

**Uncontrollable Passions:
A Process Work Approach to Addictions**
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1. Introductions

Welcome those who

- Identify as being addicts
- Suffer from addictions
- Have close friends family who suffer from addictions
- Work with addictions
- Know something or nothing about PW

Introduce myself

- psychotherapist and group facilitator
- studied with Arny Mindell since 1980
- artist, writer
- learning more and more about my own addictions

Thanks to Arnold Mindell for developing this theory of the last 20 years
Other important teachers in this area have been my clients and my own
addiction process.

Plan for evening

- What is process work? Taoism, Jung and teleology, physics and the field concept
 - Attitude towards addictions. Briefly summarize the field and show where process work fits in.
 - Process Work with Addictions
 - Discuss primary and secondary addictions (with exercise)
 - Addictions and culture
 - Advantages and disadvantages of PW approach, compare to 12 step
- ** Not dealing with relationship addictions, co-dependence in this talk

2. Some Basic Process Work Ideas

**a) Process work values consensus reality and non-consensus reality—
ordinary awareness and dreaming**

What is consensus reality:

The everyday world we all agree on. C.R. focuses on time, space and social norms. It uses our ordinary awareness which the shaman Don Juan called first attention. Most of us are well trained in first attention. We know how much money we make, when we last took out the garbage, what work needs to be done around the house, who is bringing the kids to soccer practice. In the case of addictions, we know just how many drinks we had or how many cookies we ate.

What is Non-consensus reality :

The world of feelings, inner experiences, dreams. Things that can't be proven. NCR is not measurable. It is **dreamtime**. According to aboriginals it is the foundation of reality, the most fundamental, constituent of the universe. It creates and generates reality.

NCR creates the following types of experiences:

- I dream about someone I haven't spoken to in 6 mos. I can't even remember her name. I go on line and there she is.
- I dream I have a car accident and the next day I go through a stop sign it happens
- All non-causal, non-local connections between events—the world of quantum physics

Second attention:

In order to become more aware in non-consensus reality we need to develop a special type of awareness. Shaman Don Juan called it second attention. Shamanism depends on training second attention for going to the other world, healing, finding your calling

Second attention with addictions: To work with addictions we need to value NCR and use our second attention.

- Many of us lack relationship to the dreaming aspects of life. This creates depression and causes us to seek substances
- We are actually taught to ignore NCR, it is trained out of us at 5 years old, when we go to kindergarten—second attention picks up weird signals, hurts, loves, fantasies, body feelings
- Many of us marginalize altered states and NCR experiences. We use substances and behavior to regain access to these states

Develop "second attention" by:

--notice the mysterious thing

--value it, assume it has meaning

--focus our awareness on it

--unfold it until it reveals itself and enriches us (**example**)

b) Process work has its roots in Shamanism, Taoism and Jungian psychology

- **Shamanism**

We are always looking for the mystery and we dive into the unknown— that thing which may not go along with our stated intentions. In this sense, PW sometimes feels more like shamanism than psychotherapy.

Examples:

- being angry but giggling,
- wanting to work on things but looking away

- **Taoism**

Nature was the god in Taoism. What does it mean to believe in and follow Nature?

We think that the things that are happening to a person, even if they are disturbing, weird, irrational or incorrect are important and potentially meaningful . You don't want to just get rid of them, but feel they are a part of nature, the seed or spark for something which is purposeful.

So we tend to have a strange attitude towards symptoms and difficulties. We see that the things which disturb that identity are an attempt to bring new information and bring the person closer to their wholeness. We don't try to correct people or make them fit in, we bow to the weirdness and explore it make it bigger and find out what's trying to unfold.

What does it mean to believe in Nature in the case of symptoms, addictions, disturbances?

There is something we are seeking in the addiction that is Nature—something we need in order to be whole

Examples:

- ** fatness needing to take up space
- ** chronic fatigue-- going inside and finding god
- ** breast tumor—hardness
- ** smoking—detachment
- ** sex--contact

- **Jung and teleology**

Jung was also something of a Taoist. He differentiated himself from Freud by seeing that the unconscious was not just a dumping ground for repressed material but contained information which was meant to guide towards wholeness. Drive towards wholeness which he called individuation.

Teleology: this means that you look to the future you see potential meaning in things rather than causality in which you look towards the past to find out why. Less pathologizing.

Example: Woman repeatedly has “co-dependent” relationships. Causal explanation: she is repeating a pattern from childhood. Teleology: she is trying to work it through-- getting strong enough to leave, say no, make boundaries.

