

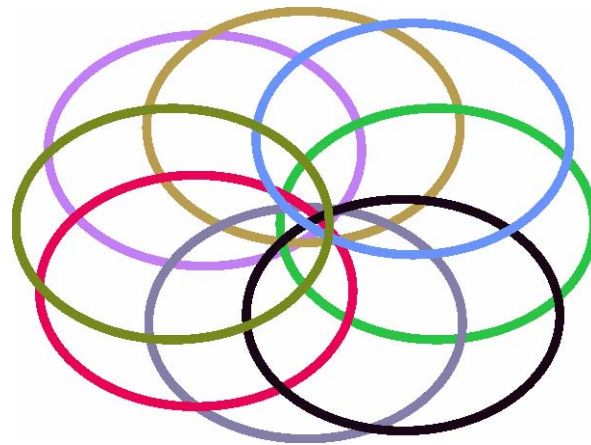
I CAN DO THIS

PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENT WORKSHOP

Helping Offenders Have The Strength To Not Re-Offend

Seven week course

Helping you learn how to be all that you can be,
by applying principles that are incredibly simple!



Each of the parts of life are inter related. You cannot separate this interaction. Everything we do in one part of our life has a far-reaching effect on all the other parts of our life. Therefore, learning to do one thing well will help us do everything well.

Presented by Cordell Vail
Editing and Updating by Kenneth Teglia

These seven lessons are based on the “*My Turn To Win: Secrets Of Excellence*” Personal Achievement Workshops.

Lesson 3

Overcoming Bad Habits and Addictions

We often talk about having a habit. What is a habit? A habit is something that we do without thinking about it. Something we do on a regular basis. A habit can be good or bad. For example, we can have the good habit of doing exercises every day to stay in shape. We can have a bad habit of losing our temper and swearing every time we are irritated or something does not go right in our life. Addiction is a little more than just a habit. Addiction is something that we are driven to do even when we don't want to, or know we shouldn't. It is a habit that is so strong that it seems almost impossible to not do no matter how hard we try to not do it. We often talk about being addicted to drugs, or alcohol. But we can be addicted to many other things too. Anything that becomes such a strong habit that we feel we cannot quit becomes an addiction.

It is hoped that when you have finished with these seven lessons, your life will never be the same again. We intend that these lessons will change you. They will change the way you act. They will change the way you think. You will never think the same way again. You will never act the same way again. You will be transformed into a new person that you will like, a person with a vision for the future, and with an ability to live a life filled with excellence. You will be filled with a true desire to accomplish things you have always dreamed of accomplishing but have never dared to try. And above all, my wish for you is that you will have the power to overcome any habit or addiction that could cause you to be sent back to prison again.

The most difficult part in this process of overcoming bad habits, or breaking the chains of addiction, is just getting started. We know we should change. We want to change. We want to be different. We want to be a better person when we get out. But where do we start? When are we going to start being a different person than we were in the past? Again, the most difficult part in that process is just plain getting started. It takes drawing a line in the sand, stepping over it and saying that starting today we are going to do something; we are GOING to start. That is the most important decision you can make in developing new good habits and overcoming the addictions in your life. But it is so necessary that you decide you are going to do this, and you must believe that you can do this. The first step of that journey, of any journey, is by far the most important step. It boils down to being a matter of the will; just deciding that you can and you will change is the key to success.

To show you how easy this is going to be, here is a little exercise for you to try. It will just give you an example of how easy it is to change. It will help you see how easy it is to learn something that will change the way you look at something for the rest of your life.

We have all seen the FedEx logo on packages, delivery trucks and in advertisements. Have you ever noticed the arrow in the FedEx logo? If you are driving along following a FedEx delivery truck, there is a very clear arrow in the logo. Here is a picture of the back of a delivery truck I was following. Look at the logo carefully.



Can you see the arrow in the FedEx logo on the back of the truck? Most people have never noticed it. If you cannot see it, turn to the last page in this lesson and you will see it outlined there.

Even if you have seen that arrow before, it would be almost impossible now for you to ever look at the FedEx logo again and not see that arrow standing out. It will just jump out at you. You will see it every time you look at it, even if you don't want to see it! It will be the most prominent part of the logo for you from now on. It was always there, you just did not notice it before.

