

ConneXions Classroom Podcast

Episode 36: Addictive Voice of Shame & Distortion

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Good morning. This morning it is September 6th 2014, and we are going to be discussing addiction and what addiction is, and who has the propensity to become addicted, and what the difference is between addictive thinking versus addictive behavior, and what causes people to act out in this manner. And the prevalence and the ubiquitousness of addiction. Addiction is not about a certain group of people, and there's people that become addicted and the rest of us don't.

The Truth is, is that this addictive behavior is available to anyone, and I want to go through some of the things that cause, or create, or set you up to have a higher likelihood of going into addictive thinking and then also addictive behavior.

So, I am actually on location. I'm down in beautiful southern Utah and I don't anticipate anybody coming by. I'm kind of up in a mountain area, but if you hear voices, it's just hikers walking by.

So, what is addiction? Addiction is often referred to as a dis-ease. Dis-ease. And it is. Addiction is a dis-ease of emotion. Addictive behavior is never about the substance, the activity, the

attitude with which the person is acting out addictively. Let me say that again. When someone has an addiction, it surely appears that it's about the actual thing that they're engaging with, the drugs, or the alcohol, or the money, or the sex, or the computer, or texting, or gambling, or a myriad of other things. That is a symptom, that's what tells everybody there's a problem. That's the outcome, or for them, it is the solution, to help their dis-ease of emotion.

So, addiction is always about the distortion of the person's real feelings and their inability to connect with themselves and others. And so, that's where I want to hone your attention. Of course, when someone has addiction, someone's acting out addictively, there are all sorts of devastating, devastating consequences that come to that person and to their loved ones. And that is what drives us to go and get help, and to seek understanding, and gather more education so we can understand what in the world is ravaging this person that I love so much?

And the answer will always be that the individual is either not able (because they don't have the tools) or they don't feel like they can (because maybe it's not safe), or they are unaware of particular emotions that they're feeling, because they block those things off, they've lived maybe a lifestyle of denying things that are uncomfortable. And at the core of addictive thinking and behavior will always be a dis-ease of their emotional state.

So, this person has learned how to "not feel," and there's no way to not feel. If you are breathing, you will be feeling. Feeling is as constant as inhaling and exhaling. However, we become very masterful at manipulating ourselves and manipulating others into believing that I don't have to feel emotion. And through this mechanism of denial which we've talked about in other podcasts, denial is a fascinating strategy that supports me to not be aware that I'm feeling certain things.

And there are numerous, numerous ways that I can go into denial, and the outcome is always the same, which is it blocks or strangles off emotion, so I'm disconnected from what it is that I'm feeling. So, I have experience, all of us are having experiences constantly, and in those experiences, there lies emotions. And when I feel emotion that I deem as uncomfortable or undesirable, I have learned through the years or maybe somebody has modeled this for me, a parent or a loved one that I've been close to, has modeled how to not feel through this mechanism of denial.

Now, I could shoot off and start talking about denial. I would like to stay on point and have this particular podcast be strictly about addiction. And if you are interested in the power of denial, I know that there is a podcast on faulty core beliefs and denial. I would encourage you to listen to that. There's also a webinar on denial, which is in the [faulty core beliefs and addiction webinar](#) that is on the website.

Let's go back to addiction. So, addiction is driven, like I said, by emotions that the person deems are uncomfortable. And inside those emotions are these two entities called shame and fear. Again, I'm not going to go into discussion around what shame is. There is a podcast around shame. But shame is something that I experience when I either have an experience that creates feelings of unworthiness, or I make choices that some way, shape or form are against my moral code and I feel shame, so I have a choice to either go into remorse and regret, and do something different and have it motivate me to change. Or I can choose to feel shame around that.

So, if I behave in a way that is contra to what I know to be true for me or correct for me, I will have an opportunity to either feel guilt or remorse, and shift and learn from that experience. Or I will go into shame, I can choose to feel shame. And it really is that conscious of a choice when you become aware, when you become alert to the power that resides inside you, to choose.

