates the need for taking responsibility. Unfortunately, for Tim, this is a path that will inevitably lead to self-destruction.

To overcome his food addiction, Tim must liberate himself from his mothers control and begin to rebuild his self-esteem. Only then will he establish his own personal identity and embrace the desire to take responsibility. When he finally removes the subconscious “Food Addiction Factor,” binge eating will become repulsive to him.

Social Isolation or Withdraw – The Recluse Excuse!

Food addiction and obesity can be used to avoid intimate contact or a relationship with the opposite sex. Furthermore, it can also be used as a tool for total withdrawal and complete social isolation, which is generally driven by a skewed perception of society or anger directed at life, society or even God. No one will talk to me if I'm fat! Or, I can't go out into public if I am obese!

As an example, Jill, a thirty-two year old marketing representative grew up in a physically and verbally abusive household. Jill's father was often physically abusive towards her mom. This subjected Jill to a distorted view of heterosexual relationships. To make matters worse, Jill's mom compounded the situation by consistently bashing men and verbally abusing Jill! As an adult, Jill struggled with self-esteem as well as a fear of intimacy. Just the mere thought of interacting with the opposite sex sends a surge of fear and panic through her body. On a subconscious level, Jill learned to use food and ultimately obesity as a means of social isolation and withdraw. In other words, if I'm fat, no one will want to approach me. And, I won't be faced with an intimate encounter!

To overcome her food addiction, Jill must face the core issues that stem from her parent's dysfunctional behavior. She must also begin to restore her self-esteem, personal power and identity by embracing self-love and intimacy. As she liberates herself from the dysfunctional patterns, she must take the empowering action required to achieve social integration, beginning with non-threatening, opposite sex encounters while working towards a healthy intimate relationship.

Revenge - The Weapon of Choice!

Compulsive overeating and/or binge eating is often used as a weapon. In other words, a person gains body fat as a means of revenge. As an example, Rita's mother wanted her to become a beauty queen prodigy. However, she really didn't possess the necessary attributes to excel in pageantry. Nevertheless, her mom insisted and forced Rita to compete. When she failed, her mom began to criticize her appearance. To correct that deficiency, her mom subjected her to one beauty treatment and diet after another. She never lost much weight, and, eventually, her mom's hopes of pageantry stardom began to fade. But, the criticism did not! In fact, Rita's failure only angered her mom further and subsequently fueled the verbal abuse. As a result, her adult life has been plagued with food addiction. She never broke free from her mom's toxic behavior and, to date, remains caught in a web of abuse and control. Instead of confronting this behavior, she has learned to use food and ultimately obesity as a weapon to punish her mother.

From a rational perspective, this makes absolutely no sense! It's equivalent to threatening someone with a loaded gun while pointing the barrel at your own head! However, sometimes, it's just easier than facing the real issues. On the other hand, some folks use this weapon on a subconscious level and aren't even aware of what they're doing, until it's pointed out. In either case, this path leads to self-destruction.

To overcome her addiction, Rita must find the courage to adopt a set of principles, set boundaries with her mother or sever the relationship altogether!

Distorted Power – I'm in Charge now!

Frequently, patterns of family dysfunction, literally, smother and choke an individual emotionally – causing them to lose their personal identity and power. Most of time, the individual lacks a high level of coping skills or an understanding of how to confront the issues at hand. This, inevitably, leads them to an escape hatch called food addiction! The feeling of powerlessness over family dynamics and emotional expression is replaced with the power to control episodes of bingeing and compulsive eating. This gives some folks the ability to control some aspect of their life when, in their eyes, it is spinning wildly out of control in practically every aspect. In other words, I'm in control and in charge of this process, and you can't take it from me – even if you don't like it. From a rational perspective, this doesn't compute because ultimately the person is destroying themselves.

For example, Tammy, a 25 year old administrative assistant, grew up in a household of part-time parenting. Both her father and mother suffered from low self-esteem issues and struggled deeply with feelings of inadequacy. Consequently, Tammy never received the love, bonding and guidance she required as a child. On the contrary, she became a pawn in a struggle for power. A battle ensued over which parent Tammy loved more. No child wants to choose between their parents, so Tammy withdrew her love completely. Ultimately, she found control, power and, yes, even love in the secretive world of bingeing.

In summary, for Tammy to overcome her food addiction, she will need to confront the core issues. She will need to gain an understanding of her parents dysfunctional behavior and call it what it was – wrong! Ultimately, a transition to self-love is what matters most. Setting some boundaries, adopting a set of principles and learning how to say no will be paramount to her success.

These are the “Food Addiction Factors.” Take a few moments to ascertain which factor or factors apply to your situation. Be completely honest about it. Don’t make excuses. It’s time to take off the rose colored glasses and put the sugar bowl away! This is significant because, at the end of Section II, I’m going to ask you to link it to the family dysfunction you endured.

Shedding those Unwanted LBS

This book is not intended as a diet or weight loss guide. Because losing body fat is a goal for most folks who struggle with food addiction, I felt it necessary to address the subject briefly. Let me be up front, I am not a registered dietician. Therefore, by law, I am not qualified to outline specific diet plans. However, I worked as a fitness professional for nearly fifteen years. During that time, I also designed meal plans for clients through one of the largest nutrition programs in the country. Having clarified that, let's start with the basics.

First and foremost, diets don't work – period! Sure, there are countless types of existing diets and new ones that emerge all the time. But, despite public participation and continued demand for them, the obesity rate in the U.S. has nearly tripled over the past three decades. Youfa Wang, MD, PhD, assistant professor in the Bloomberg School of Public Health's Department of International Health states, "Obesity is a public health crisis. If the rate of obesity continues at this pace, by 2015, 75 percent of adults and nearly 24 percent of U.S. children and adolescents will be overweight or obese." So, if dieting was actually conducive to permanent fat loss, the rate of obesity wouldn't be climbing, would it? In my opinion, not only is dieting counterproductive, but it actually increases obesity over time.

Permanent fat loss requires a mind, body and soul approach, but it also requires a change in lifestyle as well. Contrary to what you've been exposed to in the way of fad

diets and misleading marketing, there is no quick fix! You have to apply the basics. The human being is a metabolic machine, which means we need a constant source of fuel in the furnace. That source is food! If there's no fuel, the furnace shuts down and the body enters starvation mode in an effort to survive. Hence, it will attempt to preserve and even store additional body fat as a reserve of energy. Most diets are extremely low in calories, which will cause an initial weight loss, although half of those pounds will be derived from lean muscle. This not only reduces the size of ones metabolic machine or furnace, but it also increases the odds of additional body fat gain in the future when returning to regular eating patterns.

There are, indeed, many types of fad diets. Unfortunately, none of them achieve permanent fat loss. Nevertheless, in an attempt to dispel some myths, I'm going to outline some of the more popular.

The Zone Diet

The Zone diet's eating plan is a combination of low-fat protein at every meal, fats, and carbohydrates in the form of fiber-rich vegetables and fruits. The plan establishes a ratio of carbohydrates, protein and fats that author, Barry Sears, PhD. a former researcher in bio technology at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, contends the body is genetically programmed for. That ratio is 40-30-30 respectively. Sears also claims the Zone Diet to be anti-inflammatory and a regulator for insulin production. His hypothesis is based on the assumption that excessive carbohydrates contribute to inflammation in the body and ultimately disease. His theory is also

based on the assumption that insulin is a fat storing hormone. The diet does not necessarily restrict caloric intake per say. Instead, it eliminates some carbohydrates, most dairy products and saturated fat.

This particular diet is probably more successful than most since it doesn't restrict caloric intake. And at the end of the day, it is all about calories! The energy in (calories) is relative to energy out (Basal metabolic needs + activity.) But, does it matter what kinds of calories you consume? Yes, to a certain extent! The body tends to store fat from empty calories, or junk food, very quickly because it is nutrient deficient. However, aside from eating foods that are nutrient dense, fresh, organic and unprocessed, your body can store fat from anything. It may have to work a bit harder to convert 6 ounces of chicken to fat rather than a donut, but, nevertheless, it can still accomplish the goal. And, if you've ever attempted to consume 60% of your diet in lean protein, unsaturated and monounsaturated fat, then you realize just how difficult and unrealistic that really is to accomplish on a day to day basis. And, in my opinion, it's absolutely unnecessary. The real question is; why does the body store fat? As we discussed earlier, fat is a strategic energy reserve for the body. Therefore, just as you can create the right conditions to store fat (dieting,) you can create the perfect environment to reduce it (lifestyle.) This requires a comprehensive approach rather than a singular one. First, you must establish your daily caloric intake. There are plenty of resources on line that provide caloric intake calculators that are based on age, height, weight and activity level. At the end of this section, I will provide you with a basic structure for fat loss. For now, let's get back to the Zone Diet. To profess

that simple carbohydrates cause inflammation in the body and ultimately disease is absurd. First, there is no empirical evidence to support that claim. Second, experience has taught me that inflammation is generally a result of hyper-activity or anxiety and emotional issues. The second claim he makes is that the Zone Diet regulates insulin production which reduces fat storage. Insulin production is stimulated by high levels of glucose and inhibited by lower levels of glucose. The integrated blood glucose response to a fixed quantity of carbohydrates in a meal is commonly known as the glycemic index. Insulin does regulate glucose with glucagon, but it is not a given that fat storage occurs automatically when insulin is released to regulate high levels of glucose whether it's from carbohydrates or not. If that were true, then why do diabetics, who are insulin resistant, continue to gain body fat in many cases? Bottom line, these theories are highly controversial and lack empirical evidence.

