

# Slaying the Dragon of Addiction.....COCAINE

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“And there were beasts.... Three-headed dogs, Gorgons, ghouls and whirligigs.  
And dragons both alive and dead. For me to master, and I did.”

This excerpt from a poem of David Wagoner, ‘A Place To Stand By’, when absorbed and duly processed, tells all there is to tell about the ‘hell’ of addiction. It dispels the out-dated global thinking that addicts are weak, lack will-power, and freely choose to pursue their addictions. Every catalyst that leads to the ‘mind-forged manacles’ of addicts and non-addicts are external events, real or imagined. Why do I include non-addicts in the same breath as addicts? Seems unfair, doesn’t it? Let’s think about that statement. Think of the clients with whom you have worked, or the people that you know, or, what the heck, just think of yourself. Do you know of any behavior or thought that was not caused by something that happened outside of you....not that I am foolish enough to state that every cause is readily identifiable....mostly identifiable, but not necessarily ‘readily’, nor identifiable in every instance? Nevertheless the catalyst was created by something or someone, knowingly, unknowingly, willingly, unwillingly or in any given scenario that you can imagine. The external event or series of events and resultant thought processes and repetitive behaviors forge the manacles of the mind. The non-addicts wear the same set of handcuffs as the addict, it’s just that the effects of the handcuffs are not so devastating, or are they? ‘The gates of prison, insanity or death’ is oft repeated as a description for the life of an addict, and the addictive destinations, if abstinence is not attained. Consider the suffering of many of our clients, and the similarities reach out to you. A non-addict client suffering from a poor self-image may feel closed in as if in ‘prison’ because of the restrictions imposed by the poor self-image, and ‘insane’ with comparisons to other people, and ‘dead’, for life cannot be lived to the fullest. With addicts the ‘gates of prison, insanity and death’ carries the same reasoning. To work with addicts we need not walk in the same moccasins as the addict but we must think and feel. This preamble is written so that you may approach the topic of addiction with an open mind, for in reality, if we can become non-judgmental of all of the clients with whom we work regardless of their behaviors, then we can best serve their interests, and the interests of hypnotism.

The effects of Cocaine on the brain were explored in 1997 using the most current brain-imaging equipment available. (N.B. I have encapsulated flourishes of some of their descriptions where appropriate) Cocaine was selected by the scientific team as it is a very popular dragon among addicts. What was most interesting was the ‘triggering’ of devastating cravings, urges needs and desires that was brought about by external video stimulation of typical scenes in a crack-cocaine addicts life. The addicts’ cravings were ‘triggered’ by the scenes, but the non-addicts were not. It was interesting for it was confirmation of the knowledge that we hypnotists have of the workings of the subconscious mind, although scientists simplify the entire process by reducing it solely to a biological basis in studies of the brain, without addressing the existence and depths of the unconscious. Here’s what the scientific team did: Crack-cocaine addicts and non-addicts were assembled and took turns in an MRI. A mirror was set up alongside in which all could see a 10-minute video rolling. The first 2 minutes carried **images** of monarch butterflies which **images** caused nothing remarkable in the brain. But then, new **images** appeared in the video....men and women were ritualistically cooking crack,

an addict was giving money to a drug pusher, people smoked, etc. "It was as if a neurological switch had been thrown....seeing the drug scenes not only unleashed in the addicts a surge of craving for crack, but also **triggered** visible changes in their brains....lit up like Times Square". Nothing happened in the brains of the non-addicts. You have all heard of the pleasure circuit in our brain. Here's what happens with addicts: The pleasure chemical called 'dopamine' is the neurotransmitter which communicates pleasure to the reward circuit, and this makes us feel good. In the reward circuit are dopamine receptors which soak up the dopamine so that the elation subsides naturally. Just think of "little molecular baseball gloves" sitting on neurons and catching the dopamine "fly balls" that pass by. This is a natural occurrence that can be caused by sex, eating chocolate cake, or playing a good game of anything. So far, so great....but, cocaine seeps in and occupies these dopamine receptors and because they are now occupied, there is no room for the receptors to accept the dopamine....so what happens?....The dopamine keeps swimming around the pleasure circuit without fear of being 'caught' by the receptors....and the person keeps feeling good...to a point!! Continued cocaine use kills a lot of these receptors, and then it takes more and more cocaine to reach the same high that originally needed much less cocaine to attain. But that is not the worse effect....the small amount of receptors left prohibits the good feeling that other experiences caused, such as good sex, good chocolate cake, good sports, good TV, good movies, or good family life. This is what the client brings into our offices.