I am going to use that logo to help you change your life. Your life will be different now than it ever was before in a very small way. Every time you see that logo, I will be sending you a message. You will look at it and remember that I told you that for us, that arrow means:

“I SHOULD JUST GO AHEAD AND DO IT!”

You see, it was a simple little exercise but you are different now. It is not my arrow. It is not my logo. It is theirs, but I am going to use it now to send you messages that will affect you for the rest of your life; because every time you see that logo, you will think, “I SHOULD JUST GO AHEAD AND DO IT!” It will be like a secret coded message from me to you to help you make your life better. It will be a reminder to you that you can live a life filled with excellence. It will remind you that to change and be different all you have to do is start. Just go ahead and do it.

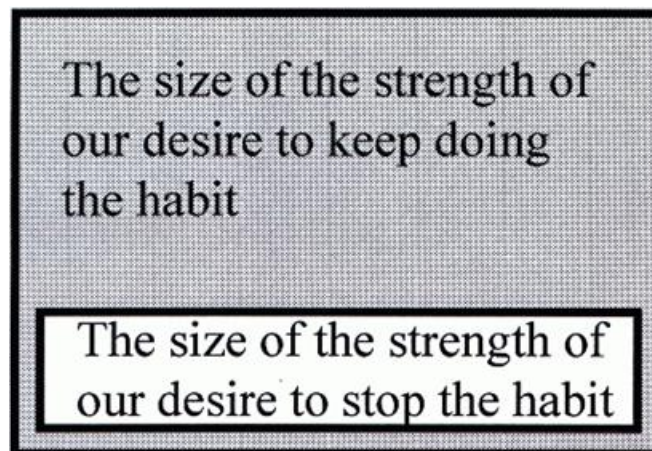
11 KEYS TO OVERCOMING BAD HABITS AND BREAKING THE CHAINS OF ADDICTION.

You may not realize it, but happiness in our lives is related to good habits in a big way. Self-control, discipline, consistency, character, each of these attributes contributes to our ability to be happy in our lives. How do we develop those attributes? By our daily routine which is made up of our habits. Many of our goals to achieve those characteristics in our life are directly related to overcoming a bad habit as well as developing a new habit. There are many effective methods to overcoming bad habits and breaking the chains of addiction. Here are 11 things that you can do to help you in overcoming bad habits and especially to help you break away from an addiction in your life:

KEY #1: You have to want to quit the habit or addiction more than you want to keep doing it.

Now that sounds simple, maybe even obvious; but it is one of the actual obstacles of overcoming any habit. We want to overcome a certain bad habit or addiction, but for whatever reason, we do not bring enough self-control to the job to do it? That lack of self-control is there because our desire to keep doing it is stronger than our desire to quit doing it. Why do we keep doing it if we don't want to? It is either because it is easier to just keep doing it than to try to stop. In many cases it is because it brings us pleasure. We actually enjoy it even though we know it is not good to do it. Why else would we do it?

To overcome a bad habit we have to understand that there are actually two wants here. We want to quit and we want to keep doing it. Both of those urges create a very strong pull on our emotions. The want that will win out is the one that is the strongest. Here is an illustration that depicts those feelings within us:



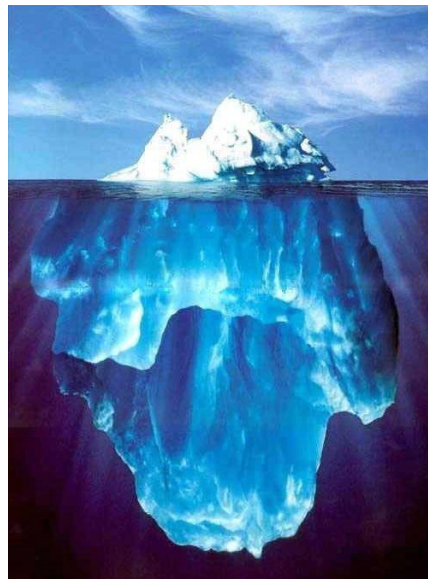
It is true that we have the desire to stop doing something, if we know, deep down inside, that is bad. But the reason we normally cannot break the habit is we have another desire that is greater than our desire to break the bad habit. Dueling desires!