The South Beach Diet

The South Beach Diet was created by Arthur Agatston, MD, director of the Mount Sinai Cardiac Prevention Center in Miami Beach, Florida. The South Beach Diet is similar to the Zone and Atkin Diets since carbohydrates are restricted. However, in the South Beach Diet, this occurs only during the initial phase of weight loss. Once again, the glycemic index principle is used to support this theory. As a person reaches their target weight, they may begin to add fruits, pasta and other carbohydrates back into their eating plan. If these so-called hi glycemic, fat storing carbohydrates are restricted during the initial phase, why can they be consumed in the later phase? I hate to keep beating the same drum, but it's all about the calories! Remember, the energy

in is relative to energy out. Of course you cannot expect to lose weight by filling your daily caloric intake with junk foods and empty calories since the body does tend to store nutrient deficient foods as fat more quickly. But, isn't that just a bit of common sense!

Vegan Diet

A healthy and varied vegan diet includes fruits, vegetables, plenty of leafy greens, whole grain products, nuts, seeds, and legumes while eliminating meat, fish, poultry, eggs and dairy products. Without question, adequate protein intake is always a concern. However, beans, legumes, grains and nuts consumed in the correct combinations do provide adequate levels of protein. If this type of diet is appealing to you, that is fine. However, do not make that choice simply on the assumption that a Vegan Diet yields greater fat loss than a balanced plan. It does not!

Raw Food Diet

The raw food diet is based on the belief that uncooked food is healthier for the body. Most food is eaten raw, although heating food is generally acceptable as long as the temperature stays below 118 degrees Fahrenheit. The vast majority of people who follow a raw food diet also tend to be vegan as well. However, some folks consume raw animal products, such as raw milk, cheese made from raw milk, fish and meat.

I would not dispute the fact that fresh, organic, unprocessed, and in some cases, raw foods are more nutrient dense and healthier choices. However, once again, there is no medical evidence to suggest that it yields a higher degree of fat loss than a balanced approach. In addition, there isn't any evidence to back up some of the wild, and utterly ridiculous, claims that are often made by raw food proponents, which include increased energy, weight loss, reduced risk of disease, inflammation reduction, slowing the aging process and spiritual enlightenment. Let me clarify a few things. First, a meal plan designed for fat loss and health are not necessarily one in the same. Just because you eat healthy does not mean you'll lose body fat – especially if your caloric intake is too high or low. Remember, the energy in is relative to the energy expended. To make such claims regarding a reduction in risk for disease is absurd since disease is multifaceted. Therefore, it is collectively what we do or don't do that often contributes to the manifestation of disease. And finally, to claim that eating raw food somehow enhances spiritual development is beyond ludicrous. Spiritual enlightenment is a journey that is always brought about by accessing higher levels of consciousness, which has everything to do with ones mind and nothing to do with diet. Therefore, you could eat “kibbles and Bits” and it wouldn't make any difference whatsoever.

In conclusion, shedding those unwanted lbs. requires a comprehensive approach. There's no quick fix, fad diet, or magic pill that will lead to permanent success. It's about sound basic practice and some good, old fashion, hard work. Yes, it will take hard work, but anything worth while always does. In order to get you started, I have outlined some basic guidelines below. They are by no means intended to replace the

advice of a health professional. Before beginning any meal plan or exercise program, it is highly recommended that you consult your physician.

1. Use a calorie calculator that is based on age, height, body weight and activity, to determine the daily caloric intake required to achieve fat loss. (Calorie calculators can easily be located on the internet)
2. Eat four to six smaller meals per day. Space them approximately 2.5 to 4.5 hours apart. Consume foods that are fresh, unprocessed and nutrient dense when possible.
3. Balance the proteins, carbohydrates and fats in your meals when feasible. The American Dietetic Association recommends on average 55 percent carbohydrate, 20 percent protein, and about 25 percent fat, expressed in a ratio of 55:20:25. Depending on the rate you oxidize food, these ratio's can be altered slightly.
4. Drink at least 64 ounces of water per day.
5. Become more active. Start and exercise plan if possible. (Consult your health professional prior to beginning a new exercise plan)

SECTION II –DYSFUNCTION

The Square Root of Addiction

I believe there's a root cause and common denominator in all self-destructive behavior. And, that direct fundamental cause is the underlying emotional trauma caused by family dysfunction. But, I also believe that addiction is a choice, and it is not caused by an incurable brain disease, a genetic predisposition, a learned behavior or a chemical imbalance.

As an example, Patricia was a model child who was admired and loved by most. She not only excelled academically and artistically, but she also seemed to be destined for great things. To everyone in the neighborhood, she exemplified the perfect girl who lived in the perfect American family. That image sharply contrasted her father's behavior, behind the scenes, since he had been sexually abusing her since the age of nine. To make matters worse, her mother was aware of the abuse and decided to ignore it! As a result, Patricia's adult life has been riddled with emotional distress, failed relationships and years of drug abuse.

As children we look to our parents for love, nurturing, security and guidance, and depend on them for our every need. They are the most important and influential beings in our lives. However, eighty-five percent of the time they fall short of fulfilling those needs by abusing, controlling or inadequately parenting us. This dysfunctional behavior is often dismissed by adult children as a standard and even accepted as their responsibility. Consequently, most people do not recognize family

dysfunction as the root cause of their addiction. Unfortunately, those that do are either misled by Cognitive Behavioral Therapists who encourage them to disconnect from it emotionally, or they are convinced by Twelve-Step Programs that they are powerless to overcome it!

Take a moment to search your feelings. Let's begin with the root cause of your emotional pain. What is it that you don't want to think about? What issues have you been attempting to dowse with food, substances or compulsions? If you're honest about it, you'll confess that they stem from family dysfunction. Sure, these patterns can be repeated in other relationships with co-workers, friends or intimate partners, but they originated in your immediate family. So, it shouldn't come as a surprise that you've attracted a mate that is verbally abusive since your father was as well. Don't get me wrong; extended relationships need to be addressed too. But, you can't ignore what happened in your childhood if you want to overcome your addiction. Were you verbally, physically or sexually abused? Were your parents very controlling? Were you abandoned as a child? Did your parents force you to become a parent by taking care of your siblings or worse, them? Did they show up part-time for a full-time job? Did your parents abuse food, alcohol or drugs? These are the patterns that undermine self-esteem and drive addictive behavior. If you've already begun to connect the dots regarding your situation, then this probably resonates. The effects of family dysfunction can literally be smothering and even strangling on an emotional level. And let me assure you, I have never seen a single case of addiction that wasn't caused by family dysfunction – not one! And, if any addicted person tells you that they grew

up in a “Leave it to Beaver” atmosphere with Ward and June Cleaver at the helm, they are being disingenuous at best, and at worst they are offering up a bold faced lie!

The concept of family dysfunction contributing to addictive behavior is not necessarily new, although it does seem to be the elephant in the room. Not only is the subject completely avoided, but the mainstream methods for correcting it are fundamentally amiss. In fact, I believe that conventional treatment methods have even exacerbated the addiction crisis in America!

In the next section, I have provided individual examples of family dysfunction. To help you relate your addiction, I have outlined actual cases taken directly from my subscriber list and coaching practice. The names have been changed to protect their anonymity. You’ll notice that some individuals are addicted to food while others are addicted to substances or compulsions. Still, others struggle with multiple addictions. Experience has taught me that many folks are often challenged with more than one addiction. So, it is not uncommon to see food combined with smoking, drug, alcohol or other types of addiction. Furthermore, the direct fundamental cause of food addiction in relation to other addictions is virtually the same. Therefore, the solution for overcoming it, with the exception of understanding “The Food Addiction Factors,” does not require modification. The type of addictive behavior adopted is merely a choice – nothing more or less.

