

Transforming Addiction, Part Two

The Pathways of Grief

By Geoff Brandenburg

In my last article, I shared the model of transforming addiction based on revealing the existence of the emotional body, and then understanding what happens when the emotional body is forced into failure by dysfunction in families and relationships. I also presented the four modalities of Doing Your Work that rebuild the emotional body— emotional sobriety, reclaiming boundaries, breath and energy work, and Reparenting.

Many readers have since asked me to elaborate on what some healing strategies would look like using the Doing Your Work tools. Let's begin by looking at the emotional body again. The healthy emotional body is based on spontaneity. Every emotion in us begins as a desire for, and a vision of, new possibility that seeks to move into full self-expression, and then resolve into completion.

And just as we can exercise our physical bodies through movement, the emotional body seeks optimal health through spontaneous expression, creation and results. Denying healthy emotional expression to the emotional body is no different than denying healthy movement and exercise to the physical body.

So when parents suppress children through shame, blame, guilt, judgment and denial, they force that emotional spontaneity to fail — to give up, become invisible and passive, and to fall into grief.

What is grief, really? Grief is love that has never been fully given or received. Grief is spontaneous love and emotion that was forced to fail,

forced to feel shame or guilt, forced to disconnect from that powerful urge to live, love and make a difference that IS the emotional body.

And what is addiction, really? Addiction can be simply defined as the avoidance of grief. Addictive behavior bypasses grief — a shortcut to feeling successful. Addiction of any kind uses an altered state to simulate feeling successful in communicating and creating love through our emotions. So let's look at four different addictions — how they are created and how they can heal from being forced to fail into learning how to spontaneously generate love and emotion again.

Self-pity

This emotional addiction typically contains two primal places where the emotional body was forced into failure — being overwhelmed by emotional unconsciousness in the family, and then holding a form of “drowning in a sea of weakness” grief that can't be digested because of this unconsciousness.

The grief inside of self-pity addiction is that of never having had a confident emotional foothold in life.

Self-pity as an addiction acts out through chronic helplessness, passive-aggressive blocking of intimacy and communication, and isolation. The initial key to working with self-pity is to first generate some fiery energy of the will through breathwork to awaken the broken will. The emotional body must discover how to move its energy spontaneously, and then one can begin to restructure their choices based on a more awake and empowered sense of self and new possibilities. With this fiery energy awakening, a person can risk being more spontaneous with their love.

Chaos

As an addiction, chaos feeds on the primal force of interruption, as that is what forced the emotional body to fail initially. When a child is interrupted repeatedly in their growth, communication, boundary setting and self-discovery, they become trapped in an internal chaos. The complex impact of being interrupted has not been processed and organized, so the emotional body will addictively act out the chaos and grief in a desperate attempt to create order.

The grief inside of chaos addiction is one of having an emerging love shredded, fragmented and cast aside.

The key here is to do intensive boundary work, role-playing and breathwork so that the nervous system, heart and mind can begin to form a sense of what normal, uninterrupted growth feels like. Only when that emerging 'normal' is safely established can the emotional body really come forward and start to structure authentic and calm emotional expression and goals, and the self can emerge as a coherent, loving person.

Anger

Anger addiction feeds on the primal feeling of being deeply thwarted in getting our needs and identity recognized in the family. Parents in denial of their own needs force the emotional bodies of their children to fail by denying them recognition and suppressing the emerging selves of the children.

Children learn about real personal power when their love can make a difference in the lives of their parents. The grief inside anger addiction is that of never being able to love or confront an unavailable parent.

Anger is really an identifying emotion that seeks to reveal the underlying fear, confusion and grief while trying to gain healthy control and create a loving confrontation with denial. After being forced into non-existence by

denial, anger seeks to create a pathway of response from another person. The most effective way to begin healing anger addiction is Reparenting – for people to learn how to respond to their own anger and bring their emotional body out failure from being denied. Learning to create that inner pathway through Reparenting the Inner Child brings the emotional body back into the present moment, and the patterns of anger can dissolve.

Food

Food addiction develops from two powerful deprivations: nurturing and grounding. When the emotional body fails through being deprived of nurturing touch and communication, it undergoes a slow starvation experience that creates a very scary moment of “going under” before dying/failing. Food addiction is a compulsive response to that scary moment when the emotional body failed — an immediate nurturing and grounding that makes the anxiety and panic of that failure go away.

The grief inside food addiction is that of never knowing what it feels like to receive love, and so never being sure what love is in the first place.

Mirrorwork and breathwork are two very direct and powerful ways to repattern food addiction, in addition to Reparenting. By establishing a real-time connection with the emotional body and feeding one’s self with healthy attention, the primal disconnect that comes from deprivation can be calmed into balanced desires and self-nurturing.

These are very brief explorations into how to heal grief and addiction. I hope though that they convey an idea of how grief forms, and how love becomes trapped inside that grief. If we are to ever heal addiction, we must learn to embrace grief with courage, and set that love free.