Beating Addiction
The Sneaky Role of the Critical Inner Voice

Lisa Firestone, Ph.D.
Addiction:
Habitual psychological or physiologic dependence on a substance or practice that is beyond voluntary control. – MediLexicon’s Medical Dictionary

Substance dependence:
When an individual persists in use of alcohol or other drugs despite problems related to use of the substance, substance dependence may be diagnosed. Compulsive and repetitive use may result in tolerance to the effect of the drug and withdrawal symptoms when use is reduced or stopped. This, along with Substance Abuse are considered Substance Use Disorders. - Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV)
Anything can operate as an addiction if done for the purpose of fulfilling a need to be cut off or tolerably numb.
Three Parts to this Webinar:

Part 1: The Roots of Addiction

Part 2: The Critical Inner Voice and Addiction

Part 3: Overcoming Addiction
Part 1: The Roots of Addiction
Causes of Drug Addiction
From Mayo Clinic

Environment

Genetics

Changes in the brain
Physical addiction appears to occur when repeated use of a drug changes the way your brain feels pleasure. The addicting drug causes physical changes to some nerve cells (neurons) in your brain. Neurons use chemicals called neurotransmitters to communicate. These changes can remain long after you stop using the drug.

Source: http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/drug-addiction/basics/causes/con-20020970
Risk Factors

- Genetics (family history)
- Having a mental illness/condition
- Peer pressure
- Family behavior
- Loneliness
- The nature of the substance
- Age when substance was first consumed
- Stress
- How the body metabolizes (processes) the substance
Dr. David Kessler  
Former FDA Commissioner

- The same neurological process that drives us to chain smoke or over-eat is responsible for many mental illnesses.
- “There is no better description of capture. Not food necessarily, not alcohol, but that self-doubt becomes the nature of capture.”

Letter from an individual in treatment:

The whole idea of addiction fascinates me not only as it relates to food and alcohol, but as it relates, in my case, to a relationship. I can describe it as a fear, a basic insecurity, that comes over me when I imagine myself without that relationship. It’s as though I have to constantly quiet the internal hunger for closeness, for affirmation, for love, for acceptance, which I don’t seem to be able to supply to myself. The fear of abandonment is so overwhelming that I drive myself deeper and deeper into depression. My ongoing struggle is to quiet the non-visible demons that drive me. Not to food or drink, but to self doubt and hunger for other’s adoration.
Professor Peter Cohen:

“Human beings have a deep need to bond and form connections. It’s how we get our satisfaction. If we can’t connect with each other, we will connect with anything we can find—the whirr of a roulette wheel or the prick of a syringe. He says we should stop talking about ‘addiction’ altogether, and instead call it ‘bonding.’ A heroin addict has bonded with heroin because she couldn’t bond as fully with anything else. So the opposite of addiction is not sobriety. It is human connection.”
Early attachment deficits have been shown to be correlated with many addictions, and it is thought that those with poorer emotional regulation use substances or addictive behaviors to help regulate themselves.

- Addiction as an Attachment Disorder Philip J. Flores
Lessons from Parents

How did they handle stress?

12 percent of children in the United States have at least one parent who has struggled with addiction and dependency in the last year. (Source: SAMHSA)
Research shows that children of addicts are twice as likely to become addicts and develop emotional or behavioral problems as other children.
Part 2: The Critical Inner Voice and Addiction
All addictive behaviors have at least these two things in common:

(1) They help people cut off painful feelings.

(2) They are strongly influenced by a destructive thought process.

These behaviors represent a direct assault against their physical health and emotional well-being and restrict the ability to pursue important goals and priorities in life.
Separation Theory
The Core Conflict... *to feel or not to feel*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Defended</th>
<th>V S</th>
<th>Undefended</th>
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[Image of a thinking person with thought bubbles]
I have absolutely no pleasure in the stimulants in which I sometimes so madly indulge. It has not been in the pursuit of pleasure that I have periled life and reputation and reason. It has been the desperate attempt to escape from torturing memories, from a sense of insupportable loneliness and a dread of some strange impending doom.

— Edgar Allan Poe
Division of the Mind

Self vs Anti-Self
Critical Inner Voice

• The critical inner voice is a well-integrated pattern of destructive thoughts toward ourselves and others.