It would have been very nice if there were a question and answer session subsequent to this research, let's say, some hypnotist asking this question: Yes, we recognize physical addiction but do you recognize the subconscious mind in the psychological aspect? Sure, the external video stimulated the addicts, but if you took the same addicts and placed them in a dark room, with a blindfold on their eyes, they would be unable to be stimulated by a video or an actual real-life observation, and nevertheless here they are in a darkened room, blindfolded, and they are intensely, uncontrollably craving crack-cocaine? And we know that the scientists would not give this answer: Well sure the addicts have intense cravings because their subconscious minds are sending them image-messages of those feel-good scenes without the use of a video or real-life. The subconscious mind stores every video, audio, kinesthetic, olfactory and gustatory happening in the life of the addict since birth and before, so naturally it is going to continue sending these messages because repetition has 'burned' them deeply into it, and the subconscious mind is a very hard worker, continuously sending us all sorts of messages....you, yourself have received messages from your subconscious mind without the necessity of a 'trigger'....how many times has a face, or name, or place popped up in your mind when you were not thinking about that person or place? Sure cravings come about through external stimulation because the sights, smells, sounds, tastes, and feelings trigger the similar memory in the memory bank of the subconscious mind and the feel-good or escape that was achieved in that remembered happening. But, an external source is not necessary....the subconscious is quite capable of wreaking its own havoc if permitted to continue sending these learned messages. Ah, they would not accept this. After all, our successes with addicts occasioned through our work with the subconscious mind are only anecdotal, as we cannot observe these successes through the eyes of an MRI.

But we'll get the best out of their research yet, because we are permitted to incorporate it into our personal approaches to working with cocaine and other addictions and the hypnotic techniques that we use. We are smart hypnotists....

1. We know that we can cleanse the subconscious of those crummy past scenes which were lived through by the addict (C.G. Jung said that 'Once we expose the demons to light, they go away') (James Allen in 'As a Man Thinketh', warned that we can only reap from the ground that which has been planted, that we must clear the earth before we plant; that we can not expect to harvest corn when we have planted carrots);

2. We can introduce new scenes into the subconscious, which scenes are appropriate to each individual client (imagery....one of a hypnotist's strengths)

3. The subconscious mind thrives on repetition....isn't that how we develop our habits, good or bad, and addictions? (so now we develop new thoughts with repetition, repetition, repetition);

4. We can break the 'mind-forged' manacles, by making the client free (I see the handcuffs of addiction breaking on the wrists....I see the addict smashing them in a unique way....I see the look and feel of joy on the addict's face as freedom replaces slavery....the addict is cocaine-free, crack-free, addiction-free, free, free, free, free, free...how many times must I say 'free' in a session? I don't know, ah, maybe 100 x free...doesn't cost anything but a few seconds here and there extra);

5. We can again acquaint the cocaine addict with the facts that water is wet, the sky is blue, (because they have forgotten) that sex is exciting (because they have forgotten), and chocolate cake tastes great, for they have forgotten all of that and more when their dopamine receptors were destroyed (re-education of the addicts with the pleasures of life );

6. We can build new dopamine receptors one by one, to bring back the natural feel-good pleasures (I remember when in New Orleans my wife and I went on a boat tour of the bayous, and the marine biologist-turned boat captain showed us an alligator that lost an eye in an alligator fight 6 years before and was now growing a new eye....if the alligator can do that, then darn it, we humans can grow new dopamine receptors, so do it....and don't let the traditionalists say it cannot be done. We have not been on earth long enough to understand all of the power of the mind over the body, and probably never will);

7. We can give them a future where there was none before (create a new person with a lot of life to live....this is what they really want. I have never met an addict that has been bouncing around for a period time that truly wanted to remain addicted).

Now it is up to you to extend your frames of reference so that you may incorporate these thoughts into your own techniques and programming. Take the time to study, think, understand, feel, prepare your sessions, and you just may be able to teach your client how to slay that destructive dragon of addiction.