Field thinking

- Our individual processes are connected to something larger. The field uses us to express its wholeness.
- Those on the fringes of the mainstream are teachers for the mainstream. (addicts). Just like mainstream needs street people to balance greed and materialism, the culture needs addicts to teach us about altered states

3. Placing PW in the larger field of Addictions Work

- Addictions and addictive tendencies are connected with all the other health issues that you have.
- Each culture has its own method of working on addictions and one method doesn't work for all cultures
- Different people need different methods during different phases of life. Best would be cooperation between methods. Not always the case.

Methods of working with addictions:

1. 12 step programs—pathology model (alcoholism is a disease, some people are “normies”) Bill Wilson, founder of AA was in contact with Jung. I'll say much more about this later.

It is a type of spiritual method, giving yourself over to your “higher power.” Group process and community oriented and egalitarian. Can be confrontational. Sometimes works less well with marginalized (less powerful) groups because of its insistence that you view yourself as “powerlessness”.

2. Confrontational methods

- **Interventions: family and doctor get together and confront the person—force them into treatment**

Eventually the person has to pick up the medical establishment or authority or family as a part of themselves. If it always remains on the outside it won't hold. Example: Worked for a long time with a client who had to do random urine analysis (UA) because she was busted at work. So as long as she was subjected to this she stayed sober. Is she staying sober for the outside authorities or for herself. The challenge was to integrate the UA.

- **Being confrontational in therapy**

Catching where the person is avoiding or lying and catching it in the moment. The addiction is part of a process where the person is kidding themselves. Confronting can be a strong way of working.

You have to have a good relationship and stay connected to the person to be able to do this or they will go away.

Can be important with eating disorders as well. Tendency to pretend it is not happening. Especially the therapist should bring it up if she senses an issue. (Not doing this can be a reason that client seeks other methods like 12 step.

3. Systems work

Work with the immediate family system or subgroup and process the difficulties there. Often everyone is covering it up. Also look at addicted person as identified patient

4. Cultural/large group process

Certain groups have a lot of secrecy around them—often connected with addictions and sexual abuse. Working on the large group level and expressing all the pain in the background can be very helpful in working with individual addictions. Also important around city shadow idea. The addict is expressing something for the whole field.

6. Reaccessing: PW

This is useful for someone who is not severely addicted. Work on accessing the state the substance brings without actually taking the substance. This is connected with working with the polarities that are associated with the addictions. Also an essential phase of the work after someone kicks the habit—otherwise they have to confront this emptiness—they need access to the altered state or life may not be worth living. (Example of man from seminar who got cancer after he got sober)

Wholistic approach: Process oriented approach includes these different methods at different times and at different phases. It is especially important to be sensitive about when pathology model is useful and when it is not.

Example of person who needed many approaches.

Pothead. Professional woman. Her cannabis use interfered with her ability to work. I helped her “**reaccess.**” She had a very creative mind in the background and was using pot to get away from boredom. She left therapy eventually and came back several years later after she got in trouble. She was angry that I hadn’t confronted her more. She had been to a clean-up clinic and now was in mandatory therapy.

She was subjected to random UAs. I knew she would start smoking again as soon as “policing” was over. She insisted she could use casually. I worked with her on picking up the police role as a part of herself.

She quits again after mandatory period is over. Calls one year later about daughter who got caught selling pot in middle school.

Family work I saw the daughter— her therapy was also mandatory. Daughter complained about mom’ drug use, lack of structure at home, desperately wanted to finish school. Daughter needed the “police.” They both had to pick up police.

This time I confronted the mom strongly. I suggested they do random UAs with each other. In this system, the police and discipline was a ghost role.

4. Process Work with Addictions

What are addictions and tendencies?

Addiction:

- you need more and more to get same desired effect
- it is harmful to your health and or relationships (includes both because if your health is upset, eventually your relationships will be too an visa versa.
- you feel you have lost control
- denial—the addict denies but the environment notices

Tendencies:

- We are a substance oriented culture and "tendencies" are those inclinations and desires that we all have towards substances or activities but it does not immediately endanger your health or relationships

How do you think about yourself or your mate/family around addictions

--shame, embarrassment

--either avoid facing it or a harsh inner critic or both

Western/modern Society's assumptions about addictions and altered states:

--they are bad, a sign of moral weakness, no self control, no discipline

--due to a personal problem

--must give over to a higher power to be cured

-- they are a pathology-- a state for life

--**general feeling: this is wrong and you shouldn't be doing it**

****Helpful attitudes/ metaskills when working with addictions***

You might technically know how to paint a portrait but it doesn't work unless you put a certain feeling into it. It is the same with psychological theories.