So, because addiction is being driven by the distortions around my feelings, you can see how important shame and fear would be in distorting the Reality of my experience. Because shame is always tied to deception—some type of faulty angle on an experience. So shame talks like, “You're unworthy,” or “You did that wrong,” or “You're not enough,” or “You'll never be adequate.” Or, “I didn't do anything wrong,” “It's your fault,” “You made me.” It never takes responsibility. When shame is present, it tells you to not be accountable for your life experiences, or the choices or the feelings you have.

So, shame and fear are extremely uncomfortable emotions and they come alongside life experiences that are uncomfortable. So, for example, I could be having a life experience, let's say I am asked to go swim a mile, and as I'm swimming, I'm starting to feel physically very uncomfortable, and all of sudden, my shame kicks in and says, “You can't do it. you're not cut out for this. What are people going to think if they see that you can't finish the race? You're going to lose respect from those you love.” Or I start hearing things like, “It's not fair, why was I forced to do this? I didn't even have a choice.”

Those kind of statements. And again, it is a constant opportunity to choose go into shame. And there are just millions and millions of different shame messages, there's no way to speak them all. However, they all have a common denominator, which is the voice of deception, or distortion or dishonesty about any given person or situation.

So, fear and shame are always inside of addictive thinking and behavior. Shame and fear are extremely uncomfortable feelings. Shame says, “I'm bad and unworthy.” Or “I get everything right.” Or “I'm better than you.” Or “I'm less than you.” And then, fear comes in and says, “Yeah, and those statements that you just heard are the Truth about yourself, that you're bad and unworthy.”

And so, I walk around in this very fearful position that what I just heard is really the Reality about me, and the Truth is that it's not anywhere near the Reality—there's no way to be bad and unworthy.

Now, I can engage in a behavior that is not one of my better behaviors, but I as a being am never bad or unworthy.

So, because we will oftentimes believe our shame, we will feel sad, and scared, and unloved, and unwanted, and disconnected from ourselves and others or God. Or feel fearful, trapped, wanting to isolate, hide.

So, addictive behavior is the ability to alter Reality in such a way that we don't have to feel any of those things that we deem as uncomfortable. So, as I start believing these kinds of shame messages, I feel more and more weighted down by feelings of inadequacy and unworthiness.

And so, I can't live in that state of this constant feeling of not belonging, or feeling bad about who I am. And so, I quite naturally will move towards something that will distract me. It's very natural, it's very reasonable. It's actually pretty smart that we as human beings, all of us, know instinctually to move away from pain. None of us are willing to stay in pain for too long. We start becoming very creative about ways to get away from things that feel uncomfortable to us.

So, we very instinctually move towards things that feel better, and that's why so there's so many addictive possibilities—things that people can become addicted to. I mean, the list is endless. As long as the thing that I'm engaged in can create a cover or eclipse the discomfort that my shame, and my fear and the Reality of my life experiences—even though I may be choosing to have particular outcomes, like I'm making poor choices and I keep getting these horrible outcomes. So, a lot of the uncomfortable feelings are coming by my own hand. Even though those things are happening, I will quite naturally move away from those things and move towards something that will feel better. Feel better.

Now, we are a physical body and we also are a spiritual body. And so, there are two parts to us, at a minimum. The physical body is made up and is regulated by hormones and these particular chemicals, and when we experience certain things hormones are released, and chemicals are released, that pleasure the body or create relaxation in the body or create a kind of spaced-out, fantasy type experience inside the body, or excitement, or arousal, and so these kind of emotions are pleasurable. They're not emotions, they're chemicals, but they create pleasurable emotions. And that's good, we need those. We engage in lots of activities that release those type of chemicals, so we can have those types of pleasurable feelings.

So, like I said, we instinctually move toward things that feel better, to cover up or conceal these experiences that are painful.