Part-time Parents

“As parents, the greatest gifts we can bestow on our children are love, bonding and guidance” – The Addiction Freedom Coach

Wrestling with their own tribal demons that have never been confronted, they show up part-time for a full-time parenting job. Bestowing adulthood on their children to compensate for poor parenting, they rob their offspring of childhood innocence and playfulness. They fail to provide love, nurturing, security and the parental bonding that is needed. Often, this results in feelings of guilt and inadequacy since no child can fill the shoes of an adult.

Gordon is a forty-two year old shipping clerk who has become addicted to prescription pain killers and alcohol. Making his way through life has proven to be a daunting task since he has failed to maintain employment or graduate from college. Gordon’s problems began twenty-six years ago when his father passed away. His mom was not a very strong person to begin with, and this unfortunate event sent her over the edge. Sinking into a deep state of depression, she not only forced Gordon to assume more responsibility in the family restaurant, but she also burdened him with her care as well. To compound the situation, she constantly criticized him. His job performance at the restaurant never seemed to meet her expectations and always fell short of his father’s accomplishments. As a result, Gordon feels guilty for failing to fill his father’s shoes and has struggled for years with low self-esteem and depression. In an effort to cope, Gordon eventually turned to drugs and alcohol.

Part-time parents essentially rob their children of their innocence and playfulness.

While they are side tracked with their own emotional struggle, they force their children to assume the role of a parent by caring for them, the other parent, or their sibling's. Since no child can fill the shoes of an adult, this results in a battered self-esteem, feelings of inadequacy, and difficulty evolving into adulthood. The emotional pain of this dysfunction, which is caused by feelings of worthlessness, inadequacy and low self-esteem, is all too often at the root of addictive behavior.

Controlling Parents

“Let your children leave the nest if you want them to return!” – The Addiction Freedom Coach

They control their children either directly; “my way or the highway” or indirectly through manipulation, guilt or by financial means. Children that have been controlled find it difficult to stand on their own and to make their way in the world. They become so entwined with the controller that they often find themselves selling their self-respect to please them. This results in a loss of personal power and prevents them from living their life with a sense of true purpose.

Doug is a thirty-nine year old juvenile corrections officer who suffers from food and drug addictions. He knows that frequenting fast food restaurants, overeating, and abusing substances isn't the healthiest lifestyle, but he can't seem to stop. Doug's problems started thirty-four years ago when his mother began using financial manipulation and guilt to covertly sabotage his success. Her controlling behavior battered Doug's self-esteem and crippled his ability to function as an adult, making him solely dependent upon her. Completely overwhelmed with feelings of worthlessness, helplessness and inadequacy, Doug has learned to deaden his emotional pain with drug abuse and compulsive overeating.

Controlling parents treat their children as if they are helpless and incapable of doing anything right. Some indirectly control their children through the use of guilt and

manipulation while others use a more direct, tyrannical and dictatorial approach.

However, both are equally damaging to the child's self-esteem and often result in drug, alcohol, smoking and food addictions.

Verbally Abusive Parents

“Sticks and stones will break my bones and names will hurt me” – The Addiction Freedom Coach

The bruises are all on the inside, but they hurt just as much if not more! Some verbal bashers are blatant in their attacks, openly calling their children stupid, worthless or ugly. And, others are coy with teasing, sarcasm and jokes that gradually destroy their children’s self-confidence and self-esteem.

Denise is a forty-one year old traffic controller who suffers from alcohol and smoking addictions. The underlying cause for her addiction was formed at a tender age by the intense verbal bashing she received from her mom. In her mom’s eyes, Denise could never do anything right. When Denise wanted to join the school choir, her mom responded by dismissing her ability to carry a tune! When Denise’s brother came home from school with A’s and B’s, he was showered with praise. However, when she came home with B’s, her mom asked why she couldn’t be as smart as her brother. As a result, Denise felt worthless, unwanted and unloved-especially when her mom said “I wish you were never born!” This verbal abuse shattered her self-esteem and caused the intense emotional pain responsible for her alcohol and smoking addictions.

Frequently, verbal abuse is often dismissed as being inconsequential to emotional health and development, but it’s extremely damaging to an adult child’s level of self-

esteem and often leads to addictive behavior. In fact, contrary to what most believe, verbal abuse usually causes more emotional damage than physical abuse.

Physically Abusive Parents

“Sticks and stones will break my bones, but the biggest bruises are on the inside!” -
The Addiction Freedom Coach

Tussling with their own rage, caused by family dysfunction, they often find it difficult to restrain themselves. Inevitably, they direct this pent up rage at their children and usually blame them for their actions.

Sam is a thirty-seven year old carpenter who suffers from drug and alcohol addictions. Sam’s problems started thirty years ago when his father began physically abusing him. To make things worse, his mother condoned the abuse, leaving him defenseless in the face of brutality. Sam learned to dismiss his father’s abusive behavior simply because he provided the bare essentials and held his respective title. In his mind, the fact that his father put a roof over his head was an even exchange for being bludgeoned with a stick until his legs bled.

Physical abuse is often handed down from one generation to the next as a learned response to dealing with feelings. However, the real issue that drives this behavior is generally an unmet emotional need. Typically, the abusers look to their children to fill this emotional void, and they lash out at them in a rage of brutality when the child fails to deliver. Children subjected to physical abuse live in constant fear, never knowing when the abuser will strike again. Continuing to blame themselves for their parent’s behavior, they carry this fear with them into adulthood – expecting to be hurt

and mistreated by others. These fears and insecurities cripple their self-esteem and cause the emotional distress that drives addiction.

Sexually Abusive Parents

“Sexual abuse of a child is one of the most vicious crimes conceivable, and a violation of a parents most basic duty” - James T. Walsh

Whether blatant in their actions by committing incest, covert by watching their child undress, or hinting at seductiveness, they betray the trust of their children and rob them of their childhood. This can result in either the child growing up to have difficulties in a relationship and with their sexuality, or it may result in the person being left with a sense of shame and feeling dirty, which usually leads to overactive meaningless sex.

Ann, a thirty-five year old compulsive overeater, was sexually abused by her step-father and verbally abused by her mother. When Ann approached her mom about her step-father’s behavior, her mother said, “It’s all your fault! You invite it!” Of course this response gave her step-father the green light to continue the abuse. With nowhere to turn, Ann found comfort in food. As an adult child, Ann has used compulsive eating to manage her emotional distress and ultimately obesity to avoid intimate contact.

Sexual abuse is a purely evil act that undermines the basic requirements of a parent to provide security, love and nurturing. Many adult children who have been sexually abused feel worthless and dirty, which causes them to pursue meaningless and dangerous sexual activity. On the other hand, some actually fear intimate contact,

which produces a pattern of failed relationships. The emotional pain that is felt from this evil act, more often than not, drives the abused to sexual, alcohol, food and/or drug addictions.

Alcoholic and/or Drug Addicted Parents

“Who will it be today; Jekyll or Hyde?” – The Addiction Freedom Coach

Their changing moods, which include anger one moment and love the next, leaves their children in a state of confusion and constant fear. Adult children of alcoholics and substance abusers find it difficult to get close to someone or to have a long lasting intimate relationship. They have a lack of trust and usually live with the constant fear of being hurt again!

Dave, a forty-two year old teacher and father of two, is addicted to alcohol. The basis for his addiction started thirty-five years ago when his parents separated and his father began drinking. This event would prove to be the first of four separations that would create a childhood filled with dysfunction and alcoholism. As time went on, his parents marital problems escalated, and so did his dads drinking! Eventually, Dad’s anger turned into violence and physical abuse that was directed toward his mom. Dave never knew which dad he was going to get; the loving kind person, or the angry violent one. As a result, he went through childhood with the constant fear of being unloved and rejected. This emotional pain, eventually, drove him to escape reality by abusing alcohol.

Alcoholic parents are often terrifyingly unpredictable with their ability to turn love and anger on and off like a light switch. Many of them become violent and even

abusive while others adopt their children as drinking partners and introduce them to alcohol at a tender age. In addition, the destructive drinking or drug abuse is often concealed in a shroud of secrecy because family members are in a state of denial. Sadly, this teaches a child to avoid the truth and to accept toxic behavior as a standard. Adult children of alcoholics live with a constant fear of being unloved and rejected. This destroys their self-esteem and often leads to drug, alcohol, food or other addictions.