A huge reason we normally tend to want to continue down a path we know is harmful to us is that it, in some way, “feels good”. We would not do it if we did not like it. Some habits like drinking are formed as a means of escaping from the pains of reality. It is the escape that “feels” good. Other habits, like overeating, may bring us a sense of satisfaction or momentary relief from stress. We may be involved in illegal activities just because of the excitement of getting away with it, even if we know it can land us in prison if we get caught. We may do illegal things just to show others they cannot tell us what to do. That is called pride or rebellion. Pride and rebellion can be powerful driving forces in our lives.

Many habits are combined with other habits. For example our temper is normally very closely related to swearing. We cannot control our temper, thus we swear, venting the feelings of the frustration. The habits we have do not come by some accident. Each one comes from past actions in our life. That is why we start these habits in the first place. To get rid of that habit, we have to find a way to change the actions.

The actual habit of behavior can cover over a deeper inward conflict within us. For example, if you want to stop swearing, that normally is not really the problem. The real inward problem is that you first have to stop losing your temper by understanding the situation and learning a different way of responding to this frustration.

Most of us have seen this picture of the iceberg:



Two thirds of the iceberg floats under water. Our habits are very much like that. Sometimes what we see on the surface (our outward actions) is actually caused by our past emotional experiences (our inward reactions). Here are some examples of how that would apply in our lives. We may have committed a crime that caused us to be put in prison because we were

angry with society or some of our family, such as our spouse or our parents. A decision to do the crime was not the problem. Pride and rebellion were the actual problem. Being angry with society or our family was the real problem. Another example might be a woman whose husband died and now she is overweight and can't figure out why. However, when she seeks counseling, she learns that subconsciously, she had a great fear of getting married again; so she became overweight without knowing why, but deep down inside she is subconsciously thinking if she is fat, she will not be attractive to other men. Oftentimes, the reasons we do things are hidden, even from ourselves.

Another example would be someone who constantly swears because they feel angry all the time. But they are not even aware of why they are angry all the time. They may finally find out that the anger comes from, for example, their having lost their job three times. So that anger shows up in other ways, on other things. We may end up being angry with our family, but taking it out on other people who didn't even do anything to us. We may even end up becoming so angry that we get involved in illegal activities, and end up in jail. Why do we do that to others and ourselves? Almost always, we do it because it is a habit. It is a habit or an addiction that we do not seem to be able to control.

I could cite many such examples here, and, later, I will talk more about things that aren't in synch in our lives; in other words, where we have one foot on the gas and the other foot on the brakes. When bad habits in our lives are caused by hidden, earlier, events, then, until we first discover what those events are, and resolve them, the chance of changing those habits are, unfortunately, slim to none.

As we make an honest, sincere effort to stop these "bad" habits caused from past emotional scars, we find ourselves caught in a war of emotions between the two desires. The stronger of the two desires within us will always win out. When we tell ourselves we are going to quit, but then fall back into the habit, all we have actually done is just let the desire to the bad win out over our desire to not do it.

KEY #2: "THE TOUCH - BURN RELATIONSHIP"

It has been said that when a child is born, the only natural fears they have are fear of falling and fear of loud noises. Have you ever watched a little child sitting in a high chair with a bowl of baby food? They put their hands into it and feel it. Why is that? It is because children are fascinated by how things feel, because in their short lives, they haven't felt how many things feel. It is all so new to them. They want to see what the baby food feels like. It is a new sensation to their fingers to feel the slick smooth coolness of the food between their fingers. Then what do they do? They rub it in their hair! Did they want the food in their hair? No! They did it because they did not realize that they had food on their hands and that if they put a hand on their head, the sticky food would get in their hair. They do not associate the misery of the sticky food in the hair with the curiosity of feeling the new sensations in their fingers. They are acquiring new experiences. They simply do not know the relationship between food-covered hands and a bad feeling of having a mess in their hair. But as they get older they begin to remember the results. They start to connect putting their messy hands in their hair with the bad feeling that comes later from doing that. They soon learn to connect an act with a result!

Now let us ask ourselves, "Why don't we do that? Why don't we put our tapioca pudding in our hair? It is because we have learned that if we put pudding in our hair it makes us feel yucky afterwards. It makes a mess and we do not like the feeling of a mess. The result of that bad feeling is that we learn not to do it! That is called experience. You do not touch a hot stove because when you were young, somewhere in your life's experience, you had a touch-burn ouch!