So, addictive behavior is the ability to do that—to alter my Reality. My reality is that I feel bad and unworthy because of the things that I keep choosing to do, I keep having these outcomes. Now, I may not be that conscious that that's what's causing it; all I know is that I feel bad. All I know is that I can't share what's going on in my life because I'm afraid, or I feel like I need to hide or isolate from people.

So, that might be as much consciousness as I have, and so I'm trying to alter that in such a way so that I don't have to feel anything that I deem as uncomfortable. Pretty brilliant, and very reasonable for a person to go in this direction. Addiction is the capacity to manipulate my Reality, so that I can numb myself to any emotion, event, relationship, trauma, experience that I believe will create any discomfort, emotionally, mentally, physically, socially, financially, sexually, and on and on.

So, it's very controlling, I learn to manipulate my Reality. How? By eating particular foods, or when I get bored I go and I eat, I go grab a bag of chips. Or I go get some ice cream, or I drink, or I go and exercise. I mean, here's where it gets really dicey, because when I engage in behaviors that can be considered very healthy such as exercising, or eating particular foods, or working, these behaviors are or can be a blessing to me.

However, if I use them in a way—if I use them addictively, if I misuse them—then I get those chemicals that get released in my brain when I overly work. So, I'm working, working and I'm trying to feel important, or valued or enough. And so, I work 16, 18 hour days because I feel inadequate other places in my life, and so this is a way to either deny or hide from that, so I don't have to feel it, or maybe simultaneously I'm trying to get recognition or acknowledgment from other people of how hard I work, so that I don't feel inadequate that way. Or maybe I'm trying to earn more money, so that when I earn money, money tells me that I have more power and that I'm worthy, the more money I have, the more worth I have. Do you see the distortion? Can you hear it?

However, because I'm unconscious, I don't realize that that connection I'm attempting to make between money and worth and value is not real. It just feels real. So, I have more money than you, so I feel better. So, again, there are so many ways to connect with something and distort it in such a way that I can get a chemical—either an ingestible chemical altering of my experience, or a chemical release inside my own brain, because my brain has a capacity to create and secrete all sorts of different chemicals that regulate and pleasure the body.

So, I am looking towards that. I am searching out how can I do that? I mean, that's why we have sexual addictions, and fantasy addictions, and spending money. Spending money is a very powerful experience, the whole entry point of getting in your car and going to a store, you start feeling very, very powerful, you start altering your experience of, you're going to whip that credit card out and the chemicals and endorphins get released, and I start feeling better. I start feeling differently to what I previously was experiencing which was pain, disconnect, discomfort, feelings of disvalue and so forth.

So, addiction is extremely destructive, because it destroys connection. So, addiction also gives you the illusion that you are connecting and that's why it's so confusing. So, if I “connect” with work and I work long, long hours, it feels connecting to me because I feel better, I feel of value. Whereas, if I don't work like that, I'm bored, I don't know what to do with myself, I'm anxious, I'm displaced in a way. Not in Reality, but that's what I experience.

So, the illusion is that it's connecting but really, addiction is disconnecting and destructive. It destroys my connection with myself, my connection with a God or a Higher Power, and absolutely a connection with other people, especially the people that are closest to me.

Addiction is not a respecter of persons; it will penetrate anyone who is not willing or who does not know how to feel and experience Reality as it presents itself to them. So, what that means is when life comes, whatever gets presented in life in the moment, you have to be willing to accept it as it is and not distort it, not put denial into it, not overlay it with shame and change the meaning of what's happening.

If we are not willing to experience Reality as it authentically happens, then addictive thinking will begin to control our Reality with faulty core beliefs, with denial, and if we continue to do this, we will be unconscious, and what will happen is that these distortions of faulty core beliefs and denial will come in and alter the experience, and so we really cannot see Reality any longer.

And then, denial comes in and starts reframing—it reframes the Reality. So, if I somehow offend someone very intentionally, let's say that I got a job offer or I got a promotion inside of a job and I know that one of my co-workers has been wanting that promotion, and so when I get it, I kind of rub it in their face, that I was the better candidate and just am kind of aggressive or mean to them.