Extended Dysfunction

Family dysfunction is, in my opinion, the direct fundamental cause of addiction. However, correcting that dysfunction is not restricted to one's immediate family since these patterns are usually repeated in other relationships as well. As an example, Shelly's father struggled with alcoholism. His addiction ultimately formed the basis for her behavior. In addition, she attracted and eventually married a man with an alcohol addiction. The mainstream, disease theorists claim this phenomenon is caused by a faulty gene or predisposition that is passed down from one generation to the next. However, this hypothesis does not explain why literally millions of adult children who were raised in alcoholic environments are not addicts. It also does not explain how an adult child who has been subjected to a verbally abusive parent tends to attract a partner that is abusive. I believe this can be explained by applying the law of universal attraction. While it is true that physical traits or genetics are passed down through co-creation, so are emotional, psychological and energetic traits. In other words, we pass down the whole package. But don't despair! You are by no means doomed to continue a life of dysfunction – even if you are predisposed to it. Bottom line, you are what you think you are, and ultimately you'll attract those who are energetically and emotionally compatible.

It is not realistic to think that you can address the dysfunction in your immediate family while ignoring toxic friendships, professional relationships or intimate relationships. Alternatively, you can not address dysfunctional patterns in extended

relationships while ignoring the dysfunction in your immediate family. If you're going to liberate yourself, you must wipe the entire slate clean!

That concludes Section II – Family Dysfunction. Before you proceed to the next section, I'd like you to determine which pattern or patterns of dysfunction have formed the foundation for your addiction. Once you have done so, definitively, then it's time to link your corresponding "Food Addiction Factor." For example, Cindy was physically abused by her Father, which destroyed her self-esteem and personal power. As a result, she has not only lived in fear, but she has also used obesity as a means of protection and security. Hence; Cindy's dysfunctional pattern is physical abuse and her "Food Addiction Factor" is "The Linus Syndrome." Making this connection is crucial to the overall process. So, it's imperative that you comprehend the external and subconscious dynamic at play. In addition, you must also acknowledge that you've used food and your subconscious mind, in a self-destructive manor, to avoid dealing with toxic behavior. Acknowledgement and acceptance are, without question, the precursors of action! If you are ready to take action, let's move on to step one of "The 5 Steps to Addiction Freedom."

SECTION III – ADDICTION FREEDOM

THE 5 STEPS TO ADDICTION FREEDOM

STEP ONE; UNEARTH AND ELIMINATE THE SQUARE ROOT

Uncover and confront the family dysfunction which has caused your self-destructive, habitual behavior.

“Only by much searching and mining are gold and diamonds obtained, and man can find every truth connected with his being if he will dig deep into the mine of his soul.”
– James Allen

This is by far the most critical of all the steps. It’s also the one that will take the most courage to accomplish since it requires a monumental leap in personal growth. In all likelihood, either one or both of your parents abused, controlled, mistreated, abandoned or failed to love you as a child. And in doing so, they inadvertently stripped you of your self-respect, identity and personal power. This, inevitably, caused your low self-esteem and led to the emotional pain that has driven your addictive behavior. Family dysfunction is the common denominator or square root of all addictive behavior, and until it is brought to the forefront and confronted, nothing will change! Therefore, to regain your self-respect and personal power, you must learn to speak your will in a calm confident way and call the dysfunction that you were subjected to what it really is – wrong! To accomplish this, you must address these issues with your parent or parents. In addition, you will also need to adopt a set of principles and establish some personal boundaries. Principles and boundaries define one’s character and personal identity, so it is imperative that you set them and never, ever forget them!

Will this task be easy? Of course not! But, nothing worth while ever is! Addiction is not, by any stretch, the complicated brain disease that the mainstream professes it to be. On the contrary, when you get right down to brass tacks, it's relatively simple! But, overcoming addiction does take courage. I will not sugar coat the process or pretend that it's going to be easy. However, if you find that courage, I will make you a promise and a guarantee; what you'll find on the other side is more wonderful than you could ever imagine!

Family dysfunction is the direct, fundamental cause or square root of all addictive behavior, but many people have a difficult time seeing it that way because they are wearing rose colored glasses. Most people struggle with the fact that their family could commit such atrocities. They often make excuses for their behavior or worse blame themselves for the situation. Well, let me ask you a question; if your family didn't bear the respective titles of Mother, Father, Brother or Sister, would you let them or anyone else abuse, control or mistreat you? That answer is, plainly no! But, the simple fact that they do bear those titles poses the following dilemma: Continue to ignore the toxic behavior at your own expense because the perpetrators are family members or stand up and confront it. Ultimately, you must come to terms with this if you want to achieve addiction freedom.

In addition to confronting dysfunctional behavior, complete liberation requires a positive, symbolic perspective. As an example, have you heard the expression, "there's a silver lining in every dark cloud?" Well, there literally is, and until you

find it in this situation, nothing will change. To find that silver lining, you must first learn to view the family dysfunction you were subjected to for what it really is – wrong! Second, you must calmly and confidently speak your will and set personal boundaries, accordingly. In other words, say it's wrong and put a stop to it! This will allow you to take back your self-respect and ultimately embrace forgiveness. As you release the anger and resentment you're harboring, you'll be able to adopt a positive, symbolic perspective. Essentially, you'll be able to find the positives in that nasty deck of life cards you were dealt. Begin by asking these questions; what are the lessons, what can I learn from these painful events, and how can I grow from them? These are the questions that need to be asked. In due time, they will be answered. I assure you, there are lessons to be learned here, although it's hard to see the forest through the trees if you keep looking back at the swamp you already passed. It's not about the nasty deck of life cards; it's about staying in the game long enough to learn how to land a royal flush. Isn't it about time you learned how to create a winning hand? You do have a choice. You can continue to hold on to all of your emotional garbage, or you can throw it out with the trash and begin a new journey!

There are two parts to step one:

1. Uncovering Family Dysfunction

Getting to the real issues will prove to be a difficult task since the process usually results in a certain amount of emotional distress. Therefore, if you feel that your current level of coping skills will not withstand the challenge then by all means seek

professional help. Once you have decided on additional support, you may proceed to apply the tribal demon models that were outlined in Section II. How do these models relate to your family history, and how have they caused the emotional pain responsible for your addictive behavior? Pay close attention to the cause and effect of each type of family dysfunction since you may have experienced more than one or just a fraction of another. The most important thing to remember is that you need to be completely honest with yourself. Do not make excuses or attempt to justify the family dysfunction that took place.

Blaming Your Parents

You are not to blame for the family dysfunction that has caused your habitual behavior. You did not ask to be abused, controlled or unloved! It was your parent's responsibility to provide the love and nurturing that you needed as a child, not yours! Do not continue to make excuses for their behavior simply because they are your family. You must stop accepting the blame for what they have done because it's not your fault! However, are you responsible for continuing your addictive behavior? The answer is absolutely, unequivocally, yes! But, let's pause for a moment because I want to make something abundantly clear. I am not asking you at this point, nor would I in the future; suggest that you blame your parents or anyone else for your behavior. This isn't about blaming anyone; it's about liberating yourself from the emotionally smothering and choking effects of family dysfunction. Moreover, it's about dropping the psychological baggage that you've toting around all these years and learning how to get on with it – namely life! Addiction is a choice, and if you

understand why you made that choice in the first place you can make another - addiction freedom. Be honest with yourself about what your parents have done. Take them down off the proverbial, Mount Olympus pedestal, and see their behavior for what it really is - wrong! Leave no stone unturned in the emotional expedition that will reveal the foundation for your habitual behavior.

Being Angry

Once you have successfully uncovered the family dysfunctions responsible for your emotional pain, you will then need to work through a process of anger and grieving. It is quite normal to experience anger when making the shift in paradigm regarding your parent's behavior. And, it's ok to feel that way, briefly! However, a continued state of anger and resentment will chain you to the past and, even worse, drive your addictive behavior to boot. Therefore, you're going to have to forgive them. I'll show you how to achieve forgiveness in step two. But for now, let's get back to confronting family dysfunction.

Grieving

As you move forward through the anger phase you will begin to feel a sense of sorrow. This is a normal part of the process since you are coming to terms with the loss of your parents or the perception of how you have known them. You have begun to see them for what they really are, and in doing so, you will feel a deep sense of loss. You realize that your parents never gave you the love, nurturing, and guidance you needed, and in all likelihood you're not going to get it at this point either. As you

make your way through this process you will attempt to cling to the hope that your parents will change. However, the odds of that happening are slim at best! Your parents have failed to deliver the goods, but the hurt you feel inside will persuade you to be hopeful for reconciliation. Remember, they have been your whole world, everything you have known, and now reality has changed that! Will they change? Can they change? These questions can only be answered by their actions that follow the confrontation. However, let me fore warn. The majority of parents will not change. If you have successfully unearthed your tribal demons and have worked through the anger and grieving phases, you are now ready to move on.