• The nagging “voices” that make up this internalized dialogue are at the root of much of our self-destructive and maladaptive behavior.
Critical Inner Voice

• The critical inner voice is not an auditory hallucination; it is experienced as thoughts within your head.

• This stream of destructive thoughts forms an anti-self that discourages individuals from acting in their best interest.
The Two Faces of the Critical Inner Voice

Self-Soothing

Self-Punishing
Anti-Self System
Self-Punishing Voice Process

**Voice Process**

1. Critical thoughts toward self
2. Micro-suicidal injunctions
3. Suicidal injunctions – suicidal ideation

**Behaviors**

Verbal self-attacks – a generally negative attitude toward self and others predisposing alienation

Addictive patterns
Self-punitive thoughts after indulging

Actions that jeopardize such as carelessness with one’s body, physical attacks on the self, and actual suicide
## Anti-Self System

### Self-Soothing Voice Process

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voice Process</th>
<th>Behaviors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Self-soothing attitudes</td>
<td>Self-limiting or self-protective lifestyles</td>
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<td>2. Aggrandizing thoughts toward self</td>
<td>Inwardness</td>
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<td>3. Suspicious paranoid thoughts toward others</td>
<td>Verbal build up toward self</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Micro-suicidal injunctions</td>
<td>Alienation from others</td>
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<td>5. Overtly violent thoughts</td>
<td>Addictive patterns</td>
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<td>Thoughts luring the person into indulging aggressive actions</td>
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<td>Actual violence</td>
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Self-Soothing Voices

You’ve been doing so well. One little piece of cake won’t hurt.

Have a glass of wine. You can be like everyone else here. You have this under control.

It’s been a tough week. You need to relax. Take a hit. You can quit tomorrow.
Self-Punishing Voices

You messed up again. You’re such a pig! You’ll never change.

You’re disgusting. You have no control. You don’t deserve to succeed.

You’re weak. You’re doomed to fail. I knew you couldn’t do it.
• The critical inner voice perpetuates addictive behavior.
• People further engage in addictive behavior to escape this inner critic.
Part 3: Overcoming Addiction
Emotion-Focused Therapy Study

Six Things That Were Helpful:

1. Struggling to separate from the critic
2. Recognising the destructive impact of the critic
3. Recognising the protective function of the critic
4. Accessing and accepting previously avoided feelings
5. Accepting my needs
6. Valuing the group
Voice Therapy
Cognitive/ Affective/ Behavioral Approach

Robert W. Firestone Ph.D.
The Therapeutic Process in Voice Therapy

Step 1
The person is articulates his or her self-attacks in the second person and expresses any feelings that arise.
Step II
The person discusses reactions to saying their voices. The person tries to understand the relationship between these attacks and early life experiences.
The Therapeutic Process in Voice Therapy

**Step III**
The person answers back to the voice attacks. The person makes a rational statement about how he or she really is.
Step IV
The person develops insight about how the voice attacks are influencing his or her present-day behaviors.
The Therapeutic Process in Voice Therapy

Step V

The person collaborates with the therapist to plan changes in behaviors. The person is encouraged to not engage in self-destructive behaviors and to increase the positive behaviors these negative thoughts discourage.

If you are interested in attending a voice therapy training or in getting training materials please contact jina@glendon.org or visit www.glendon.org.
Self  Anti-Self
Additional Steps of Voice Therapy to Treat Addiction

- Journaling as an adjunct to counseling – Helps to catch on to triggers
- Strengthening the real self
# Exercise 6.2

Voices of Addiction: Feelings and The Real You

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<tr>
<th>My critical inner voices</th>
<th>How these voices make me feel</th>
<th>My realistic thoughts</th>
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<td><strong>Seductive Voices:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Punishing Voices:</strong></td>
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**Exercise Objectives:**
- Identify and describe your critical inner voices.
- Evaluate how these voices affect your feelings.
- Develop realistic thoughts to counteract these voices.
# Exercise 6.3

## Triggers for Using Substances

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<th>Triggering events or circumstances</th>
<th>My critical inner voices</th>
<th>My realistic point of view</th>
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**Punishing Voices:**

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*conquer your critical inner voice*
## Exercise 6.4
### Going After What You Want

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<th>Personal wants and desires</th>
<th>My critical inner voices</th>
<th>My realistic point of view</th>
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When we break an addiction, the painful emotions we’ve tried to suppress start to rise to the surface. How do we deal with these emotions?
RAIN

Recognize what is going on

Allow, accept, acknowledge the experience to be there as it is

Investigate with kindness

Natural awareness, which comes from not identifying with the experience
From Dr. Daniel Siegel:

Curious
Open
Accepting
Loving
Self-Compassion

“Being touched by and not avoiding your suffering”

From Kristin Neff, Ph.D.:
Self-compassion is not based on self-evaluation. It is not a way of judging ourselves positively, it is a way of relating to ourselves kindly.

