

Chapter 7  
**Addiction**  
*Powerlessness*

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An *addiction* is a compulsive habit in which one becomes so excessively devoted to— that all power to control its indulgence is forfeited. The *addict* becomes *powerless* and *defeated* alongside the presence of the addiction. Addiction can be either a physical behavior or mental state that is fabricated by way of *distorted thinking* (illogical and irrational thoughts about oneself, others, and the world). As our thinking becomes distorted our consciousness inheres to *addictive thinking patterns* (self-justification for addictive behavior and mentality to appear sensible). It is then when we use *tactics* (tools, skills, and strategy used to accomplish an end) to aide us in performing the habitual activity in which we are addicted to. If an addiction was an army; *distortions*, *patterns*, and *tactics* would be its biggest alliances. For one to prevail over an addiction these “allies” must first be *distinguished* amid their camouflage and then *vanquished*. Addiction hardly ever *originates* as an identifiable condition, it is when the habit becomes *unmanageable* is it then determined as an addiction. One person’s addiction may not be the same issue for another. The only way to triumph against an addiction is *abstinence*. Once a person is *addicted* it is nearly impossible for the *addict* to continue the addictive habit in moderation. As addicts, there is no “*moderation*”, it’s either we **are** or we **aren’t**, and if we *are* it will only be a matter of time before we become submerged deeper into the addiction than we have ever been before.

Addiction does not discriminate. *Anyone* at *any* time could become addicted to *anything*. Addiction extends an open invitation and equal opportunity to all. This is why pinpointing the addiction and then abstaining from it is so important to our well-being.

For an addict in *recovery* to return to their addiction is referred to as a *relapse*. A relapse is always a possibility in spite of how long we have been abstinent from something. To relapse doesn’t equal defeat, you may have lost a battle but the war against addiction is perpetual. While in recovery we are exposed to extreme vulnerability amongst even the slightest *trigger* (something outside of you such as people, places, objects, or situations that puts you at risk for relapse) or *urge* (something inside of you such as a belief, emotion, attitude, or a reaction to a situation that puts you at risk for relapse). These two components are

also allies of addiction and can only be avoided by first being recognized.

My story on addiction is based off the three (3) that shattered my life the most; *chemical use*, *gambling*, and *criminal thinking*. There was a stretch in my life where I was so committed to these addictions nothing else in my world was of any importance; all of my healthy “M.V.Ps” went straight out the window. My interaction with one addiction left me prone to engage in my other addictions causing me to become *powerless* as my life revolved around a vicious cycle to the point it became *unmanageable*.

I was first acquainted with drugs and alcohol by an old friend that lived a few houses down from my Grandparent’s house. I had to of been either 13 or 14 years old. The friend was a few years older than I and was already experienced in the use of drugs and alcohol. Being exposed to these chemicals as we used to hang out playing video games together I never had any urges to use. My entire focus was on sports and I didn’t want any chemicals in my body to interfere with my athletics. Plus, I wouldn’t dare return to my Grandparents’ home high or drunk, especially not after everything they taught me and the expectations of responsibility they held me to.

One day all that changed as I made the decision to try my first hit of weed and my first swig of booze. This didn’t happen by coincidence, nope, first I had to assure myself through my thoughts that this was something I really wanted to do. This is where my *thinking distortions* came in at. The thinking distortion I used was *overgeneralization*, I told myself, “hey everyone else is doing it, it can’t be that bad”, “my friend does it and everything in his life seems to be fine”. I also used *minimization* to minimize the situation by saying, “what will it hurt to just give it a try, it’s **only** a lil’ weed and liquor”.

Next my *addictive thinking patterns* kicked in. At the time I was *seeking pleasure/excitement first*. I put aside my original “M.V.Ps” to relish in my own self-gratification without any regards to the possible consequences. In addition to seeking pleasure/excitement first, I used *ownership stance*. I said, “This is **my** life and **my** body I can do with it as I please!”

After that I utilized *tactics* to turn my thoughts into actions. See, I thought I was slick. Since I knew I couldn’t come home impaired I knew I needed an excuse to stay out all night if I planned on getting loaded, therefore I wouldn’t say I lied completely, however, I was *deliberately vague* with my Grandma when asking her for permission to spend the

night over this buddy of mine's house. I didn't give her many details and I certainly didn't tell her I was going over there to experiment with marijuana and alcohol. I simply told her I was spending the night to play a new video game that my friend just got (I mean, we did have plans to play the game, but not until after we got high; hence me being deliberately vague). So anyways, sure enough once she granted me permission I ran out the door to participate in this new experience of consuming chemicals.

From that point on I continued to use these chemicals on a regular basis. In doing so my morals, values, and principles also continued to diminish in prominence. The vilest trait of an addiction is its cunningness. Addiction will guide one to believe that what they're doing isn't a problem, that all is well, and will eventually persuade one to believe that they are in **need** of the addiction. That's what happened to me throughout my entire struggle with addiction. The army of weed and liquor grew more firm and robust as it's allied "*distortions, patterns, and tactics*" also became more potent as they each united together to rationalize my use. Furthermore, my repeat usage augmented my *urges* and unfolded new *triggers* which more so also aided the addiction to appear more appealing.

Following chemical use came my next addictions; *gambling* and *criminal thinking*. My gambling addiction sprung forth as I got heavily involved with shooting dice in school and around the neighborhood as a teen. I gambled to satisfy my instant gratification and let's face it; my **greed**. The worst thing that happened to me during my gambling addiction was "*winning*", that might sound baffling so let me unravel that one for you. See, winning was captivating, it made me feel as if I could always win, winning gave me a type of rush that was comparable to a *high* and invigorated me to resume. As an addict, enough is never enough. Even after winning I'd find a cause to carry on my quest for the next "*big score*".