This is the "touch burn relationship". We all learn from our experiences. We could list thousands of them. Why don't you pet a growling dog like a little child would try to do? Experience! You can understand that if you pet a growling dog, it will bite you and it will hurt. You have never been bitten by a growling dog, but, still, you don't pet it. Why? You don't even have to have had a touch-burn experience to know not to do something. As we get older we are able to combine learning experiences, which reduces our need to have *actual* bad experiences. With more experience, we start to understand and figure things out in our minds without having to engage in actually doing something; and those mind-experiences are just as "real" as if we had done a particular thing. We start to connect the dots. This therefore makes it possible for us to avoid things we do not want to actually do, because we can predict the pain, discomfort, guilt or bad feelings that will come if we do them.

How does this relate to breaking a bad habit or overcoming an addiction? When we have a habit that makes us feel bad after doing something or acting in a certain way, or we have a reoccurring event in our life that happens over and over again, which brings about a bad result, we consider it to be a bad habit or an addiction to something we don't want to do. If we are always feeling bad after we do it, then we gain a touch-burn experience. We want to stop the habit because of the bad feeling that comes after we do it. We start to gain the ability to experience the results in our minds before the action. That is the key here. The ability to realize and be sure about it before we do it, that if we do it, the bad results or bad feelings will come after.

But as stated above, sometimes the pleasure that comes from doing it is greater than the pain or guilt that comes after! Gaining weight is a perfect example of this. Many times the pain of being overweight is not as great as the pleasure that comes from eating when we are depressed, and so the touch-burn relationship is not enough to make us stop. This applies to many habits. We smoke to relieve stress, and so we do it even though we know it can destroy our health later. Our desire to do is greater than our desire to stop. The threat of being sick with cancer does not stop that urge to relieve stress by the pleasure of the taste of smoking.

When we smoke, the pleasure of the effects of the nicotine on our body is greater than our fear of the long-range loss of our health. It does not hurt yet, so we do not connect the pain of loss of health later on with the pleasure that comes right now from the nicotine as we inhale the smoke. Thus, we keep on smoking. If we are overweight, our discomfort from not being able to do the things we want, the tiredness, the embarrassment from people's rude remarks, do not produce sufficient pain within us as we eat, to cause a greater desire to quit the over-eating. We could list almost any habit that is hard to break here. They all fall into this same category. The touch-burn relationship does not create sufficient pain to cause us to stop the habit. It only causes us to want to stop, but our greater desire to continue keeps making us do it. To stop a bad habit

or overcome an addiction, we have to figure out a way to be rocked by the knowledge of the bad that comes from it before we do it.

KEY #3 When we are entrapped by a bad habit or an addiction, it does not come into our life all at once by a blowout, but always by a series of slow leaks over time.

I said that addiction is the action or desire to do something overwhelmingly greater than the desire not to do it. It is a habit that creates such a strong desire that we put into action a motion stronger or more powerful than the pain or effort required to quit. That almost seems crazy to even think about when we look at an alcoholic lying in the street, so drunk that he cannot even get up. How could that pain not be worse than the desire to feel a need to have the drink? Now here is an interesting experiment for you. Think about past experiences in your own life where what you were doing was so pleasurable that the resulting pain, discomfort or guilt was not great enough to overpower the pain that you knew you would feel by doing it. (Cordell, I'm not sure what you are saying in the next sentence beginning with "These".) Habits or addictions can paralyze us. They can cause pains so great in our life that we lose the ability for movement forward. We can become so paralyzed; we lose the ability to have a happy life. In most cases, it is obvious that there was some habit or addiction in your life that caused you to do something so bad you ended up in prison. How could you have done that? Why didn't you realize the results of your actions before you did them? Was it just because you did not think you would get caught? Probably not. It was more just the growing of bad habits that got a little worse over time. The change to feeling bad was not enough worse this time than it was the last time you did it so doing it again was not able to make you realize how close you were to ending up in jail. A good example of this is how you don't feel the gradual reduction in performance of your car as it heads toward being in need of a tune-up, but, then, one day, it stops running. Each day up to that point, it felt like the day before, the difference was not noticeable. When you did get caught, it almost surely was not the first time. It was a series of little slow "leaks" in your life that led to your being arrested. Each time you did something illegal, it was just a little worse than the time before. The developing of a bad habit that resulted in your being arrested and sent to prison came over time, not just in one act. Why didn't you stop those activities in the first place? Why didn't you realize you would eventually be sent to prison? It was because there was never a day when you realized it was getting so bad that it would have the result of you being sent to prison. Isn't that true?