--They are their for our wholeness

**We are addicted to our wholeness, addictions are attempted healings. This means we use substances which get us into states that we desperately need in order to be whole. These are "altered states," such as outgoingness, courage, wit, creativity

** Quote Jung (was in contact with Bill Wilson, founder of AA) "An alcoholic's "craving for alcohol was the equivalent on a low level of the spiritual thirst of our being for wholeness, expressed in medieval language: the union with god."

--Addictions are like big dreams—related to childhood dream

The stronger the addiction the more powerful the person's potential.

(Very different than a disease model)

I worked with a woman who had a repeated childhood dream of flying and being brought down to earth. As an adult, she had a serious long term addiction to heroine and cocaine.

-- Addicted person is part of the city shadow.

She is there to make the culture whole. Primary culture has certain standards and disavows other aspects of itself. Addict compensates society where everyone has strength, success, can make it. Addict can't make it, gives up. Therefore if you have an addiction, you may have a task related to changing the culture you are part of. All of the altered states we are addicted to either make us more adapted to the primary culture or are disavowed by the culture May be part of an outlaw process. Just going against the culture.

--Shamanic process in addictions-- related to altered states

Need for altered states in our culture Edges of primary culture to certain behaviors, others are supported. In indigenous cultures people who easily slipped into strong altered states have a "calling" .

Basic Addictions Theory

We usually have two main addictions. One supports usual identity and other supports marginalized parts of ourselves

****Concepts of PP and SP processes**

The edge: The identity seems to have a boundary and it is difficult to become aware of and integrate material and information which is beyond the boundary of the identity.

Exercise:

- a) **What are you like as a person over time? How would you describe your main identity?**
- b) **Do you take anything which supports that state and helps you become more that way?**
- c) **What kinds of moods, feelings, trances and altered states happen to you that you don't like or that don't fit in to your sense of yourself or what is expected of you or what your culture thinks you should be like?**
- d) **Do you take something that supports this state?**

Example:

Caffeine : extraverted, awake, focused.

Alcohol: relaxed and fuzzy

Or maybe you have 2 substances or behaviors that you do together—
Beer and cigarettes in my 20s— gave me the ability to be both social and detached at the same time.

Note: If you are telling yourself you have no addictions, look again. Think of medications—are they necessary because of addictions.

Re-accessing

One goal of process work with addictions: to complete and unfold state.

- Reaccessing is a sober way to work with altered states. You use all of your awareness. May be less useful for people just trying to quit or in the early stages of recovery.
- Reaccessing is an amplification technique. Go even further with it than the addiction does. This gives you an even greater high because its meaning is revealed. Then it may be easier to stop.
- Help the client go through the ritual of taking the substance. Focus awareness on all the rituals, situations around taking the substance. Set it up. See yourself and surroundings. Use slow motion. Feel what it does to you. Really get into state.
- This is important because you have to break it down and discover salient features of the addiction. ie. a food addiction could be biting, the feeling in the tummy, the relaxation, the taste and self-love. Follow the least known part and the part that has the most energy in it.
- Be careful to distinguish the state it produces from the effect it produces. ie. the state may be relaxation but the effect may be shame.

Example of eating cookies

Imagine the many different ways person can eat cookies

- holding it long in the mouth, chewing slowly: sensuality
- quickly, grabbing: anger
- totally unconscious one after the next: relaxing, numb

Example of smoking

- eyes closed, leaning back
- smoke up nose
- smoke rings

Once you discover the altered state remember:

Addictions bring a promise for a state which is never quite fulfilled

It's like staying in a hotel instead of your home. This is why the substances and behaviors are addictive. They bring a promise of a state you never quite reach. It's the illusion of power or confidence or love but it isn't real thing. They don't "deliver the goods" in a sustainable way.

--*Examples:* Cookies promise to make you feel loved. But you don't really achieve self-love, it is a substitute. Or cigarettes make you detach-- but only shortly and its not deep, true detachment. Therefore you take the substance over and over again, hoping that this time it will fulfill its promise.

Addictions are processes waiting to be unfolded. Addiction processes are extremely individual.

You must have an open mind because the same substance or behavior does different things for different people. It has to be unfolded.

Example of tv addiction:

- brings relaxation
- brings being the commander of a ship, pilot of a plane, power
- movement, excitement (guy with twitch, twitch goes away when he gets into all that excitement, he watches tv at night when his wife won't screw)

Example of alcohol:

- brings relaxation
- brings aggression
- brings social confidence

**** Addictions cover up a state or an issue which is problematic or difficult for the individual.**

**** They can provide a way to avoid working through or facing or discovering more about a particular part of yourself**

This goes along with the commonly held belief that addictions are used to get away from something. This is true but in PW we ask what for and not why-- in other words if we are using a substance to get away from something than we must need to get away from it. The goal here would be to help the person get away without the drug-- that is the first step. Second step would be to deal with the problem. Therefore we are depathologizing the need to escape something. We believe that with the distance that escape brings, it might be possible to deal with the problem in a new and creative way.