Three Elements:
1. Self-kindness Vs. Self-judgment
2. Mindfulness Vs. Over-identification with thoughts
3. Common humanity Vs. Isolation

Source: http://www.self-compassion.org/
Benefits of Self-Compassion

- Mechanism for change
- Lowers stress
- Buffers against negative social comparisons

Source: http://www.self-compassion.org/
Dialectical Behavioral Therapy

DBT teaches clients four sets of behavioral skills:

• Mindfulness
• Distress tolerance
• Interpersonal effectiveness
• Emotion regulation
The Value of Mindfulness

• Healthy self-soothing strategy
• Teaches us to sit with feeling
• Widens our window of tolerance
Helping Others
Helps strengthen our real self
Create a Coherent Narrative

MAKING SENSE OF YOUR LIFE

Understanding Your Past to Liberate Your Present and Empower Your Future

An eCourse with Drs. Dan Siegel & Lisa Firestone

Launches June 1, 2016
Differentiation

Step 1: Break with internalized thought processes (critical, hostile attitudes toward self and others)
Step 2: Separate from negative personality traits assimilated from one’s parents
Step 3: Relinquish patterns of defense formed as an adaptation to painful events in one’s childhood
Step 4: Develop one’s own values, ideals, and beliefs rather than automatically accepting those one has grown up with
Know Your Triggers
Relapse Prevention
Categories of Relapse Triggers

➔ **Environmental triggers** often include social events or circumstances that were once associated with using the drug.

➔ **Re-exposure triggers** include circumstances that bring the user into proximity with a drug of abuse, and this can reinstate the drug-seeking behavior.

➔ **Stress triggers** typically include such emotions as anger, fear, anxiety, and sadness.

*Source: Recovery.org*

“It’s a concert. You’ll enjoy it so much more if you’re a little stoned.”

“What’s the big deal? Everyone else is drinking. Join the party.”

“You’re under too much pressure. One cigarette won’t matter.”
CBT and Relapse Prevention Therapy

In clinical practice, coping skills training forms the cornerstone of RPT, teaching clients strategies to:

1. Understand relapse as a process
2. Identify and cope effectively with high-risk situations
3. Cope with urges and craving
4. Implement damage control procedures during a lapse to minimize its negative consequences
5. Stay engaged in treatment even after a relapse learn how to create a more balanced lifestyle

Mindfulness-Based Relapse Prevention

“It’s a human tendency to want to have pleasure and want to avoid pain or discomfort.”
- Sarah Bowen, University of Washington researcher

• A tool to become aware of that inclination to want only pleasurable things and escape uncomfortable things

• Helps people learn to relate to discomfort differently - observe it with presence and compassion and choose how we respond, rather than defaulting to automatic behaviors
I am developing the inner strength to bear my feelings: sit with them, not judge them, and verbalize them instead of acting them out in my eating disorder.

- “Healing from 38 Years of Food Addiction and Bulimia”
The Importance of Connections

Professor Peter Cohen:

- Portugal had one of the worst drug problems in Europe
- Resolved to decriminalize all drugs, transfer all money they used to spend on arresting and jailing addicts to spend instead on reconnecting them—to their own feelings and to the wider society
- They were helped, “in warm and welcoming clinics, to learn how to reconnect with their feelings, after years of trauma and stunning them into silence with drugs. Suddenly, they were a group, all bonded to each other, and to the society, and responsible for each other’s care.”
- An independent study by the *British Journal of Criminology*: Addiction has fallen, and injecting drug use is down by 50 percent. I’ll repeat that: injecting drug use is down by 50 percent.

From: The Greater Good – “Can Connection Cure Addiction?”
“A human being is part of a whole, called by us the ‘Universe’—a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts, and feelings, as something separated from the rest—a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circles of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.”

- Albert Einstein
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Thank You!

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