

Artificial Pacifiers for Grownups



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The problem of addiction—any kind of addiction—is basically a problem of emotionality. If we could handle our feelings, we would automatically be impervious to pills, pot, or whatever.

But most of us are so conditioned to look at our emotions as “only natural” that we are as helpless as the drug addict to trace the problem to its root. If we could blink the emotion out of our eyes, even for a few minutes, we could surely see that giving in to our emotions is what is making us wrong—so wrong that we need drugs in order to forget how wrong we are.

In other words, our lack of self-control and inability to discipline our emotions form the groundwork for all our addictions. If we knew how to control our emotions and stand up to stress with true inner composure, we would have no need for artificial pacifiers of any kind.

We would have a built-in immunity to addiction.

The more we react to life emotionally, the farther we get away from reason, and when our actions cease to be motivated by sound reason we fall prey to guilt and anxiety feelings. (As well we should!)

When a person has no real way to prevent pressures from

getting under his skin, he turns in desperation to anything that will make him feel happy, right, and calm. He will reach for cigarettes, drugs, alcohol—anything—to quiet his guilt feelings.

And because he bases his sense of rightness on feeling right, he grows to need artificial material support for those feelings. Remove that support, whatever it is, and he experiences the full impact of his separation from reason—the very thing he was using the drug to conceal.

The guiltier he is, the greater the dose of drug he needs to ease that guilt and dull his awareness of the faulty emotional reactions that continue to demoralize him, even while he is under the influence of the drug.

The relief of the pain of guilt by these means is pleasure. It closely duplicates divine forgiveness, without having to experience humiliation or humility, except that it doesn't really forgive us. It merely blots out the knowledge of transgression from our awareness.

The greater the problem, the greater the pleasure to be derived from the contrast of relief, and the more beneficent the drug appears to be.

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Drugs actually become substitute religious experiences because they make men feel so good, so free from guilt. But that kind of freedom is not really free because it depends on the drug for its continuance.

In order to hang onto the feeling of being “saved,” the user must give himself over to the drug increasingly. Soon he centers his whole existence around the drug, the source of his “salvation,” and he will do anything to maintain his

relationship with it.

To desert the drug, the savior, would be a sacrilege—a greater guilt than the one he was running from in the first place. Or so it seems to his drug-clouded consciousness.

People cannot quit drugs because of the displaced guilt associations they experience under their influence. If they were to stop using drugs, they would feel that they had failed their “god.”

It is a far easier thing to relate to a physical or chemical experience for the relief of guilt than to relate properly to one’s own self, of course.

Nevertheless, there are users who would gladly learn the secret of self-control (not to be confused with suppression) if they only knew how to go about it.

The Foundation of Human Understanding has a simple technology to start people on the road to self-discipline, and among the drug addicts and alcoholics who have used it successfully, withdrawal symptoms have been practically nonexistent.

The moment a sincerely searching individual learns this technique, he is able to meet the next moment, and the next, with composure—without losing his cool.

He begins to look forward to the encounters with life that once terrified him, and as he meets each one successfully, he gains ground as a re-humanized being.

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