

## Is Substance Abuse the Same as Addiction?

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Subservience to unmitigated cravings is a position exclusively held by the servile. Without the capacity to be individually well-regulated, self-government is a purely unattainable theoretical pipe dream. For those who care to secure their Liberty, they must be serious in the pursuit of defeating their personal addictions as well as moderating their naturally occurring desires.



Contemporary scientific research suggests that **addiction is not only cognitively based, but physiologically as well**. Neurobiological breakthroughs indicate that decreased dopamine is a key element, as well as the role of opioid peptides and serotonin in reinforcing addictive effects. Cerebral neurocircuitry alterations show a long-term vulnerability of relapse. Stress in the amygdala seems to explain abstinence withdrawal symptoms. It is clear to now boldly declare that addiction is not just in someone's imagination or their perceived lack of self-control because of the biological proof of their ailments.

Similar to these findings on the biochemistry of addiction, non-substance forms of abuse appear to be similar in this regard as well. Initial indications suggest that abused individuals are disproportionately more likely to possess addictive behaviors than non-abused people. **As Stefan Molyneux summarizes**, "[the] amygdalae of insecurely attached children are hyperactive and larger than those of securely attached children....so they are less able to control their fears, angers and other irrational emotional reactions in response to later interpersonal difficulties." For instance, "[w]hen children experience maternal abandonment fears and maternal abuse, they release cortisol, which shuts down their prefrontal cortex and makes their amygdala hyperactive, 'indelibly imprinting, burning in' the memory of the threatening mother in their amygdalan module." It would also seem to be the case that **those who**

experience early childhood trauma have a strongly persistent tendency to start both alcohol and illicit drug use during their adolescence.

Despite these physiological handicaps, such addictions serve as a weakness that can be exploited by both public and private criminals. Abused and addicted individuals are unfortunately, though not surprisingly, much more susceptible to government malfeasance than the non-abused and non-addicted, especially because of drug prohibition. The “land of the free” possesses the highest incarceration rate in the world; those imprisoned tend to be lower on the socio-economic scale, to be non-violent substance abusers, and to be ethnically non-European. As corporatism becomes ever more entrenched in America, so-called “private prisons” are becoming more popular, since they possess a government protected profit motive to maintain high incarceration rates. Street level drug dealers, like their bootlegger predecessors, prefer illegal substances to remain as such, otherwise they go out of business. Of course, many of these street dealers don’t produce their own products, since they are typically smuggled in courtesy of the Central Intelligence Agency.

It is imperative to keep in mind that addicts are not criminals; they are sick and require empathy as well as medical care. The mainline public’s hypocritical attitude towards addicts is appallingly barbaric, especially considering the very same tendencies present in many of them (such as Rush Limbaugh’s condemnation of drug addicts all the while he pops tons of Oxycotin pills like there’s no tomorrow). Nearly every adult has drunk a glass of wine or a bottle of beer at some point. Over 40% of Americans have smoked a cannabis cigarette at least once. We now know that rehabilitation is much more effective at reducing recidivism than incarceration. Fake moralistic snobbery has no place in the attempt to heal the ill.

Even if you don’t have any addictions, you don’t want any wanton dependencies for the simple reason that it is an open weakness that unscrupulous entities can choose to exploit, at your expense. Besides, addiction is at odds with Liberty, for Liberty is equal parts tolerance *and* responsibility. Responsibility necessarily entails self-sufficiency, which is impossible if you’re reduced to being a servile drone looking frantically for your next quick fix. Being responsible also means you are in charge of your indulgences, instead of them controlling you. If addicts wish to regain their Liberty, they need to become responsible, and to do that, they need to pursue whatever avenues that are currently available to alleviate themselves from their afflictions as much as possible, for unless they make a good faith effort to do so, they are behaving irresponsibly.

It has been postulated that the addictive properties of certain substances are not so much the problem, but instead the compulsiveness that accompanies it. Vices and luxuries have the potential to exacerbate the satisfaction of desire to the degree that obsession with such activities lead to the detriment of everything else, including those tasks necessary for the sustainment of life. Particularly concerning are those luxuries that involve electronic gadgets; Krugman’s findings about the flickering screens of television sets on brain waves could possibly extend to computers, hand-held video game consoles, and “smart” cellular telephones. The disassociated mental state when using these devices is plainly observable, especially with the youth of today.

For those who choose to engage in self-liberation, I do offer some suggestions. One option is to never experience the satisfaction of any cravings by becoming totally ascetic (and probably celibate). Obviously, this is an unrealistic (or undesirable) ideal for virtually all of us; hence, a more attainable goal is to indulge in no more than one craving per day. Some of Molyneux’s approach to peaceful parenting can be made applicable to treating addiction by attending 2 years of therapy, during which time 8 – 10 hours a week of journaling would also be done. A somewhat more cynical approach for those who are already self-regulating is to stock up on those items that others still have a nagging dependency on, which of course, is ready to be dispensed with by the virtue of price. Supplying a demand that exists as a consequence of others’ flaws puts you, not your vices, in the catbert’s seat.

At the very least, none of us should be substance abusers, because it not only makes us more susceptible to being attacked by the enemy, but is also a blight on our individual character by rendering us helpless. For example, drinking is fine, being an alcoholic is not. Smoking is dandy, just not two packs a day. Even using substances that violate *mala prohibita* is morally permissible, provided that others are not harmed. As *Socrates* famously said, "Everything in moderation, nothing to excess."

Reality is a cruel enough mistress as it is; compounding that with the coerciveness of the State about something that is inherently victimless is a mockery of justice. Unless there exists a *Common Law offense*, there is no crime. It is the prerogative of the individual, never the State, to practice personal responsibility.