For me; gambling didn't stop at shooting dice. I would partake in any wager-able activity in which I was liable to multiply my bankroll. I could care less if it was shooting dice, pitching quarters, playing sports, videos games, card games, whatever; it didn't matter what it was, I was taking all bets. Hell, I'd bet on the weather if it gave me the opportunity to double-up. These financial perils that I endorsed were once again the products of distortions, patterns, and tactics.

The thinking distortions behind my infatuation for gambling were *extreme thinking* and *selective focus*. I used extreme thinking by housing an “*all or nothing*” attitude. I was either going to win big or lose it all trying, there was no middle ground. I exhibited selective focus as I limited my attention peerlessly on basking in financial gain while ignoring the feasible alternative of *loosing* to be an option.

The two thinking patterns I embodied to support me in my gambling addiction was my *fear of exposure* and my *lack of time perspective*. Fear of exposure is pretty much self-explanatory; it [fear of exposure] mainly came into effect during the episodes in which I was losing. I didn’t want to be ridiculed by friends and family if they were to discover the fact that I basically gave my money away. The fear prompted me to wager even more radically in hopes of reclaiming any abstracted cash in order for me to not be exposed. Unfortunately, more times than not chasing lost moneys only brought me further in debt. This thinking pattern ties in closely with the other, *lack of time perspective*. There are 3 parts associated with lack of time perspective.

1. You do not learn from past experiences and do not think about the future. You often think “this time is different” and will echo the same thoughts and behaviors that have failed you before.
2. You believe in instant gratification, you tend to act impulsively
3. You expect big success with minimum effort. You fantasize about making the “big score”. You make choices based on what you *want* to be true, rather than what *is* true.

I implicated all 3 into my gambling regiment. I didn’t learn from my past experiences; always believing that “this time is different”. I acted impulsively; I wanted what I wanted now”. I expected success with minimum effort; making my decisions while overlooking reality in search of the “big score”.

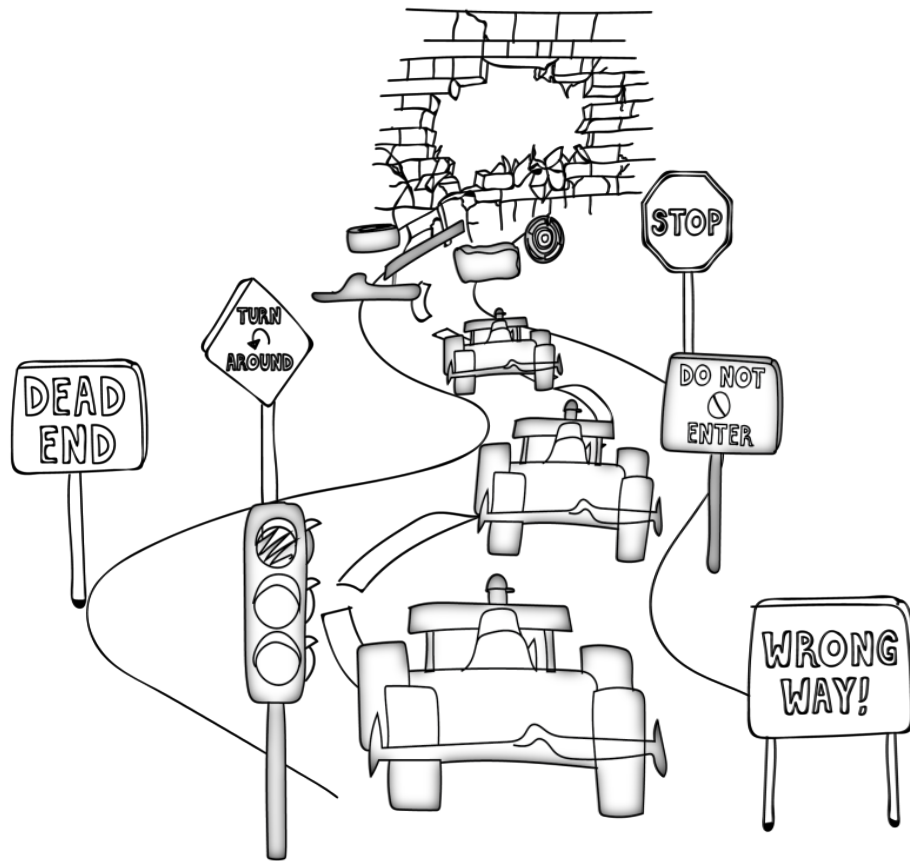
Lastly, the apex tactic I used to accelerate this addiction in its domination was *introducing irrelevant issues*. My problem was that I had an excuse for everything. I distracted myself and others with irrelevant issues to divert the attention away from the actual problem. I swayed myself into gambling by reciting things like, “I’m an unemployed felon”, “the government is bogus”, “life’s been tough for me”, “my friend’s uncle just hit a jackpot”. All of these are undoubtedly

examples of irrelevant issues. None of these statements give any logical prudence to vindicate the addiction; they are only a mere tactic used to *manipulate* the mind.