2. Confronting Family Dysfunction

The thought of confronting the person that is responsible for your emotional trauma is one of the most frightening situations you will face. However, it's also the most liberating and empowering thing you'll ever do! Why do you need to confront your parent or parents? Well, first let me clarify the meaning of the word confront and in what context we are using it. The confrontation should not be conducted as a verbal assault or vengeful attack. Instead, treat it as an opportunity to set the record straight, drop emotional baggage, and take back your personal power. You are conducting the confrontation for you, not for your parents. Consequently, their opinion or perception of the issues is of very little importance. Truth does not require validation, so you should avoid debating the issues. Simply state your position and, most importantly, put a stop to the abusive behavior.

Choosing a Method

Before we move on to the confrontation itself, you will first need to do a bit of preliminary work to determine the method that best suits your needs. Therefore, I would like you to decide whether one or both of your parents are responsible, and if you will confront them individually or together. The following considerations should be taken in to account when choosing a method of confrontation:

If both parents are responsible, and you suspect they will mount a joint attack to prevent you from speaking your mind, you may want to confront them individually? If one parent is in denial about the abuse that the other parent has committed, it may be best to speak to them at the same time. If one of your parents is physically abusive, you may want to have someone else present when you confront him or her.

The three methods for confronting your parents are as follows:

Face to Face

I prefer this method over the later two because it allows for an open expression of your emotions, and it gives you the opportunity to ascertain your parent's willingness to change. However, it is the most difficult and will take the most courage to accomplish.

Writing a Letter to Them

This is often an effective method of confrontation, and it should be selected if your parent has a history of physical abuse or has tendencies toward violence. Writing a letter gives you the ability to express your feelings without putting yourself in harms way!

Telephone

This method often results in a parent ending the conversation prior to full emotional expression, so I prefer it the least. If you choose the phone method, I would highly recommend following it with a confrontation letter as described in the second option. Combining these two methods will often result in as powerful a confrontation as the face to face method.

Speaking Your Mind

When you speak to your parents, you should tell them that you don't agree with what they did and that it was wrong. You should tell them how it made you feel. You should tell them how it has affected you. You should tell them that you love them and forgive them, but you are no longer going to allow them to mistreat or abuse you! Finally, you should tell them what you expect of them in continuing or discontinuing the relationship.

Confrontation Letter

The following is a confrontation that addresses an abusive, alcoholic parent:

Dad, I have been thinking about some things, and I'd like you to know how I feel about them. You said a lot of hurtful things to me when I was a child, and you also said some terrible things to mom in front of me. You have been verbally and even physically abusive to me, which has affected my ability to have a loving relationship. I have had a difficult time getting close to anyone since I never knew whether I was going to be loved or mistreated!

You told me that if I couldn't be the best at something then I shouldn't be anything at all. This was very damaging to my self-esteem because it made me feel afraid to try anything for fear of failing. I am so angry at you for saying that to me! My life has been full of unhappiness, and I now realize that I tried to hide it with alcohol and cocaine. It was easier for me to cover it up than it was for me to tell you how I really felt. But that stops right now! I don't forgive the hurtful things you said and did because they were wrong, but I do forgive you as a person. However, I'm not going to allow you to treat me that way anymore. If you continue your behavior, I will be forced to sever our relationship.

Confronting a Deceased Parent

Just because the parent has passed on does not mean that the emotional trauma has disappeared. On the contrary, your parent may have passed on, but they have left behind a dysfunctional legacy of self-limiting beliefs that has continued to wreak havoc in your life. The key to abolishing this legacy lies squarely in your hands since it really has nothing to do with whether they agree or disagree with your concerns.

Remember, when confronting a parent face to face, most will not admit their wrong doings and apologize anyway. Therefore, you can exercise an indirect confrontation with a parent that has passed on just as effectively as a direct confrontation with a parent that has not. The two ways to accomplish this are as follows:

You can write a letter and read it out loud to your deceased parent.

You can openly talk with them and perform the confrontation while in meditation.

Continuing a Relationship

It is possible to continue to have a relationship with your parents beyond the confrontation? This is usually a result of the parent's admission, apology and commitment to change. On the other hand, most parents prove to be unsympathetic to the emotional trauma they have caused, and they have no intention of discontinuing their dysfunctional behavior. Remember, you can't change them, no matter how hard you try. Only they can change themselves! Yes it's your family, but that doesn't make it right! Remember the question I posed earlier? Take away the title, and would you let anyone else treat you that way? If you want to become addiction free, do not take this lightly. Every situation is different, so only you can decide whether or not you need to distance yourself from your parents. However, do not continue subjecting yourself to toxic behavior, or you will once again have a need to seek out habitual behavior to mask the pain.

The three options for types of parental relationships are as follows:

Continue to have a relationship with certain rules

This option can usually be selected when the parent or parents are sympathetic to your feelings, have apologized, and have agreed to refrain from causing you any further pain.

Continue to have a distant relationship

If your parents show very little concern for your well being and do not agree to change, you can pull back a bit and have a distant relationship. But, you must be prepared to promptly address any abusive behavior, or you will find yourself back to square one.

End the relationship altogether

If your parents are in complete denial about their behavior and have no intentions of changing, then in all likelihood the relationship will remain status quo. Therefore, you will be faced with a choice; continue to allow them to inflict the emotional trauma or end the relationship altogether!

Setting Boundaries

Sometimes you just have to say no! This is absolutely critical to the process - especially if you've chosen parental relationship option one or two. If you continue to allow others to violate your boundaries and undermine your personal power, your

addiction will be sustained. Contrary to what most people believe, saying no doesn't require screaming, yelling or confrontation. In fact, I would highly recommend that you attempt to remain calm, collected and confident when addressing boundaries with your parents. Regardless of your demeanor, you must say what you mean and mean what you say! In other words, if your parent or parents violate your boundaries there must be consequences for their actions. For instance, if you've made it abundantly clear that tolerating any further verbal abuse is unacceptable and they refuse to cease and desist, then leave the room or sever the relationship altogether.

Finally, I would highly recommend that you deal with your family dysfunction decisively before moving on to the remaining four steps. Otherwise, it will be extremely difficult to find forgiveness for your parents, or yourself for that matter. Please note; steps two through five should be worked simultaneously throughout the recovery process.

Unearth the Square Root Example

Rick has been plagued most of his life by low self-esteem, academic failure and alcohol addiction. Rick's problems began at the age of seven when his mother began controlling and verbally abusing him. His father withdrew from the family and turned to alcohol to cope with his own emotional issues. With nowhere to turn, Rick began to rebel by sabotaging his academic curriculum. He failed the seventh grade twice, the eighth grade once, and left school entirely in the ninth grade. Shortly after the age of eighteen, Rick began drinking. Quickly, he discovered that alcohol alleviated his

emotional pain and bolstered his crippled self-esteem. A discovery that would perpetuate thirty-five years of alcoholism!

Rick felt abandoned, inadequate, and even worthless! So, I wasted no time in helping him unearth the square root of his addiction. Although he was deeply saddened by the absence of his father, Rick failed to understand the damaging effects of his parent's dysfunctional behavior – especially his mom's! Instead, he blamed society and the school system for his academic failure. Once we uncovered the root cause of his addiction and he gained a clear perspective of the family dysfunction that took place, Rick began to deal with the issues appropriately. He took back his personal power, restored his self-esteem, and began to gravitate away from destructive drinking!

STEP TWO; REMOVE EMOTIONAL BAGGAGE

Find forgiveness in your heart for those who have committed atrocities against you. Remove the anger, resentment and blame that you are harboring.

“It’s hard to see the forest through the trees if you keep looking back at the swamp you already past!” – The Addiction Freedom Coach

You have completed step one by confronting your parent or parents. This, in and of itself, should have removed much of the pain and emotional trauma. To complete that process, it will be necessary to find forgiveness in your heart. First, let’s start by defining true forgiveness. Mistakenly, forgiveness is often perceived as an act of passivism, which is commonly referred to in Christian teachings as “turning the other cheek.” But, that is a complete misrepresentation of the true meaning. In fact, there is evidence to suggest that at the time of Christ, turning the other cheek was not a passive act at all. In those times, striking someone deemed to be of a lower class with the back of the hand was used to assert authority and dominance. However, if the persecuted person "turned the other cheek," this was meant as a gesture of indifference and a demand for equality. So, it would appear that the intent of turning the other cheek was not passivism at all, but rather a method of standing up for righteousness and justice! Something Christ, himself, preached on a regular basis. The true interpretation is as follows: stand up, speak your will without engaging in violence or revenge, take back your self- respect and release your anger and resentment.

