

## **Section 1: Introduction & Vocabulary**

An incentive use disorder shows up when the payoff of using a substance or activity is effective at motivating behavior that is harmful to the user's health, relationships, or principles. Escaping this kind of trap is vitally important but deceptively difficult task, and not everyone who attempts it is successful.

A frustration of being a therapist—and a motivation for developing this course—is often triggered during my first session with a new client when I hear about the relapse that motivated the appointment and the gratuitous suffering it caused. The stories are difficult to listen to, and the narrator often cries out loud during the telling. But revealed within these hellish personal histories are the principles of cause and effect that pertain to relapse and its prevention. Here is an illustrative example:

Mr. Hasslebring is an attorney with a drinking problem. When he gets his second DUI he decides that he has finally learned his lesson and it is time to quit drinking completely. Like most people, he underestimates the difficulty of preventing relapse, and so he does not prepare for this challenge, other than making a solemn vow to never drink again. He has little trouble remaining sober during the initial stages of his legal problems. However, as the salience of the DUI fades with time, the intensity of his resolve to remain sober fades with it. At some point he encounters local conditions [stressors or temptations to which he is particularly vulnerable] that put him at risk of a first lapse. If he does not have an effective way of coping with this situation he is likely to make an irreversible error—violating his vow—which is likely to initiate a secondary sequence of events that lead to a demoralizing relapse.

If you have developed a pathological relationship with an incentive, understand this: Relapse is painful and destructive! Unfortunately, preventing it is so difficult that despite the widespread availability of chemical dependency programs, diet books, self-help groups, etc. most people who make up their mind to control their incentive use fail because of repeated relapses.

### ***Goals***

To prevent relapse and achieve good long-term outcome you will have to appreciate the cause-and-effect relationships that influence your actions. This is an ambitious goal, and you have only a single lifetime to achieve it. This course provides the information and tools that will help you escape an incentive use disorder. The presentation is concise, and the user is encouraged to actively navigate his or her path through the material. My goal, as developer, has been to offer the user, in a few hours, the tools and understandings developed during my career accompanying thousands of individuals through the passage from dependence to self-determination.

*The material is presented in two formats for your [two minds](#):*

- ***Text: for Rational Processing:*** Understanding the lawful principles of cause-and-effect can help you appreciate the nature of the particular trap into which you have fallen, and what you will have to do to escape it. Summaries of pertinent research in the cognitive and neural sciences, illustrative stories of individual clients, and a range of metaphors are presented, mostly as text, for the benefit of your conscious, rational, problem-solving mind.
- ***Audio and other media for Experiential Processing:*** Evidently there is more to you than rational processing; otherwise you would not make the same mistake more than once, and so a major part of this kit has a different target. For the non-rational, unconscious part of you, invitations to experiential phenomena are offered. Depending upon the nature of your particular trap you may find some of these exercises to be especially useful or trance formative for you.

## ***Definitions***

### **Impulsivity**

Some individuals have good cognitive abilities and are able to predict the likely outcomes of their actions. They may, nevertheless, knowingly choose a less rewarding over a more rewarding alternative. The technical term for this perverse tendency is *impulsivity*.

### **Dependence**

[Dependence](#) occurs when the individual becomes unable to control incentive use despite its obvious destructive consequences. In spite of sincere attempts to quit or cut down, the individual predictably relapses. After several relapses it may become clear to an observer that the individual's behavior is dependent not upon his or her commitment but upon the pull of the incentive. When this is the case, the individual is said to be *dependent upon* or *addicted to* the incentive.

### **Freewill versus Determinism**

[Freewill](#) refers to the idea that we have the ability to influence our actions intentionally. The contrasting view, ***Determinism***, holds that we actually have no free will because all of our decisions and actions are completely determined by a set of causes, though they may be unknowable to us—the experience that we have free will is merely an illusion.

### **Self-determination**

Consider the turkey; it doesn't have free will yet it provides excellent care for its young. A turkey spends much time warming and cleaning her young, but this complex behavior is triggered by one thing—the “cheep cheep” sound of her chicks. If the chick makes that sound, the mother will care for it; otherwise she will ignore it. In a research project, a polecat, the turkey's natural enemy, was stuffed with a tape recording of the “cheep

cheep” sound. When the stuffed pole cat was pulled by a string to approach turkey she attacked it viciously, but when the taped sound was turned on, the turkey not only did not attack it but gathered it under her to comfort it. When the sound was turned off she again attacked it.<sup>1</sup>

Unlike turkeys, whose behavior is determined by specific aspects of their immediate environment, some humans are able to set long range goals, develop plans, and make adjustments to their plan until their goals are achieved—they appear to have an intentional influence over the course of their life. Advocates of freewill argue that a new phenomenon emerged with human cognition, which makes us fundamentally different from turkeys. Alternatively, determinists argue that it may just seem that way because we are so much more complex than turkeys.

*Self-determination* is the position that human behavior is determined by many causes, including biological factors, psychological conditioning, and current social pressures, but this very causality provides the opportunity for us to have an intentional influence on how things play out. The more we discover about the cause-and-effect relationships, the more [efficacious](#) we are in actualizing our intentions.

### ***Experiential invitation***

Later in this course you will have the chance to experience classical hypnotic phenomena such as suggestion and intentional state change. The experiential invitations presented in this section do not require a hypnotic induction. These exercises do, however, require that you focus your full attention on the content of the audio file and the meaning of the words to you. Please click the link below to play the audio file or to copy it to your computer:

- ***[Corruption](#)***
- ***[Attachment](#)***

**[Please click here for Section 2.](#)**

---

#### Footnotes

1. Influence: Science and Practice Cialdini 1988