It is like boiling a frog. If you just dump a frog in hot water he will jump right back out. But if you put him in cold water and turn on the stove, the water will get warmer and warmer and there will never be a time when the water is finally so hot the frog jumps out. He will stay in the water and get cooked.

Some of these bonds of addiction can become so powerful they cannot be broken without professional help. For example, things like drugs or pornography are so addictive their lure can enslave us to the point that we continue the habit even when we see it is about to destroy our

marriage, cause us to lose our job, to lose friendships or even be sent to prison. Sometimes they can be so strong that even when we get out of prison we go right back to doing those same things that caused us to be sent to prison in the first place. Why would we do that? You have to wonder why the touch- burn relationship sometimes doesn't work with us as adults as fast as it did when we were children.

The answer to that question lies in feelings. We were all born with a natural intuition of right and wrong. We normally call that a conscience. We base much of what we do or consider right or wrong on feelings related to that conscience. The intuition within us is a feeling. When we do something that according to our character we consider to not be right, we experience a feeling of withdrawal of the feeling of peace within us. A feeling of emptiness replaces it. That is the first indications of the loss of or changing of our character, standards and morals. That withdrawal of peace from within us should stand as a warning to us that what we have just done is not in keeping with our overall life's purposes. If we persist in that behavior, then that feeling of peace or our conscience begins to become dull. If the uncomfortable feeling starts to happen a lot, we get used to it. It starts to be our normal feelings and we forget what it felt like the dull feeling came all the time. That is why we call it a bad habit. That is why we have the desire to change or quit doing it yet we lack the power to change.

When our feelings or our conscience warns us not to do something, and we do not listen and do it anyway, it brings about a change in us. We gain weight, start losing our temper uncontrollably, we become dishonest in little things, etc. By continuing to ignore our conscience, we start to dull our senses. Our inability to listen to or feel that voice inside us telling us not to do something, eventually robs us of the ability to stay on a right path. But if we CAN listen or not allow our consciences to go numb, we can stop from continuing down a bad path before it becomes more difficult to stop or come back. If we instead continue on that not-good path, allowing ourselves to stay in that rut, it will take us to where we become past feeling. We get to where we are so used to the pain that we do not notice it as being different from normal. We adjust to our ruts! We accept it as our way of life.

Continuing to live in the rut brings weakness of character. We find that we lose our hope of ever being a better person. We feel worthless. The things we wanted to be when we were a child give way to feeling we can't be anything different. It changes what we dream about becoming in our minds. That leads us into a vicious circle of hopelessness!

Vice is a monster of so frightful men,
As to be hated needs but to be seen;
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.

Alexander Pope
Essay on Man. Epistle ii. Line 217.

Bad habits and addictions can lay us to waste, often giving us feelings of helplessness and loss of hope. The best defense against bad habits is to learn to retreat at the first throwing of the switch. To listen to our conscience and stop when we first feel the spiraling down to that rut.

That is the time to stop. However if you already have an addictive habit, to take action to break out of that rut may require the help of others. That is why you are taking these classes so we can help **you** stop. We want to help you not make the same mistakes in your life again.

The Bible - Proverbs 13:12
Hope deferred maketh the heart sick;
but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life.

KEY #4: The human mind is extremely subject to conditioning and triggers.

Another key factor in creating new habits or breaking old habits and addictions is conditioning. To understand the power of conditioning, let us look at the experiments of the Russian scientist, Ivan Petrovich Pavlov. He was a Nobel Prize Laureate in Physiology and Medicine. He received his prize for his experiments with dogs. In his work he showed that if he rang a bell every time he fed the dogs that after a while the dogs would get hungry when they heard the bell even if they had just eaten and shouldn't have been hungry. Pavlov published his findings in 1903, calling them the "conditioned reflex". Conditional reflex is different from an innate reflex. Innate reflexes are automatic reflexes like the touch-burn reaction. You automatically yank your hand back from a hot fire. A "conditional reflex" is learned by doing the action over and over, rather than relying on innate reflexes like the example above of yanking your hand away from a hot fire.