My final and most decimating addiction was my addiction to *criminal thinking*. You might be nonplussed as to how one can be *addicted* to “criminal thinking”, but just like any other habit, if you foster it long enough it matures into and gets tagged as an addiction. In retrospect I can freely admit that I struggled immensely while battling to annihilate this addiction and permanently cast it from my life. Criminal thinking was like the foundation that fortified all my other addictions and for a majority of my life I grew highly fond of it. I nourished the belief that short-cuts, schemes, and scams were the answers to all my *wants* and *needs*. As I look back on this extensive rollercoaster I was guilty of exploiting nearly every single distortion, pattern, and tactic in the book. The more crimes I committed the more natural it felt to commit more.

My putrid psyche was the makings of *closed thinking*. I had my beliefs and no one was going to convince me otherwise. I didn’t trust, or for that matter even want to hear any new information outside of my own. I thought I had all the answers..... **Wrong!** I was a victim of my own stubbornness. I was the one in my own way. It didn’t matter how many times I got arrested or almost got killed by committing crimes, I still continued to have at it, not paying the consequences any mind.

My old way of criminal thinking can be compared to me driving down a clearly labeled dead end road in hopes of a non-existent outlet to be on the other end. Picture this. I’m speeding down a road with several lanes; on my right side is a sign that reads, “Warning dead end ahead”. I elide it completely while keeping my top speed. Soon after comes another sign; it reads the same as the last, “Warning dead end ahead”. Once again I ignore it and zoom along. This time I switch lanes foolishly thinking this may help me avoid the “dead end”, but it doesn’t. Despite the *lane* I chose, I was still going down the same *road* in which all lanes projected to the same *dead end*. So here I go, recklessly speeding down this road switching from lane to lane disregarding every “dead end” warning sign. That is until..... BOOM, CRASH, SMACK! I collide head on at top speed into a brick wall. I can’t be surprised, I seen all the warning signs but seemed not to mind them. I had plenty of opportunity to come to a halt, but declined them, leaving only myself to claim the responsibility.



This story is exactly how my criminal thinking operated. Me “*speeding*” portrays “criminal thinking” and the “fast life”. The “*dead end signs*” resemble “arrests” and “near death experiences”. Each “*lane*” represents different “crimes” and the “*brick wall*” signifies “incarceration”. Yet the utmost appalling segment of this story is what takes place next. After the crash and as my wounds heal I plunge right back onto the same road reenacting the previous scene precisely. How crazy is that? This short story also depicts the thinking distortion *concrete thinking* and the thinking pattern *selective effort*. As I stated earlier every distortion, pattern, and tactic in the book was applicable during my addiction to criminal thinking. (For a defined listing of all distortions, patterns, and tactics please explore the **Appendix** on page. (b.1-6))

Now I want to get into how I became *powerless* over these three (3) primary addictions and how my life became *unmanageable* as the aftermath. Recalling my lifestyle in hindsight I can lucidly envision the impact my habits caused.

For starters my chemical use became troublesome as my use merged from occasionally using small subtle amounts of weed and alcohol in a very discreet manner, to consuming an abundance of chemicals in a nonchalant way. The first indication that my chemical use ripened into a full addiction was when I began to use more compulsively while taking unnecessary risks in order to do so. My usage quickly sprouted from maybe 2-3 times a month to me using every time I had a chance. No longer was I scared to go home high in fear of being caught by my Grandparents. I risked losing their trust and receiving a harsh punishment as I would boldly walk into the house, avoid eye contact, and head straight to my room high as a kite. After getting away with that a few times I then upped the ante. In addition to using with my friend down the street I started purchasing my own stashes of weed and liquor to use independently. What was once used as an experiment out of curiosity cultivated into an *unmanageable* addiction. My *triggers* and *urges* were escalating and multiplying by the minute. Anytime I was around weed I was sure to take a puff, same with alcohol, if I saw it I wanted a shot. Even the *thought* of being high or drunk brought me a euphoric urge to use.

Chemicals were a part of my daily routine and only got more perplex over time. The risks I was taking to satisfy my cravings were totally asinine. In the beginning I spent an innumerable amount of hours outside in my Grandparent's garage hiding my habits from the others around me. Surviving without being detected compelled me to further my escapades to go as far as drinking and smoking in the basement of the house while my Grandparents were home. As my level of consumption inclined, so did my level of *powerlessness*. I soon found myself using just to use. I had no concern as to when or where it went down at long as it happened. No excuses, rationalizations, or justifications necessary. I can remember early mornings rushing to my bus stop ahead of schedule to warrant enough time to light up a pre-twisted joint and guzzle down liquor disguised inside a soda bottle so I could revel in an intense buzz before starting my school day. Throughout the day in between classes I would scramble to my locker to return to my liquor filled soda bottle as I had **no** control over my urges.

School was actually the first place I got busted for using. Luckily for me it wasn't during school hours and my Grandparents weren't notified. It was after school before a basketball game. Besides my obnoxious behavior and my eyes being bloodshot red, my coach smelled the alcohol on my breath and the stench of marijuana coming off my clothes. He didn't even bother to let me suit up; instead he forced me to sit in the stands during a home game that I was slated to start in. So what did I do? Duh, I left and rolled up another joint. It didn't even occur to me at the moment that I was willing to give up something I loved as much as basketball all because my lack of *power* and *control* over drugs and alcohol.

Without the structure of organized sports in my life I began to embark upon my other love; **Money**. Gambling came to be my main source of income. I prided myself as one of the best dice shooters I knew and was on stand-by to demonstrate my talents whenever, versus whoever. I quickly found out about the inconsistent merit of gambling. Not every day was I a winner, often losing everything I had. Other days I couldn't even find a worthwhile game to be a part of, leaving my pockets at a standstill. In need of a steady cash flow to fund my addictions I turned to *illegal activity* and *crime* as a resort.

