

Transforming Addiction A New Spiritual and Emotional Model

By Geoff Brandenburg

Grasping addiction is not a simple subject, and I want to acknowledge that what I have written in this article is a condensed version of what would easily fill a small book. To best engage with the model of transformation I am presenting here, begin by focusing on your breathing, and getting centered in your body.

Now, imagine that you are holding a stick in your hands. Visualize slowly bending that stick, forcing the fibers of the wood to stretch until they finally snap and break, and the fibrous structure of that stick is forced to fail.

You have just fully visualized the experience that is at the core of all addiction.

What I am presenting in this article is a model of healing addiction that embraces that we are spiritual beings, born of Light and capable of co-creating our lives with Light. This model asserts that it is truly possible to transform addiction and be free to project a vibrant, Light-filled soul from within. It requires though that we understand a part of us that has been misunderstood and denied for a long time: the emotional body.

The model of addiction I want to present to you is built on five simple ideas: first, that we possess an emotional body that is identical to our physical body. Second, that our emotional body, just like the stick above, can be broken and forced to fail. Third, that when our emotional body is forced to fail, our soul and spirit cannot move and connect within us. Fourth, this condition creates a very specific and profound grief in the heart. And fifth, that addiction seeks to bypass this grief and simulate an emotional body and soul connection that has never been forced to fail.

Imagine that your emotional self really lives within you as a body. It has a structure just like your physical body — brain, heart, circulation, muscles and bones — and craves the same joy of movement, expression and sensual pleasure. And if it is wounded or deprived in any way, responds exactly like your physical body, and seeks the same timely attention.

Now, imagine that you have grown up in a family that does not express love, emotion or intimacy. In the emotional body, love equals water, emotion equals oxygen, and intimacy equals food. So imagine that by the age of seven, deeply deprived of these essential elements of life, your emotional body slowly starves, and then actually dies. It has been forced to fail by the dysfunction of the family.

With this model of the emotional body being forced to fail in mind, add to this that the Light of our soul strives to enter into our being through the emotional body. In this model of transforming addiction, an essential understanding of our psychospiritual being is necessary: the soul and spirit inspires us, and the emotions respond with desire and expressive movement. If our emotional body has been forced to fail, the soul cannot fully resonate and move into and through us. No matter what kind of spiritual practice or healing a person chooses, if the emotional body remains in failure, unhealed, the soul is not fully present, nor is it truly evolving.

So this is the foundation of all addictive behaviors: an emotional body that has been forced to fail, and a soul connection that has forced to fail along with it. This creates a quality of grief that is complex and very suppressed in our culture. As a culture, our skills in responding to this grief are poorly developed, replaced instead by an addictive “response” that is formed from a weak and broken will.

Just as there are many variations in the family dysfunctions that force children's emotional bodies to fail in their development, there are many kinds of addiction. They range in duration from distinct phases to long-term cycles, and they range in intensity from the subtle "socially accepted" addictions to the most blatantly destructive and violent acting out behaviors.

Substance addiction is the most familiar, but there are addictions to sex, spirituality, food, rage, golf, collecting, control, prestige, isolation, manipulation, denial, perfection, selflessness — the list is long. Addictions create the result of an altered state through the pathway of compulsion, immersion and isolation from the emotional body. And they all have one goal in common: to simulate, through a choice that leads to that altered state, the successful experience of having the soul move through the emotional body and create Light within our body, emotions, heart and mind. That is what we are really here for, and our emotional body strives relentlessly to achieve that reunion with the soul.

The purpose in presenting this new model of addiction is the path of healing that it opens to us. Without grasping the existence of the emotional body and the grief that forms when it is forced to fail, addiction recovery is very difficult. Being able to see the needs of emotional body is the first step in anchoring the transformative process.

I created the Doing Your Work program to address all forms of spiritual/emotional healing through the emotional body, and the process applies to addiction as well. The essential focus in Doing Your Work is to create transformative results that shift a person's experience of self from having been forced to fail to self-reliance and self-authority.

There are four distinct modalities in Doing Your Work that literally rebuild the emotional body back to having a real choice to receive the soul: 1) creating emotional sobriety, 2) breath and energy practices to reawaken and reanimate the emotional body, 3) discovering and rebuilding our boundaries, and 4) Reparenting and restoring the full function of the four emotional ages within us: the little kid, teenager, young adult and mature adult.

The result of emotional sobriety arrives when we have taken full responsibility for our wounding and our lives, and can respond to our own needs without depending on others or acting out. Confronting codependency is an essential process in becoming emotionally sober.

Breathwork repatterns our ability to choose, and to respond to our deepest grief and emotions, while allowing us to digest complex layers of experience efficiently and without addiction. Breathwork literally reweaves the fibers of the emotional body and opens the whole person to receive waves of Light.

Educating ourselves in what constitutes healthy, spiritually functional boundaries is the key to rebuilding the circulation and chi of the emotional body. Holding bad boundaries in our lives leaks vital energy, and traps the emotional body in a forced-to-fail pattern.

And finally, Reparenting the four ages is the deepest key to transforming addiction: learning to feel and love the emotional body — especially in the little kid and teenager — breaks the early failed dependency in the family. As we respond to and bond with these powerful parts of our psyches, they learn in real time to make new choices based on a whole body feeling of being nurtured. The mind within each age becomes capable of choosing beyond an addictive pattern.

Let's look at one example of the origin and transformation of a type of addiction: the person who grew up with no love, emotion or intimacy. Their emotional body has been profoundly under-stimulated and deprived of an essential awakening: they have been forced to fail in discovering real heart-to-heart communication. The inner child and teenager are passive shells who derive a sense of self from what they do, not who they are.

It is common for this kind of person to form a certain isolation addiction: buried in a busy but empty relationship with someone with a similar deprivation history, and isolated from receiving any meaningful touch to their soul. The altered state is the relentless deprivation that both people live in while calling it love, and the simulation of the soul successfully being alive comes through the busy doingness patterns that such couples live out. That doingness could be raising children, sharing a business, or being competitive triathletes.

The work for this person would be 1) to confront the enabling of their partner's addictive isolation patterns as well as the truth of their own isolation, 2) to fully breathe into the physical sensations of that isolation and re-establish a vital, living relationship to their own needs, feelings and being, 3) to create healthy boundaries with their partner that embrace either working together consciously to come out of the isolation addiction or ending the relationship, and 4) to find and awaken the younger selves so that they learn to receive love, attention and growth.

Rebuilding the emotional body takes commitment and patience. To be successful, one has to learn to unconditionally accept their emotional body's history of being forced to fail, which can be a real challenge to an addicted personality self. The emotional body moves in waves, and when these waves of emotion are allowed to move to completion using the four modalities above, they can begin to receive Light as they move, eventually reuniting us with our soul.

When the emotional body is healthy, the soul's Light moves in naturally, lifting us up and resonating a powerful freedom of self-determination and vision. The spiritual and emotional unite as one self in the heart, awakening the soul's true existence.