That is a distortion of Reality, and the reason is, because the reality is that maybe I was a better candidate, and I distorted it by attempting to harm or injure that person. Because the Reality is, this person wanted that promotion, they did not get it, they feel grief or sadness around it, and the Reality is, is that I did get the promotion and maybe I don't even know why I got it, but I distort the Reality by saying, “Well, I was better than you.” And the Truth is that can never be. I can never be better than another person; I might have been more qualified but for me to go and tell them, “Well, I was just better than you were, and that's why I got it and you didn't,” is a shift in the Reality of what was or what is. Hopefully that makes sense.

So, addiction shows up as a way to find a solution to all of that hurt and pain that my choices of violating myself create. It also is a “solution” to the shame and fear that I feel. However, addiction is not a solution, it is a false solution. Addiction is very challenging to heal because what's happening is that I've altered my Reality, so that I can avoid anything that's uncomfortable. I, the addict, believe the solution that I've discovered is helpful and appropriate because it makes me feel better. So, that's true. I do feel better and more at ease because the neurochemicals in my brain change every time I engage my addiction. I experience the pleasurable feelings of dopamine, serotonin, adrenaline, and other enjoyable feel-good drugs which physically alter me until I temporarily leave my uncomfortable state of my reality, not the Reality.

Unfortunately, this solution is not a solution. It is a false solution because it requires me to be dishonest and use denial in order to change or distort the Reality of what I'm experiencing in any given moment. When I engage in distortion in my life, I cannot see clearly what I'm experiencing and feeling. And therefore, I'm at risk of becoming unable to respond accurately in my relationships, and also respond in Truth to myself.

Addiction is not a solution because I am not addressing the core issues, which are fear and shame, and the fact that I become a compulsive liar to myself and other people. Those are the issues. And when I lie like that to myself and other people, I feel badly. And when I feel badly, shame comes in and says, “Well, it's because you are bad and unworthy.” So, then I believe that, because look at what I've just done, I've just lied to my spouse, I've lied to my parent, I've ripped money off from them, I've told stories about them to my friends that are not the Truth. And so, I keep doing these very dishonest and hurtful things, and then shame comes in and goes, “Well, it's because you're just a piece of garbage. You don't matter.” Or shame says, “You know, it's not that big of a deal. They hurt you, so they deserved it.”

So, those kinds of statements are dishonest, and they're not even possible. In that way, you don't deserve to hurt a person just because you perceive that there's been an injustice or some kind of wrong done towards you.

So, because I'm not able or willing or even conscious to know to address the core issues which are fear and shame that are driving the desire to alter my reality, the addition starts a cycle, and I

cycle through a pattern of denial, distortion, shame and fear. I experience chemical hits in each turn of the cycle which only create more fear, and shame and confusion, and reinforces this false solution.

Addiction is a false solution because once the chemicals in my brain and body wear off, I always return to my original Reality which is, I feel lonely, I feel bored, I feel scared, I feel inadequate, unworthy, not enough. I remain responsible for my reality where all of my issues and relationships are waiting to be acknowledged and addressed. That's kind of a rude awakening, is that, here I'm engaging in some kind of substance, ingestible substance or maybe I engage in the emotion of anger, I start using anger addictively. Or I have behaviors that I use addictively. And the whole point is to get away from those feelings, but as soon as the chemicals wear off, I'm right back to my original state of Reality. And I have to engage it again.

Addiction or addictive behavior is not a solution for managing Reality or my emotional system. Living in Reality, being responsible for the outcomes of my choices, living with rigorous emotional honesty and learning to live humble—those are solutions to healing addiction. Whether it's addictive behavior/addictive thinking (addictive thinking will lead into addictive behavior). That's how I'm going to heal this.