*Selling weed* was my first perilous venture. I figured I could sell enough weed to cover for the amount that I was using and any other profits would basically be a bonus. In my "*criminal mind*" this idea was brilliant, so I grabbed my first pack, bagged it up in 5 and 10 dollar sacks, and was on my way; always being sure to set a few bags to the side so that I could treat myself once I reached my break even mark. The first couple rotations everything went perfect. I was technically smoking free weed and was helping other stoners around me get high as well. Business was booming. First time customers became regulars and those regulars brought reliable referrals. The demand for my product began to outmatch my supply. Now the bags I had set to the side had to be sold to keep up with client's needs. For me this was no problem, all I had to do was go re-up with my supplier that evening and do it all over again the next day.

Everything was all cool until I ran into my first drought. I was fine with maybe waiting until after dinner at the latest to meet up with my guy, grab a fresh pack, and burn my next blunt but being told the supply was dry without knowledge of knowing when the next shipment would be received was a serious issue. Not only was my addiction kicking my butt, my reputation and creditability was on the line. I had clients to tend to that were going to be in need of their daily dose and I

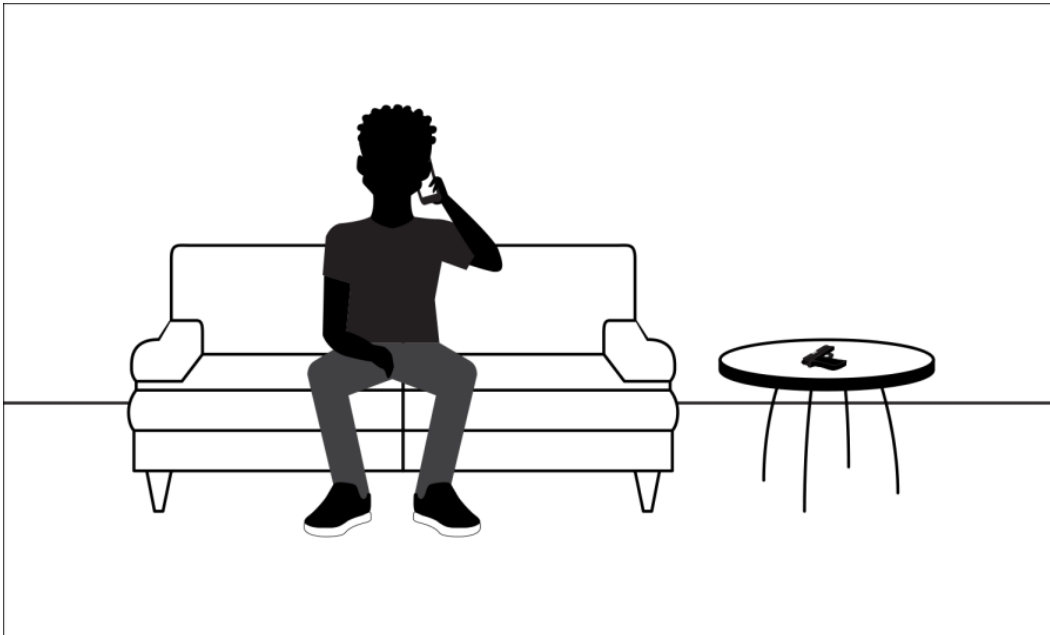
felt a sense of responsibility to make sure they got just that. On the other end of the spectrum, I believed in consistency and didn't want to rush into anything new right away. I chose to stay loyal to my supplier and road the dry spell out with him until things got back to normal.

As the ball got back rolling and more money was being exchanged I decided to purchase a gun to protect me and my possessions. I probably really got it [the gun] because I thought it was *cool*. At age 14 I didn't know anyone my age that had a gun. I thought I was hot stuff and kept it with me wherever I went.

Life went on and after noticing that I was making a lot of buys on regular basis my supplier asked me, "Why don't you invest in a larger quantity?" He went on to tell me that not only will this option save me trips from going to see him; it will also make me more money in the long run. From the outside looking in one would think I was netting a small fortune with all the sales I was making, but in reality I was smoking a majority of my profits and with the rest of the revenue I was buying bottles and purchasing high end fashion and accessories while becoming accustomed to the "typical" flashy, fast paced lifestyle of a "drug dealer". I played it cool with his question and told him, "Maybe on the next one". Heartbreakingly for me there wasn't a next one. Somehow my guy disappeared and we never got back in contact.

So there I was; business booming with no product in hand. I couldn't afford to wait for my original supplier to miraculously pop out of nowhere, so I journeyed off into the open market to find a replacement. This wasn't easy, my connect and I had such a great relationship he was giving me deals that no one else could even come close to.

In the middle of networking to find a new source I got a call from my buddy DH...