Another misconception is that forgiveness and reconciliation are inseparable. They aren't! In fact, they are very different and distinct acts. Reconciliation is defined as acceptance and submission to a person's behavior while continuing the relationship under those circumstances. I am not at all suggesting that you accept your family's behavior and condone its continuance while condemning yourself to a life of unhappiness. I'm suggesting that you remove yourself from their behavior and release the resentment and anger you're harboring towards them. Think about it for a moment. If you can't forgive them, how in lord's name are you going to move on with your life? You can't! The angrier you become about their dysfunctional behavior, the more you will be tempted to punish them. But before you do, take heed in the following ancient Chinese proverb; "Before seeking revenge first dig two graves!" When you harbor anger and resentment towards another are you hurting them or are you hurting yourself? Forgiveness is defined as giving up or ceasing a resentment that is being harbored towards an offender. Therefore, I am not at all suggesting that you reconcile with anyone, but I am suggesting that you forgive them. If they apologize and make a commitment to discontinue their behavior, then reconciliation is possible. But, forgiveness does not hinge upon reconciliation because you are forgiving them for you, not them. If they fail to apologize and refuse to cease their toxic behavior, then reconciliation is sheer suicide! You shouldn't reconcile with someone who insists on treating you like a doormat- period! Even if reconciliation is impossible, forgiveness is not. You don't have to forgive the act, but you should forgive the person. The more you harbor anger and resentment, the more emotional

distress you will experience in your life, which increases the odds you'll reach for substances or compulsions!

Blame

Yes, one or both of your parents mistreated, abused, controlled, abandoned or failed to love you, but blaming them for it will only harm you. So, I am not asking you to blame your parents, yourself, society, God, or anyone else for your behavior. This isn't about blaming anyone; it's about liberating yourself emotionally. Moreover, it's about dropping the baggage you've been toting around all these years. Forgive me if I sound a bit harsh and unsympathetic, but to do otherwise would condone victimization. And, that isn't going to help you overcome your addiction. Besides, when you get right down to it, blaming others is just validation of your own self-loathing! And, where do you think that's going to get you?

Before we move on to the technique that will help you achieve forgiveness, I want to make sure you have a clear understanding of the meaning and end goal. So, I'm going to use an allegoric exercise to demonstrate true forgiveness.

I want you stand in front of a mirror for a moment. Now, looking yourself squarely in the eyes, I want you to slap yourself in the face! Next, look in the mirror and say "It's ok, I know your going through a difficult time, and so I forgive you" OK! Now, slap yourself in the face again! Next, say "It's ok, I know your having a hard time, and so I'll just turn my head, and I'll forgive you." Is your face swelling up yet? Is your nose

bleeding? Now, slap yourself in the face again, really hard! Next, look in the mirror and say “My face is swollen, my nose is bleeding, but I know you’re having a rough time, so I forgive you.”

This is most people’s misguided perception of forgiveness! And, it’s exactly the way you’ve been reacting to your families dysfunctional behavior, isn’t it?

OK! Let’s use the same scenario we did above to demonstrate true forgiveness! Standing in front of the mirror, once again, slap yourself in the face! Next, look directly in the mirror and say “I understand that you’re having a rough time, and I feel sorry for you. But, that’s not an excuse to mistreat me, and, frankly, I’m not going to tolerate that toxic behavior anymore. I am going to walk in the other direction and travel my own path because I don’t want to share in your misery. I am not going to harbor any anger or resentment, and I do forgive you. But, before I go, let me make something abundantly clear. If you ever slap me in the face again, I’m going to knock you into next week!”

This is true forgiveness! Put a stop to abusive and dysfunctional behavior. Walk a different path but forgive by releasing anger and resentment!

In conclusion, harboring resentment causes great harm to you and very little if any to the perpetrators! So, forgive for you, not for them!

There are a few different techniques you can use to accomplish forgiveness. But, the one I favor is Forgiveness Meditation. If you don't know how to meditate you can think of it as visualization. Lying down in a comfortable place and position, take a few slow deep breaths. Once you are in a higher state of consciousness (meditative state) or you have relaxed, begin to hold a picture in your mind of someone you love unconditionally. As you focus on this person try to feel the love in your heart. Notice how this process puts you at peace with yourself. Next hold a picture in your mind of someone that you like but don't necessarily love at this point. Now try and transfer the same unconditional love you held for the first person over to the second. Feel the love in your heart. Now hold a picture in your mind of the person that has committed atrocities. Try and transfer that love over from the first to second and finally the person that has caused you the pain. Try to feel love and compassion for that person. When you can feel the same unconditional love in your heart for the perpetrator as the person you love, you will have achieved true forgiveness.

Remove Emotional Baggage Example

Mike is a fifty-two year old pastor who is addicted to food. For most of his adult life, he has struggled with self-esteem issues, obesity and compulsive overeating. Mike knows that gorging himself with five hamburgers in a single sitting isn't healthy, but he can't seem to stop. His problems started forty-seven years ago when his parents began controlling and verbally abusing him. In an attempt to liberate himself from this dysfunctional behavior, Mike severed the relationship with his parents. However, he never forgave them, and the resentment continued to boil away inside of him-even

after his parents passed away. As a result, Mike allowed his parent's behavior to drive his emotions, undermine his self-esteem, and fuel his addictive behavior.

Immediately, I drove right to the heart of the matter by examining Mike's history of family dysfunction, and I helped him arrive at an all important conclusion. Although he attempted to liberate himself from his parent's behavior, they were still controlling him from the grave! I taught Mike how to forgive his parents by releasing the resentment he was harboring. Using forgiveness meditation, Mike was able to break free from his parents grasp and drop the emotional baggage he had been toting around for the past forty years.

STEP THREE; CURE “WOUNDITIS”

Forgive yourself, be kind to yourself and learn to love yourself. Live your life in the present moment, refusing to become disempowered by the guilt and shame.

“There’s a silver lining to every dark cloud. But, we often fail to see it because we’re stuck in the rain of victimization!” – The Addiction Freedom Coach

Without question, partaking in addictive behavior not only causes you pain, but it also inflicts pain on those around you. No one would dispute that, but the events that led to that pain occurred in the past. You can not go back and change them, so why dwell there? Do not allow the previous actions of either yourself or others to chain you to the past and force you to live in fear of the future. The past is the past, it’s over, and living in it doesn’t serve anyone well. Live in the present moment, be kind to yourself, forgive yourself, and learn to love yourself. *“Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, but today, today is a gift!”* How can you love someone else if you don’t love yourself? The answer is you can’t! It isn’t a big secret that you’re feeling guilt and shame for the pain you’ve inflicted on those closest to you. And it’s also no big secret that you probably blame yourself, since many people suffering from addiction do. Addicted people are professional blamers. They blame themselves, their parents, society and even God! And, you can continue to be the victim and blame everyone else for your addiction, or you can accept responsibility for your actions and move to higher ground. But, many people get stuck in the why me train of thought, and subsequently believe they are being punished. Well guess what, its ok! God doesn’t

punish people, we punish ourselves. God is a loving and forgiving being. So if you thought that you would continue to punish yourself with guilt before God gets a hold of you, you can stop right now! We do not have defects of character, are not full of shortcomings, and we certainly are not powerless! On the contrary, we are children of God, and he has given us all the power to create the happiness, love and abundance in our lives that we desire. If you are not comfortable with the term God, you may use higher power or universe. Regardless what term you choose, the most important point is to unite with your higher consciousness and the source of unconditional love. The truth be told, love really does conquer all! That's right; there is nothing more powerful than unconditional love. So, you should love your addiction, not hate it! Now I don't mean that you should love it and continue it! On the contrary, you need to dissolve your habitual behavior. And, while giving thanks for it may seem paradoxical, it's also a key component to beating it because the more you hate your addiction the stronger it will become. It's easy to become bitter and angry, which is often used as an excuse to retreat. And, if you adopt the mindset of an angry, bitter victim, what will you attract in the future? Let me answer that for you; a whole battalion of angry, bitter victims who use self-incrimination as an excuse to assemble! And, if you want to spend the rest of your days in the basement of a church complaining about how screwed up your life is, that's your prerogative. But, you don't have to be a victim. You do have a choice! Take the high road and get back up on the horse. Just because you got knocked down doesn't mean that you can't sprint to the finish line. Refuse to be the wounded soul and aspire to be the gentle warrior. Embrace the crisis as a spiritual lesson, and ask what you can learn from it.