So, the core problem with any type of addiction or addictive behavior is that I become a masterful manipulator. I manipulate myself, I manipulate others. I begin to hide and lie and tell secrets to myself and others. I become afraid to look at the Truth of how out of control I am and how out of control I feel. I feel shame because of the many, many, many violations and lies I continuously engage in, lies against my personal constitution.

It is so uncomfortable to look at the Truth about all the people I have lied to and hurt and all the people I have injured or used or exploited. So, I continue to disrespect myself and others by violating my values, my beliefs, my commitments, my integrity.

So, the other part of the core problem is that I don't know how to be emotionally honest with myself. If I'm emotionally honest, that means I have to feel all these emotions that I've been trying to run away from. As somebody who comes to me and wants help with their addiction, and they start realizing the direction we're headed, they're like, "So, I've been spending two decades trying to shut all these emotions down and you want me to go headlong into them?" "Uh, yeah. That's exactly what I want and need you to do in order to heal. That is where the solution, the power of healing is, is actually going into your emotions. And so, you have been deceived to believe that if you just avoid them, then you will be able to somehow not be responsible / feel them. However, that is not the Truth and so you've got to go back and address all of your emotions and therefore all of your behaviors."

So, because I don't know how or I'm not willing, or I'm unconscious of my emotions, this results in this vicious cycle of distortion and lies. And I create a cycle or pattern in which I don't know how to feel anything that's uncomfortable, or I don't want to feel anything or experience anything that's uncomfortable, so I engage in escaping from those things.

I escape the uncomfortable feelings by altering my reality. I engage in denial or lying to myself, so I can give permission to myself to access my addiction. And that's really interesting, because

the only way to go into addictive behavior is to go into a state of victim. I have to have a perception that I'm being victimized by something or someone, so that I can be in a spot where I can go hurt myself. That is the only way to do it, and so teaching people to stay out of victim. And victim is explained in the drama cycle. So, again if you're interested in that, we have a webinar called [Co-dependency and Drama](#). I encourage you to go to those and watch them if you don't understand victim.

Let's continue. Once I've created this pattern of hiding and lying and being disconnected, I escape the uncomfortable feelings by altering my reality by all of this denial. My addiction is called my drug—my drug of choice, if you will. I am wanting to engage in my drug, so that I can exit the Reality where all of you live because I don't know how, I don't want to. So, I give myself permission to act out, so I can have a reprieve or a pseudo-release from the uncomfortable emotions and experiences that I don't want to acknowledge.

So, this problem will continue. It does not stop. People don't just wake up out of addiction one day. They must be intervened on. They absolutely must have someone do an intervention with them. And whether that's a formal intervention or an informal intervention, someone must interrupt this cycle with them. And this is where loved ones who are inadvertently enabling this, thinking that they can love this person back into health, you are sorely mistaken and you are wasting precious time. And this person is spiritually and physically and emotionally dying.

Now, I'm not suggesting that you are ultimately responsible to wake them up. However, you do have culpability around not enabling them in ways that keep this addiction going. And so, if you need help, if you are a loved one, or someone on the other side of someone's addictive behavior, no matter what it is they're addicted to, addiction is addiction is addiction. Some addictions are just more physically deadly than others, but they all silently snuff out the spirit inside the person, and some addictions will actually take the body, such as drugs and alcohol.

So, if you need help, please, please contact us at www.connexionsclassroom.com. Let me know that you need help, I am more than happy to help you with coaching. I can do that worldwide, just get you on Skype and educate you and support you in that way. There's also a phone number that you can call us directly on the website at www.connexionsclassroom.com.

So, the only way to heal is to address the core problem head-on and deal with the fear, the shame and the denial that your addiction has created. By having the courage to participate in the Reality of your life and those that you choose to engage with, you will be able to heal with. You have to learn how to feel the emotion that you have been trying to control. You don't get to get away from that. You are responsible for that. Emotion is not bad. Emotion is a teacher. It is a compassionate teacher. Now, yes, is emotion uncomfortable? You bet it is. However, emotion is there to refine and to educate and to create wisdom in you. It's not there—it's not meant—to scare you, or intimidate you, or frighten you, though it does do those things. Or at least we have the illusion that it does those things.