**DH:** *What's up bro, did you score any bud yet?*

**Me:** Nah not yet, still looking.

**DH:** *You still got that gun though, right?*

**Me:** Yeah of course, why what's up?

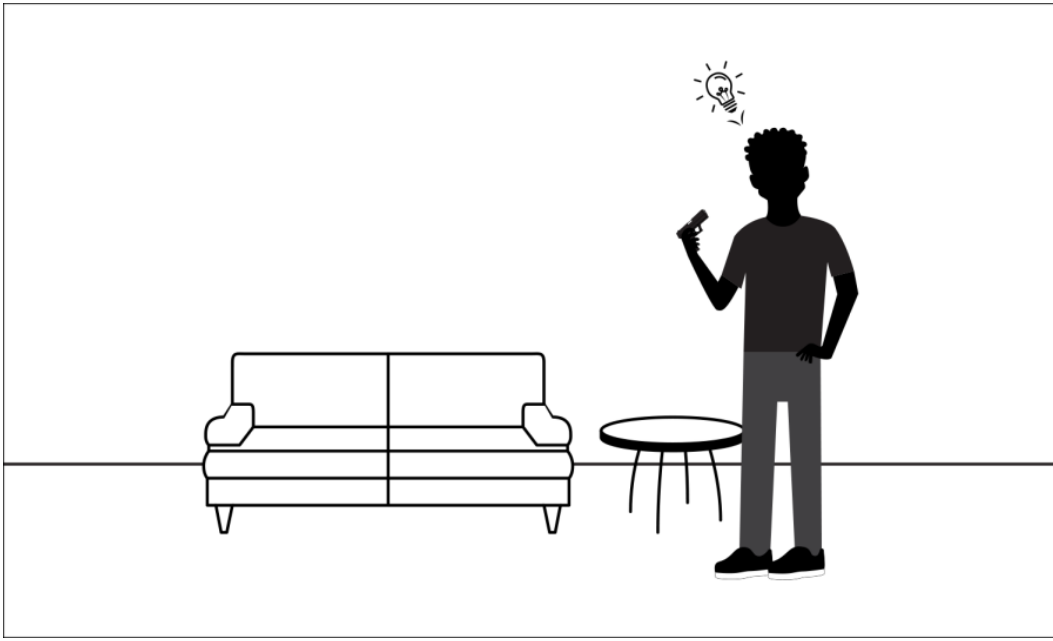
**DH:** *Well, I know of a dealer with some good stuff that you could rob if you were down for it.*

At this point I had never robbed anyone before, but desperate times called for desperate measures...

**Me:** What all would I have to do?

**DH:** *Nothing really. It'll be simple. I'll set it all up and have him meet you wherever you want, then you do your thing from there.*

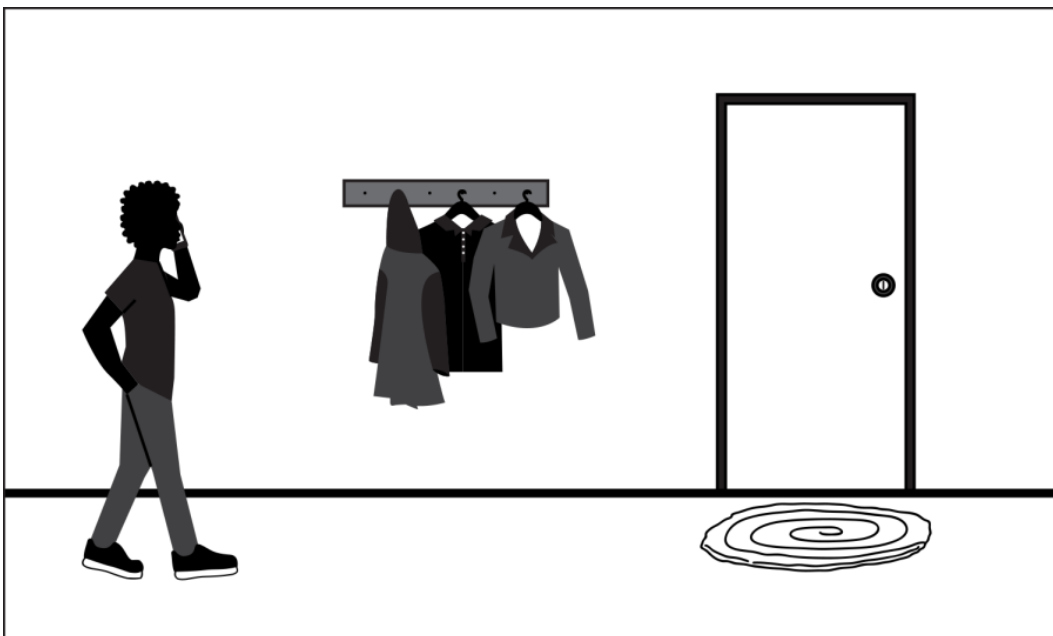
I was a bit apprehensive at first. It almost sounded too good to be true. Plus who knows, what if this dealer guy had a gun too. I wasn't interested in getting into a shootout over a little bit of weed. This was no time for nerves though, my phone was ringing off the hook and I wasn't going to let this dry spell lose me anymore customers...



**Me:** Alright man I'll give it a shot. Tell him to meet me behind the pizza parlor by the old gas station.

**DH:** *Okay cool, I got you. I'll call you back when he's out there.*

10 Minutes later...



[Phone Rings]