Contemplate this; would you be taking the steps to become a stronger and more confident person, who is searching for their life's purpose, if you hadn't been thrust into this painful addiction? Sometimes we have to wade through the mud puddle to get to the rose garden!

For your benefit, I have outlined the four stages of self-esteem below. Notice that these four stages encompass the very same principles of "*The 5 Steps to Addiction Freedom*." This is not by pure chance since addiction is a self-esteem issue.

1. Liberation = Step one: Unearth and Eliminate the Square Root

To set someone free from socially imposed constraints.

If you are in fact suffering from addictive behavior, begin by examining the path that brought you to your present state. What types of family dysfunctions played a role in undermining your self-esteem? Were your parents verbally, physically or sexually abusive? Were they controlling and manipulative? Did they fail to provide love, guidance and bonding by showing up part-time for a full-time job? Or, did they abuse alcohol or drugs? These are the questions that must be answered. Once you have uncovered these negative patterns, you must liberate yourself from them by putting a stop to the dysfunctional behavior. This must be accomplished by either setting boundaries or severing the relationship.

2. Self-identity = Step Four: Awaken the Power Within

Self-identity is defined as a complete and individual personality, especially one that somebody recognizes as his or her own and with which there is a sense of ease.

Once you have liberated yourself from patterns of dysfunction, it is time to re-evaluate who you are, what you believe in, and the principles you stand for. It is hard to be at ease with yourself if you fail to live your life in truth or stand on principle. Define those principles, and then stand by them like a rock, refusing to let anyone persuade you otherwise.

3. Self-love = Step three: “Cure Wounditis”

Self-love can be defined as having hi merit or regard, concerning your personality, principles and actions. Once you have adopted a new set of principles and beliefs, you can begin to uncover who you really are. Get to know yourself! Discover your true authentic self, and realize that you have the power to change and create anything you want in life. We are all the same and we are all connected. So, the playing field is a level plane.

4. Transformation = Direct result of converging all the steps

Transformation is defined as a complete change - usually into something with an improved state, appearance or usefulness.

Change is incredibly hard and very frightening for most people, isn't it? The fact of the matter is, most people avoid and even resist change. But, you can't avoid it, nor can you stop it. At the end of the day, life is a journey of change. And the sooner you

realize that the better off you'll be. Let's use the following parable to describe the process of change; your standing on the dysfunctional side of the road and on the other side is change. You can stay on the dysfunctional side and avoid the unknown, or you can venture into the middle of the road, confused about whether to go back or to cross. And, I don't need to tell what happens when you stand in the middle of the road to long, do I? Or, you can close your eyes and take a leap of faith over to the magical and miraculous. But, this is frightening to people. In reality, it just comes down to fear. Everyone experiences fear. You are not alone. The fearful allow it to become a paralyzing nemesis while the fearless embrace it as an agent of change and take action. A hypothetical consequence that is manufactured in ones mind is usually responsible for the paralysis. As an example, some folks worry about failure, rejection or how others will view them. Subsequently, it gives them a license to avoid change. Generally speaking, very few of those hypotheticals ever become reality. Besides, even if they did, are you going to let that prevent you from reaching your goals? Some of the greatest men and women in history failed multiple times. Thomas Edison attempted to create the light bulb 9,999 times. He succeeded on the very next attempt. No one seems to focus on how many attempts it took, do they? He who perseveres shall surely wear the crown of glory. You really do have "nothing to fear but fear itself!"

Cure “Wounditis” Example

Catherine, a forty-five year old accomplished author and mother of one, was losing her marriage, her happiness and herself to alcohol and antidepressants. Her problems started forty-two years ago when her father began sexually and physically abusing her. Her mother, who was diagnosed with mental illness, ignored the behavior and accused Catherine of being untruthful. The affects of this dysfunctional behavior dealt a crippling blow to her self-esteem, undermined her marriage, and caused her alcohol and prescription drug addictions.

When I first met her, she was frustrated with the Twelve-Step Program and discouraged with the prospects of addiction recovery. Immediately, I sensed that Catherine had embraced the Twelve-Step Program principle of self-incrimination and was suffering from “wounditis!” Like most addicted individuals in recovery, she not only bore a burden of guilt for her habitual behavior but also for causing others to suffer as a result of it. After a bit of prodding, she made an admission of guilt for abusing alcohol and hurting her family. She also revealed that hiding behind the comfort of the group afforded her the opportunity to use victimization as an excuse. I helped Catherine realize that the only way to beat her addiction was to re-gain her self-respect by transforming the victim into a gentle warrior. Finally, she embraced the concept of liberation, restored her self-esteem, learned self-love and walked away from alcohol!

STEP FOUR; AWAKEN THE POWER WITHIN

Spiritually empower yourself through the daily practice of meditation.

“You have to leave the city of your comfort and go into the wilderness. What you'll discover will be wonderful. What you'll discover is yourself.” - Alan Alda

Personal Identity and Power

Identity theft has become a well known topic of concern in later part of this decade, and I might add with good reason. But, I'd like to talk about a different kind of identity theft – one that has absolutely nothing to do with social security numbers or credit scores. The type of identity theft I'm referring to is personal identity, and it's quite common in addiction. As a matter of fact, I believe it's a core component in every form of addiction. Being subjected to family dysfunction is completely suffocating in every sense of the word, and it often robs individuals of their personal identity. In fact, many of the clients I coach literally feel like imposters in their own shoes. They often lack true meaning and purpose in their lives and, at times, even feel completely lost. The scenario is usually a successful work-life and a failed personal life. Surprisingly, ninety percent of the time, career success is not an issue at all. Therefore, identity issues are not external problems that require more education or social interaction, and nor can they be corrected by behavioral modification. Personal identity can only be rediscovered by connecting to your higher consciousness because that is where your true self resides. Only by embarking on a path of self-reflection

that will mine deep into the soul, will you find the answers you seek. However, to find them, you must ask the right questions;

Who am I?

Why am I here?

What can I learn from my addiction?

How can I grow from it?

The answers to these questions can be found in an uncharted place that's just waiting to be explored! It's called your true self! To make that connection, you're going to have to leave your comfort zone and boldly go where you've never gone before! Venturing into the unknown is usually a frightening prospect for most, but you really do "have nothing to fear but fear itself!" If you find the courage to plow through the fear blockade, what you'll find is more wonderful than you can imagine. The real you doesn't consist of bone, muscle, skin and hair. The real you is your higher consciousness or your soul. Your body is merely a wrapper or a package that's on loan. Truthfully, isn't everything really on loan? Name one thing that can't be changed, destroyed, or whisked away in the blink of an eye? You can't, can you? Everything of a tangible nature is subject to change. The only thing that is impervious to change is your true self. Therefore, the only way to empower yourself and bring peace and happiness to your life is by connecting with your higher consciousness. This is accomplished through the daily practice of meditation. For your benefit, I have included a step by step instructional guide below to assist you in your meditation practice.

Meditation

While the benefits of meditation are widely promoted as relaxation, stress relief and improved health, there's only one purpose for practicing it. Meditation connects you with your higher consciousness. To meditate successfully, you must learn to quiet your mind. It's in the breathless silence that you will find what you're searching for. Initially, the mind will resist shutting down. However, with some regular practice and persistence, the mind will eventually respond. When this occurs the ego will take a back seat, and you will learn to listen to your inner guidance. Following the guidance of your higher consciousness will change your perception of humanity and foster decisions that breed happiness. All of a sudden, you will understand the universal connection that exists between us all. So if you want to achieve balance, true happiness and lead a life that is full of meaning and purpose, learn to meditate!

Preparing for Meditation

There are various ways to practice meditation, but the method is not nearly as important as the end result. Before I outline the method that I prefer, let's talk about preparation.

Choosing a Quiet Place to Meditate

Choose a quiet place, one that you can make your own such as your bedroom or study. Make sure it is a place that will be free of any and all distractions that will allow you to devote at least 20 to 30 minutes, once to twice daily. The best times are

in the morning just after rising and in the evening prior to sleep. To set the mood of your space you can utilize candles, aroma's or even meditation music.