Pavlov's learning process is now just called "conditioning". The fancy way to describe it is the process in which the nervous system comes to associate an action with something we do over a period of time until the doing of the thing is not needed to stimulate our nervous system to want to do it. In Pavlov's dog experiment and research, the ringing of the bell was what we can call a trigger. It made the dogs hungry instead of becoming hungry because of the need for food. Pavlov also demonstrated that this conditioned reflex will stop if the trigger is removed over a period of time. That is a key point of his study related to what we are trying to learn here. If you start feeding the dogs long enough without ringing a bell first, eventually the dogs stop associating the ringing of a bell with hunger.

That is what we have to learn to do to overcome a bad habit. Stop allowing the trigger (a bell in the case of the dogs) to set off our emotions, creating the desire to continue with that habit. What a powerful concept. Conditioning is a learned behavior. We are all very prone to develop a habit if the behavior repeats. And if it is repeated often enough, the habit can become an addiction that we cannot stop doing.

Conditioning is normally associated with a time and a place. Many, if not most, students will tell you that they study at the same time and in the same place every day, and they never study in their bedroom. Why? Because they have conditioned themselves to sleep when they go into the bedroom. So if they study there too, especially on the bed, they start to send mixed signals to their brain and find they cannot sleep or study very well in the bed. When they are in the bedroom they are more conditioned to sleep than to study. So they fall asleep trying to study.

Many people smoke at the same time and same place every day. To stop smoking you need to avoid going to that place until the habit is broken if possible. When we enter that place, we feel the urge to smoke (or whatever the habit is) even if we don't really want to. The place becomes our trigger.

People who have been shoplifters feel the urge to take something every time they go in a store, even if they don't need or want it. It is just an urge that comes when they go in a store. It is a conditioned reflex. People who drink normally drink in a bar. If you want to stop drinking it will help to stop going to the place or associating with the people you drink with. That is breaking the conditioning that causes you to want to do something even when you want to stop.

The mental triggering in your brain actually becomes much stronger than the physical triggering. We normally do what we think about. We experience in our mind a feeling or urge to do something before our body gets involved. You can stop the ringing of the bell conditioning, or triggering, by finding something else that you can do every time you feel that urge. You have to find something that changes the conditioning; that breaks or interrupts the vicious, destructive cycle. You may have to do drastic things to accomplish this.

How do we remove the triggers and stimulus creating the wrong action? You must discover "the switching point" in your mind where you first start to think about it. Start watching for that negative behavior and see when it very first starts and what caused you to start thinking about it or wanting to do it again. Then you have to learn how to remove that trigger. These are the first extremely important steps in overcoming a bad habit or addiction. Watch for what sets you off and causes that pulling feeling or desire to do it. Then replace that trigger with a positive change in your thoughts.

Replacement is the key tool for overcoming bad habits: doing something else that changes your conditioning every time you feel the urge! It may be something as simple as singing a positive song in our mind or memorizing a poem; or just not going to the place where you do that. It could be something like chewing gum to stop smoking. You could be creative too, and find interesting ways to outsmart your conditioned reflex! It could be a challenge. But it may take something stronger than that, like going and talking to a friend who is helping you or even going to a group session like AA. Whatever technique it is that you use, it needs to be something that will replace, or short circuit, the very thought of doing the bad habit, or addictive behavior, the second the idea of it pops into in your mind. That is the key to breaking the bad habit or addiction. We have to learn how to derail that "train" of thought before it gets clear of the "station". We have to find something that replaces that urge and makes the urge go away.

Negative conditioning feedback

There is another kind of replacing the action or thought of doing something that can help you. It is a kind of feedback that works in helping you change the feelings in your mind that cause you to do or want to do things you do not want to do or will regret doing later. It works almost the opposite way as finding something positive to replace the action. It is more of the innate reflex (automatic pulling your hand away from a hot fire). It is actually the same type of trigger or stimulus as Pavlov's "conditioning" but it is negative feedback instead of positive

feedback, like food when the bell rings. It is also a form of conditioning. It was first taught by Mat Oxley at the University in Greensboro, North Carolina. The idea is that you put a rubber band on your wrist and then when you think a bad thought, or you are tempted to do whatever it is that you want to stop doing, you give that little rubber band a flip, painfully stinging your wrist. The pain is the so-called negative feedback. It is not overwhelming, but your mind can be conditioned to learn to avoid the thought of doing the bad habit because you will want to avoid the pain on the wrist from flipping the rubber band every time the bad thought enters your mind. That may sound pretty simple; but it has been proven to work.