**Me:** Hello.

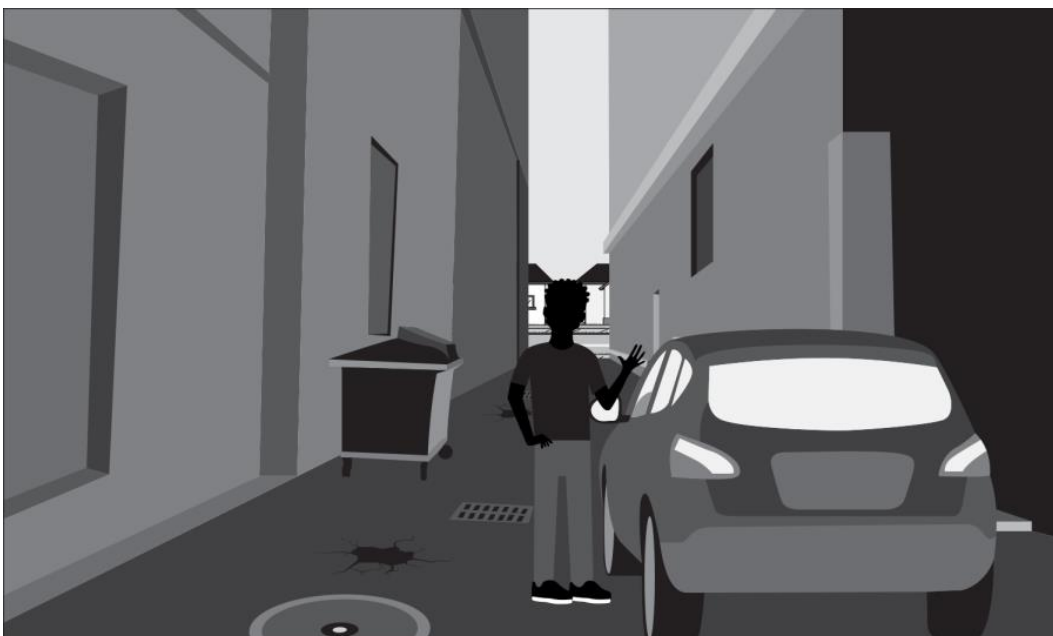
**DH:** *Where you at? Dude said he'll be in the alley in 5 minutes.*

**Me:** Alright, fasho. I'm on my way up there right now. Stay by your phone, I'll call you when I'm done.

“Well, here goes nothing”, I tell myself, walking down the alley about 50 paces away from the black SUV idling directly behind the pizza parlor...



[I walk up to the window]



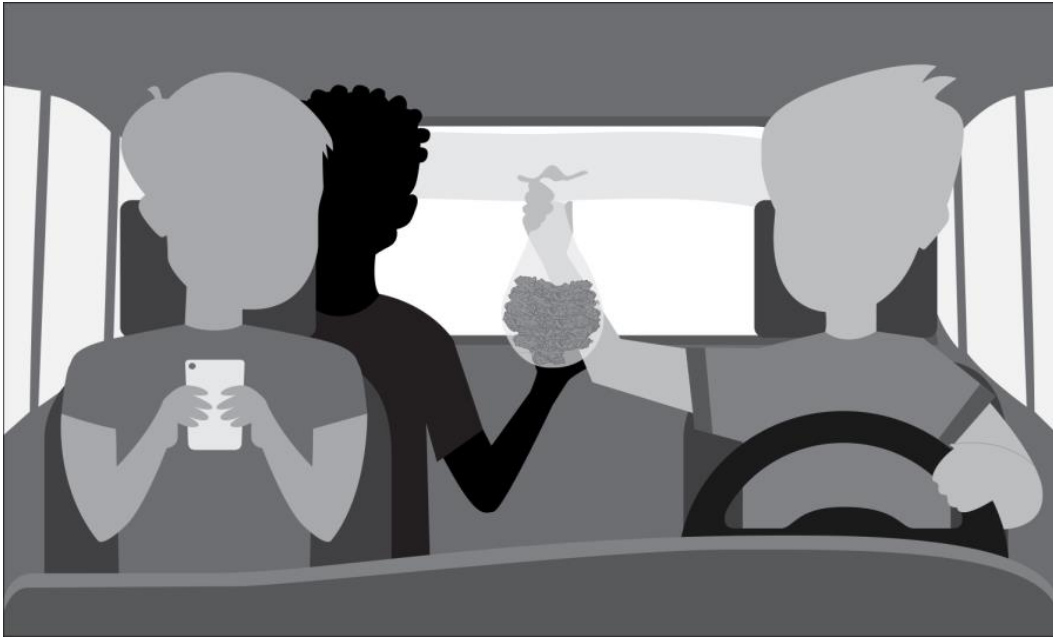
**Me:** What's up, are you Dan?

**Dan:** *Yeah.*

**Me:** I'm DH's boy.

**Dan:** *Okay cool, hop in.*

I went to get into the passenger side but it was already occupied by one of Dan's associates, so I jumped into the backseat instead...



**Me:** So how's that green look?

**Dan:** *Here, take a look for yourself.*

He put the entire pack in my hands as I got a whiff of its ambrosial aroma. I felt my adrenaline rushing as my heart beat profusely. It was now or never. I pulled my gun out, cocked it back and put it to Dan's head...

**Me:** Put your hands on the steering wheel and don't move.

**Dan:** *Alright man, don't shoot.*

I point the gun at the other guy...



**Me:** You! Empty your pockets and give me your wallet!

He proceeded to do so. I then clutched the keys out from the ignition and retreated out the back door of the SUV. I started sprinting towards the end of the alley and threw the car keys in the opposite direction. After that I cut through a few yards and jumped a few fences before safely making it home.



Before I could even settle in, I get a phone call; it was DH...



**Me:** Hello.

**DH:** *Dang man I can't believe you really did it!*

**Me:** How you know?

**DH:** *Dan just called me said he got robbed at gun point. He's pissed.*

**Me:** Yeah I bet he is. This green is dank.

**DH:** *Well what's up, you gonna smoke one with me?*

**Me:** Fasho, you gotta come to my crib though, the block is hot right now. I'll be outside in the garage, bring a blunt.