Positioning of the Body

When choosing a body position for meditating the most essential element is keeping the back or spine straight. Try to be comfortable, physically relaxed, and avoid moving too much. Generally speaking, most eastern philosophies teach meditation in a full lotus position. However, unless you practice yoga on a regular basis or you're extremely flexible, this can be a difficult position to accomplish. Therefore, you may practice mediation in a half lotus position (seated on the floor with the legs lightly crossed), seated on a bench preferably without a back or lying down. Remember, the main objectives are to keep the back straight and to be comfortable and relaxed. If you choose the lying position, your feet should be apart and your hands at your sides away from your body slightly. Your palms should be facing upward and your index finger and thumb should be touching at their tips, creating a conduit for the flow of universal life force or energy. Your mouth should open slightly and your tongue should be gently up against the roof of your mouth approximately one half inch behind your teeth. Your eyes should be relaxed and open just ever so slightly. If this is somewhat distracting at first, you may close them completely. Should you choose the full lotus, half lotus position or a seated position, you may place your hands palms up on your knees. Otherwise, all of the previously outlined steps apply.

Breathing

Breathing should be slow and controlled, involving the chest, diaphragm and the abdominal area. As we age, we tend to shorten the depth of our breath, only utilizing a small portion of our lung capacity. Therefore, the goal is to expand the use of your lung capacity in a slow relaxing process while avoiding labored and exaggerated breathing. Inhale through the nose drawing air into the abdomen, diaphragm and then the chest. Exhale through the nostrils while lowering the abdomen, diaphragm and finally the chest. One important point; you should only practice the deep breathing for approximately 10 full breaths, then slow the breathing in an effort to reach “breathless silence.” The breathing is meant to oxygenate the body, increase the flow of energy and aid in relaxation. However, it will not assist you in reaching a higher state of consciousness because you must obtain breathless silence to do so!

How to Meditate

After you have positioned your body, begin to focus on your breathing. Do not attempt to force your breathing, and above all, try not to become frustrated if you lose your focus. Once you have taken 10 full breaths, slow the breathing down while working toward a state of breathless silence. Do not have any expectations about the outcome of this process. Expect nothing and just be! Above all, do not become frustrated if you fail to empty your mind. You can not expect to shut down the mind in a matter of minutes when it has been working for a lifetime. With practice and persistence the mind will quiet. When you succeed at quieting the mind, you will notice sensations of weightlessness and tingling in the body. You may even begin to see various colors of the Chakras (7 energy centers of the body) in the 6th chakra

(minds eye), which is located between the brows. This is a sign that you have peeled back the layers of ego and are beginning to reach your higher consciousness. When you can hold the color violet of the Crown Chakra in your minds eye, this is proof that you have indeed made contact with your inner self! Note: If you find it difficult to locate the minds eye, try briefly staring at a lit candle for several moments prior to meditating. This will help you fixate the position of the minds eye when closing your physical eyes. However, do not try to force the appearance of the third eye. Instead, let the minds eye draw you to it.

Meditation Blocks

On occasion, some people experience difficulty connecting to their true self. This is usually caused by an emotional block. What fears and insecurities are preventing you from wanting to know who you really are? You truly do “have nothing to fear but fear it self!” What you will find inside will be more wonderful than you can imagine, but to get you there, you must be willing to set fear aside and take a leap of faith. If you are having trouble letting go of your fears and insecurities, try the following visualization technique in your meditation practice; **Imagine that you are standing on the bank of a crystal blue river with your back turned to the water. Know in your heart and your mind that you will be taken care of. Let go of your worries, all of your thoughts and all of your problems, then surrender your will by falling backwards onto the river. Trust the river to take you wherever it chooses to, and know that the outcome will be wonderful. Just float on the water and be!**

Finally, to be successful at meditation you must refrain from having any expectations.

The changes that will occur will be subtle in nature, and they will certainly not eclipse

being struck by lightning or parting the Red Sea! Paradoxically speaking, if you

expect nothing you will reap the benefits by leaps and bounds. So just let go and be!

STEP FIVE; PRACTICE ACTS OF RANDOM KINDNESS

Find happiness, meaning and purpose by practicing spirituality daily. Begin with small acts of kindness, generosity and unconditional love while building towards a life of service to your fellow man.

“One small step of random kindness for man is the universal exponent for a giant leap of enlightenment for mankind!” – The Addiction Freedom Coach

Contrary to popular belief, authentic spiritual practice entails much more than just practicing meditation, yoga or attending workshops led by one guru or another. Many people focus on polishing the exterior of their spiritual vessel to impress a crowd while they ignore the fruit that rots on the cosmic vine within. A truly authentic spiritual existence is lived from the inside out. Additionally, the inside must match the outside. There must be a harmonious union and flow created between ones internal and external reality. One should not engage in acts of selflessness while attaching self-serving conditions or agendas to those acts. That is not harmonious! Random acts of kindness are indeed selfless and also an essential part of any spiritual practice. And, all of the preceding steps have been designed to prepare you for making a leap from selfishness to selflessness. If you’ve followed those steps, by now, you are deeply aware that spiritual transformation does not lie in the practice of outward ideals. Yes, meditation, yoga & spiritual practices are part of the dance. But, the true spiritual dance can only be cued by walking through the fire of liberation. Even Buddha came to this understanding. After years of self-deprivation & abuse to

his body, he finally realized that the path to enlightenment was to face the demons outside so that one could take the journey within. Yes, you must continue to practice meditation and evolution of consciousness, but you must also embrace selflessness.

Begin with small acts of kindness such as opening a door for someone, letting someone go before you in the checkout line, or just taking the time to offer a kind word to an elderly person or a child. You get the picture! The first thing I do upon waking in the morning is contemplate how I can be of service throughout the day, and I am always mindful of opportunities that present themselves. Paradoxically speaking, the more kind and generous you are, the more love, kindness and abundance you'll receive. Don't believe me? Just try it and watch what begins to happen! But, take heed because it must come from the heart and it must be unconditional. Now at this point, you may be asking; what does this have to do with my addiction? The answer is everything. Take a moment to describe the characteristics of the people you'd like to surround your self with. If you're like most, you would probably say loving, caring, understanding, thoughtful and generous. So, let me get this straight; you want to be surrounded by people who possess those qualities, but do you possess them? Can you see where I'm going with this? You must become the very thing that you want to attract in your life. Besides, if you've been entrenched up to your eyeballs in addiction, you haven't even thought about helping anyone else, have you? One of the quickest ways to open your heart is by being of service to others. When you take the focus off your past improprieties and focus on being of service to others, paradoxically, you will receive more of what you wanted in the first place. So be

generous, kind, giving and of service to others. It's fuel for the soul and your path to addiction freedom!

Practice Acts of Random Kindness Example

Larry, a fifty-two year old theater manager suffers from drug, gambling and sexual addictions. Larry's problems began forty-five years ago when his parents began verbally abusing him. As a result, he withdrew socially and turned to addictive behavior. Even though, Larry has forgiven his parents and made amends, he continues to view life from a glass half empty perspective. In Larry's mind, there's no reason to end his addictions since the world is so screwed up! This train of thought fueled his selfishness and gave him a license to avoid change. After making this analysis, I immediately began teaching Larry how to practice acts of random kindness. Once he realized that selflessness was the fuel for inner happiness and that he could make a difference in the world, he embraced change and moved toward addiction freedom.

CONCLUSION

Finally, you are now armed with all the tools required for ending habitual behavior. If you apply them correctly, you will be healthier, happier and addiction free. Seize this opportunity! “Boldly go where you’ve never gone before!” Change yourself – change the world!

Best wishes,

David Roppo

The Addiction Freedom Coach

724-203-4575

Follow me on Facebook @ <http://www.facebook.com/5StepstoAddictionFreedom>

Follow me on Twitter @ <http://www.twitter.com/addictions>

david@visionquestlifecoaching.com

<http://www.5stepstoaddictionfreedom.com>

<http://www.howtostopdrinkingwithoutaa.com>

All rights and copyrights reserved 2011 by Vision Quest Life Coaching and David Roppo. Any unauthorized reproduction is subject to U.S. copyright laws.

Disclaimer

All information in this document is for general information purpose only. The author has used his best efforts in preparing this document and makes no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or the completeness of the information contained within. Furthermore, the author takes no responsibility for any errors, omissions, or inaccuracies in this document. The author disclaims any implied or expressed warranties or fitness for any particular purpose. The author shall in no way be held liable for loses or damages whatsoever. The author assumes no responsibility or liability for any consequences resulting directly or indirectly from any action or lack of action that you take based on the information in this document. As with any exercise or self-help program it is recommended that you first consult your physician prior to following the steps in this guide. The information in this guide is in no way intended to be a substitute for the advice of your health professional.