If you are willing, and you are willing to stay humble, emotion will tell you information about yourself and how you engage with your environment. And with that information, you can better empathize, understand and feel and connect with not only yourself, but anyone that's in your life. You start learning how to be emotionally honest. You tell the Truth about your feelings. You tell

the Truth about your thoughts, and your behaviors, and your perceptions and anything else. You learn how to be honest, and therefore you learn how to be responsible.

The only way for you to stop and learn about yourself is to experience emotion.

So, I'm going to stop right there. There is a cycle that people go through, but I think I'm going to do that in another podcast because it deserves to have more time and attention to it. So, let me just say really quickly, the way you heal any and all addictive behaviors, there are three keys.

Healing is very demanding, it's very rigorous, you must have an accountability person, at least one person. It will be better for you to have a group of people who will hold you accountable, but you must be willing to give yourself to them. And what that means is, you've got to give your will over to them. You have to stop making the decisions for you, because, quite frankly, no offense, you make lousy choices. Your choices end you up in acting out.

In 12-step, they say my best thinking gets me loaded. And that is such the Truth. One, because your brain is damaged, so you literally have an organism that is not functioning correctly, and that organism is responsible to make choices for you. And so, you need someone else's brain to help make positive choices and appropriate choices for you for a period of time.

So, the three keys to healing any and all addictive behavior and/or, I would throw in there destructive behavior, anything that you deem as destructive. Maybe you have a gossiping problem, or maybe you have a compulsion around anger. These principles will heal any and all destructive and/or addictive behaviors. They are:

1. Learning how to become impeccably honest.

Now, you've got to understand what impeccable is. You can't just look at the word honest and go, "Yeah, I'm honest" because you don't really appreciate the rigor around what impeccability means.

So, in being impeccably honest includes but is not limited to, honesty around your emotions, your thoughts and your behaviors. Being emotionally honest to the point where you ask yourself questions about your motives and agendas. Like, why am I doing this or why did I do that? Or how come I feel this way? Or why do I feel entitled? Or what are my expectations? Or how come I think that I can have resentments and feel justified in holding a grudge with this person for 20 years? Or why am I unwilling to forgive?

2. The next key is rigorous personal responsibility, being willing to be accountable for all of your decisions and all of your choices, and all of your feelings, and your behaviors, and your thoughts, and your perceptions. And again, your expectations. Everything that goes on inside your system, you are responsible for.

So, when an experience happens in life, you get to choose how you're going to define that. Like, what kind of meaning you're going to put onto that. You are responsible for that, nobody else is. And so, learn how to be willing to own everything that goes inside you, and stop blaming other people. It's keeping you sick.

3. Humility. Being willing to humble yourself. Humble yourself means learn how to be modest. Modest in thought, in word and action. Learn how to temper yourself. Learn how to be transparent and open. Learn how to be curious and susceptible to feedback.

Those three points—and I know I just went over them quickly—those are the core components to healing addictive behavior and destructive behavior.

I'm going to end there this morning. Thank you, thank you for joining me this morning on this beautiful, beautiful day. Where I'm sitting, it's just absolutely gorgeous. There's not a cloud in the sky, and it's very still. I thank you for joining me. I would encourage you to look around your life. If you have addictive behaviors, be brave enough, have the courage to take a glance at yourself and say, "Is there anything in my life that is causing havoc or pain to myself or to those that I love? Am I hiding in any way, shape or form? Am I keeping secrets?"

If you are, please, please, humble yourself and get the help that you need. I'd be more than happy to help you in any capacity that I can. Contact me at www.connexionsclassroom.com and we can have a conversation about the help that you need.

So, until next Saturday, I'm going to sign off. I implore you to live consciously and stay connected.

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