**DH:** *Okay, on my way.*

Just like that I got away with my first stick-up. Rather than overpaying to re-stock my inventory, I was now sitting on more than over a thousand dollars worth of free product. This feeling was irreplaceable, it was better than any other *high* I have ever experienced. This was the day I officially became *addicted to criminal thinking*.

Robbing drug dealers became my new norm. All the guys that I avoided doing business with because of their ridiculously expensive prices were now perfect targets to be my next victims. My supply was plentiful as I was making more money than ever before. People around me enjoyed the perks as well. Friends were getting high for free and clients were getting the best deals in town. The cash was flowing and when product got short— the next person got jacked. It was like I created an art out of robbing people. It became habitual to me. Yet not everything in my life was going well. Like the late rapper The Notorious B.I.G said, “*More Money, More Problems*”. This stood to be true for me as well. More *money* meant more chemicals, more gambling, and more enemies which all lead to more *problems*. Problems worsened as all my addictions began to swell and coincide with one another. I was experimenting with new drugs such as *ecstasy* and *prescription pills* while still using excessive amounts of weed and alcohol. My gambling habits rose from \$5 bets to at times single \$100 rolls. When it came to criminal thinking it was on my mind constantly. Even when I wasn't conspiring to engage in criminal activity I lived in a state of paranoia as if someone was concocting a plot against me. These were daily occurrences and often initiated in unison. I'd be organizing robberies while selling weed out of my garage and at the same time me and a couple homeboys would shoot dice, smoke weed, and drink liquor. This also became routine. It took for me to get locked up as an adult to open

my sights to the havoc that my addictions were imposing onto my life.

Jail *exposed* my behavior to my Grandparents. They had no idea that I was selling drugs, carrying guns, or robbing people up until then. I felt *lifeless* after knowing how disappointed they were in me. Following a brief incarceration of 6 months with more than another 50 months hanging over my head and 20 years of probation to do, I recognized this to be just as good a time as any to slow my roll and act like I had some sense. With my probation officer breathing down my neck as well as my sentencing judge daring me to come back in front of him, I knew my only option was to *abstain* from **any** wrong doing.

For a while I was living a spotless lifestyle. I was able to ditch the chemicals, change my phone number to distance myself from the game, and was working a part-time job. Things were looking up. I battled against criminal and addictive thinking every second of everyday before I eventually let my guard down and became complacent with the positivity that I was achieving. I thought that after being clean for so long that I *deserved* to treat myself. My other thoughts were that I could “*beat the system*” while doing so. My plan was to *use* and *act* in “*moderation*” which I found firsthand is downright impossible for an addict to do such.

Returning to chemicals was my first *relapse*. The idea was to have one or two drinks to be “sociable”, but that idea lasted about as long as the two drinks did— at all. Soon enough I was chugging straight out of the bottle. Along with the alcohol I dabbled in the ecstasy and prescription pills again. I would particularly use these substances because of their rate of metabolism, which either take more than 7 days to release from the body. These drugs were my *substitute* for weed since THC (the chemical in cannabis) could take in upwards of 45 days to abscond from the body. Knowing this allowed me to properly schedule my usage around my pre-anticipated drug screens ordered by my probation officer each month.

My gambling habit was my next *relapse*. I felt I had to do something to bridge the gap between paycheck to paycheck. I had been so accustomed to living a careless lifestyle, just getting by wasn’t enough. I was thinking I could simply cash my couple hundred dollar paycheck from work, go to the casino, and walk out with a few thousand dollars; the most enticing factor at the time being that it was all **legal**. I thought the casino was going to be my legit *alternative* to robbing people. However, leaving the casino ahead a few thousand is much easier *said* than *done*. There were ample amount of times I lost my whole check after announcing I would only risk a fraction of it. Pure *greed* and

*addiction* kept me glued to the tables pulling out more and more money. Looking back as I see it now I'd accuse gambling of being the "ring leader" of all my addictions; rekindling my gambling habit while living paycheck to paycheck wasn't the best thing for me to do. I had still possessed that extreme *all or nothing* mentality, howbeit, this time I didn't have a pile of weed or phone full of contacts to turn upon if I were to lose. I played with so much emotion while at the card tables there were times where a drink felt almost *mandatory* to relinquish my intensity. *Winning* or *losing*, the drugs and alcohol were there. Whether I was *celebrating* a bountiful victory or *coping* with a draining loss, the chemicals remained a constant. The worst was losing my money with no drugs to submerge myself into afterwards to alleviate the agony— on top of that, having to wait for my next paycheck before I could give it another go.

After this sequence repeated itself for several weekends in a row I took the risk of slipping back into selling drugs again alongside of working my job. I knew that this time around I had to be more cautious than ever knowing that even a baggie of crumbs would for sure put me back behind bars.

Not everybody got the call that I was back on. I chose a few people I knew would spend enough money at a time to make each transaction seem worthwhile. I wasn't getting rich or anything, but I was comfortably collecting a modest sum of cash every other day or so. My advantage was that I wasn't smoking so I could keep my amounts whole and make every dollar it was worth. The disadvantage was with every move I made I would bring the profits back to the blackjack tables. Up down up down, back and forth back and forth. This plight trounced me into a blithering ruin.

I think I can speak for anyone who has ever been addicted to something when I say, "the motivation that pushes us to act on our habits is the remembrance of the *good times* and the pursuit to recapture that moment". So even though the ambiguous times may have outweighed the glorious ones for me I continued to *chase* that liberating high and what I *thought* to be happiness. I didn't think about the times I lost entire paychecks for weeks on end or when I lost the rent money that was due the next morning. Nope, I just thought of "the good times". The excitement, the laughter, the couple thousand dollars here and there, that was my reason for returning, having faith that one day I would turn \$100 into \$100,000. Same went for my criminal thinking and chemical use. I focused on the *easy way out*, the *quick buck*, and the *ultimate high* rather

than the cold lonely nights in a jail cell, the disappointment in my Grandparents' eyes, or the hurt I caused myself and others both *physically* and *mentally*.