--Examples

- *Someone uses pot to get away from feeling of emptiness and boredom-- needs the stimulation. At later point, deal with the problem-- the emptiness
- * A businessman comes home and drinks after work-- the drinking relaxes him, helps him get away from his irritation and anger. He identifies as a nice guy but at some point he needs to look at his anger.

Addictions are reactions. Revolts of one part or spirit against another.

In this sense they are deadly. We are all partly suicidal in that one part of us is trying to kill or wipe out another part. We need to kill a part of ourselves .

Example:

- * Cookies are a reaction against negative thoughts.
- * Almost all chocolate addictions are an antidote for the inner critic.
- * It is interesting to think about food addictions here. People often diet to lose weight. But food addictions often have to do with self-love and nurturing and the diet is strict and disciplined. The person needs self-love to be whole but then they diet. It is the war of one spirit against the other.

It is the relationship between the two states that is important.

Addicted state is also part of your personality and also part of the way you effect and relate to others.

We are the substances that we are addicted to for other people. This means I have the effect of cookies on other people. I may be sweet and loving.

Example:

You need sweetness to work on your depression, but you also are cookies for other people.

5. Culture and Addictions

What drugs do you think of as bad and what drugs do you think of as okay?

Addiction and the City Shadow

Mindell's City Shadow idea: The addicted person is addicted to states that the culture marginalizes.

The responsibility isn't just with the individual. The addicted person picks up what the culture disavows

***James Hillman and Michael Ventura. We've Had 100 Years of Psychotherapy and the World is Getting Worse. They make a scathing attack on 12 step. Say it keeps people working on themselves, so they don't get angry at society. They say people should see that problem originates in the culture*

Most societies give mixed messages about altered states.

Say they are bad except when used by the medical model as a cure for disease (prozac, valium) or when they support the cultural status quo-- coffee, cigarettes, alcohol. Certain drugs support certain norms and values -- but other drugs like hallucinogens are not supported by mainstream culture. Hallucinating doesn't support puritan work ethic. In indigenous cultures hallucinogens support connection to nature/other world. What is and is not acceptable is culture specific.

Hypothesis: Look at a culture and guess what kinds of drugs might be popular to compensate mainstream values and beliefs. Then ask who is taking those drugs, accessing those states, getting addicted and being condemned

Rank and addictions

Someone on the bottom of the social hierarchy may take a certain substance, in part because the culture denies them access to the "altered state" the substance brings. Like inner city African American youth and crack cocaine. Crack brings the feeling of power. White mainstream culture doesn't support young black men to have power. Guns also bring power. So it is also the mainstream's responsibility to help the group access those states in other ways.

Discussion Groups

What are the goals, values and beliefs of the mainstream in USA?

Which drugs support the qualities that USA embraces?

Who takes those drugs?

What kinds of qualities and states is the culture against?

Which drugs support those qualities?

Who takes them? What attitudes/opinions do you have regarding those people?

6. Advantages and Disadvantages of PW

12 step is most popular-- Why??

- brings in concept of the spiritual,
- for mainstream-- white men-- compensates a governing attitude of superiority and dominion over nature
- community support, free, egalitarian model
- doesn't require depth psychology, doesn't ask to integrate states, (as a result there is boredom later)
- helps members in times of crisis
- introduces disease model which reduces shame and guilt
- some people need a tough disciplinarian

Possible shortcomings:

- for disavowed groups, they already feel too powerless
- For women esp with low self esteem, AA is focused on looking at own faults and taking blame. Focus on how you screwed up your life and accepting blame but not on building self-esteem
- does not include a criticism of the system that fosters addictions, helps people get sober and sends them back into mainstream
- if 12 step doesn't work, it sends message-- "There is nothing missing from 12 step. Something must be wrong with you."
- May tend to be dogmatic

Benefit of pop approach:

- brings deeper insights into behavior,
- integrates states, therefore it may be more sustainable,
- doesn't only rely on will power,
- helps you feel self-loving, accepting of the process while trying to change the addiction
- sees meaning in the addiction
- doesn't have strict rules
- sees and addresses social components, addictions not just personal problem

Shortcomings:

- reaccessing doesn't work well in the midst of a heavy addiction, better after you have already gotten sober
- it is exclusive in that it requires someone to have the desire to grow psychologically
- sometimes tendency to marginalize the strict disciplinarian in favor of "process"
- may sometimes marginalize the "pathology" aspect