Not long after I allowed my addictions to get the best of me I dug myself into such a deep hole I was for certain there was no way to escape it. I was *physically torn, emotionally exhausted, and mentally liquidated*; I quit my job, got back into robbing people, started smoking weed again, I expanded my drug dealing business to include pills and cocaine, got involved in pimping, conducted fraud, and bought some new guns. I re-dedicated myself to an **unhealthy criminal and addictive** street valued lifestyle, all for nothing.

It was like I was on a treadmill running after a mirage. All that I had *imagined* never came to *reality*. Due to my antics I was faced with many *consequences* which included, but wasn't limited to; warrants for my arrest landing me in and out of jail, street fights and shoot-outs creating new enemies and injuries, stress and weight loss, sleepless nights, paranoia, alcohol poisoning, lack of confidence, ruined friendships, lost time with family, depression, low self-esteem, homelessness, and more. This goes to show how *addiction* can rapidly overpower our minds from thought of "*moderation*" to the *unmanageable* behaviors of a full scale *relapse*.

Addiction is an army on a mission to destroy as many prisoners and confirm as many casualties as in its path as possible. It wasn't until executing the rest of my 57 month sentence and almost permanently losing my girl and kids for good did I take heed to my "wake-up call" and decide to take *action* to disrupt the cycle.

I want you to take a moment and think about a *personal experience* where *you- yourself* or *someone you know* has suffered from an *addiction*... Got it? Okay now chew on this; whether you labeled yourself *or* the other person as *the addict*, I can practically guarantee that you *both* were *affected* one way or another from that *same situation*. Am I right? This is part of something called *the ripple effect*. The ripple effect describes how a single incident can cause the spread of consequences amongst *people, places, and things* who were not immediately involved in the initial event. One may view certain actions and behaviors to be *victimless* or *harmless* to others, when on the contrary consequences from these doings could trickle down to impact humanity around the world, converting everyday people, places, and things into unsuspecting *victims*.

Here's a personal scenario of mine that could at first appear to be *victimless*, but is soon proved to impact many...

- Testing positive for chemicals during a random drug screen directed by my county probation officer.

(Sounds *harmless* enough right?). Besides destroying my body with chemicals and creating new legal issues for myself; my behaviors affected others as well, here's how...



### **City, County, and State Government**

- The county's testing center writes a report notifying my probation officer the results of the test
- My P.O. then has to take time away from meeting with another client of his in order to process a warrant for my immediate arrest (by the way which also affects the client's schedule.)
- By the time the judge gets the fax requesting his signature to authorize my warrant; he has already closed the books and was one foot out the door. Now he is forced to retract to his office to complete the documents.

- After the papers are finalized, the judge's clerk (who also stayed late to assist in this matter) then translates the official warrant to the city and state authorities who then call "all hands on deck" in effort of apprehending me as soon as possible.
- Once I am apprehended the whole legal process begins, decreasing the government's spending budget.

### **Family**

- With me on the run attempting to avoid the depths of a frigid dark jail cell; my parents, siblings, and relatives all worry about my well-being while I mindlessly run the streets homeless jumping from place to place.
- I "borrow" hard earned money from these family members just to support my chemical addiction as well as longing my gambling and hustling binge.
- My significant other and children are left home alone with any plans of us spending time together canceled. My woman has no idea of what's going on, full of fears of what tomorrow may bring. She sits restlessly by the phone with panic each time it rings.
- In her arms our two children left only with the question of, "where's Daddy?"
- Upon being imprisoned the pain remains. I'm no longer present to assist with the house bills, the trips to the park, or able to help save up for that big family vacation we planned to take
- My family also loses that companionship and love that no one else can provide them with but *me*.

### **Neighborhood**

- Neighbors are flabbergasted to know that a *criminal* lives on their block.
- They feel vulnerable and keep a steady surveillance on their property to ensure they will not be a target for any future stings.

### Citizens of Society (*This Means You*)

- Safety is jeopardized as authorities focus efforts to arrest *me* while possibly unintentionally allowing other criminals to slip through the cracks.
- Citizens' tax dollars are inflated and used towards the legal system rather than fulfilling other needs such as fixing damaged roads or cleaning up lakes and parks.
- Paranoia of living in crime infested areas
- Hassled with stricter laws and harsher punishments.

These examples here merely scratch the surface. It gets much deeper than this, trust me. So next time you think about getting involved in some mischief with inconsiderate thoughts of, "*this is harmless*", remember *The Ripple Effect* and keep in mind just how harm-**full** what you're about to do can really be.

We must recognize and fully understand that we **are** in fact stronger than any addiction could ever be. We must reclaim our *power* and break loose from the constraints of this beast to once again *manage* our own lives. Alleviating addiction is a steady process which calls for a stout *will* and everlasting *commitment*. To outdo addiction we may also need *help* from others around us.

If you struggle with an addiction, the moment is **now** to put your pride and ego aside, ask for help and fully commit to a *better life*. If you have already subdued an addiction I commend you, but I also ask that you latch onto the hand of another and guide them to victory as well. Let's change the world and make a difference together, you are not alone. Thank you and may GOD bless you.