Using cinnamon mouthwash to stop smoking is the same principle. Every time you have the urge to smoke, take a swig of nasty cinnamon mouthwash. Eventually your body associates the burning in your mouth with the urge for nicotine and it will help you to make the urge to smoke go away.

Negative feedback can be a very effective mind-conditioning tool. Try it.

How the Reticular Activator of Your Brain Works

Reticular activation is also a way to condition your mind. The reticular activator is a network of cells located at the base of the brain. It is a mental trigger in the subconscious mind that focuses your attention and causes you to notice and remember things without you trying on purpose to notice and remember them.

An example of how this works is how we talk to our children. Our child is learning to ride a bike and we say look out for that pot hole in the road. Why then does saying that almost always guarantee they will run right into it? It is because in warning them, without wanting to, we suggested to their subconscious minds that they will run into the hole. Or when they are sitting at the breakfast table and we say, "look out; don't set your glass so close to the edge of the table or you will spill your milk." Then almost without exception they spill their milk. WHY? That is the reticular activation system at work. You suggested a pothole or spilling the milk, and it does not matter that you said look out or don't do it. Their minds just heard Pot Hole or Spill milk. It ignored the "don't do it" part. Therefore, they unconsciously headed for the pothole, or knocked over their milk. It is almost as if you programmed them to do the very thing you did not want them to do. If you would say, "Let's ride our bike over on this side of the road" or "Let's set your milk up here in front of your plate", then there would be no negative programming. This may seem silly to you, but there has been a great deal of research on this type of negative programming of the mind to verify that it is true. When we are told to not do things that are illegal it can be the very thing that makes us do it. Have you ever felt that? That would seem to be a crazy reaction in our minds, but it is very real and works in all of us.

There is another aspect of the reticular activation system that is used in advertising on TV to influence you. It is, in a way, a type of getting you to form a buying habit. For example if they wanted you to buy a yellow Volkswagen, they would advertise it over and over on TV. Then every time you see a yellow Volkswagen on the road, you think of the ad and repeat it in your mind. That becomes free advertising for them every time you see a yellow Volkswagen. We have all experienced this when we buy a different car. As soon as you drive it off the lot you

start seeing other cars the same model and color everywhere you go. They were all there before. You just did not notice them. Seeing the arrow in the FEDEX logo that we talked about at the first segment of this lesson is the same principle.

How does this relate to forming or breaking a habit? Well, this is one big way our minds can be influenced to do things we may not even really want to do. Negative pressure from family or friends, as well as advertising on TV, can condition us to form habits that we would normally not have formed if we had been in an environment where we were not constantly bombarded by these. They get us to do it. Every time we are around those family members, friends, or are in that environment where we are enticed to act in that way, it becomes almost impossible to resist that behavior. It is the natural rebellion or pride instinct in us. The desire to show them they can't tell you want to do even if you know it is right.

Using Positive Affirmations:

As a part of conditioning, we can recondition the dominant thoughts of our minds. This is true for all people. If you have never tried it, it may seem a little silly to try the following at first, but there is no question that it works. Here is what you do to recondition your dominant thoughts from negative to positive: make up some positive affirmations that are the opposite of what you are trying to overcome as a bad habit.

Here are some examples of how you would use positive affirmations.

1. If you are tired all the time then every morning when you get up or while you are in the shower close your eyes and see yourself feeling good and then say, "I feel good, I feel great". Say it hundreds of times over and over.
2. If you want to quit smoking, every time you feel the urge to smoke, close your eyes and see yourself as a non-smoker and start saying, "I only breathe clean air. I am in total control of my life". Or, "I have total control of my life. I am in total control of my body". (It is very important to use positive words and not say anything negative like "I do not smoke"; because your mind will hear the word smoke and ignore the word DON'T. That is why it is necessary to say something positive like "I breath clean air" instead of saying "I don't smoke". It is the reticular activation system in our mind discussed above. You need to say things that show you're mind you have total self control. See yourself filled with will-power, even if you are not yet. You will become what you believe you can become.
3. If you are overweight and trying to get thin, then when you feel the urge to eat, close your eyes, see yourself thin, and say something like this: "Nothing tastes so good as thin feels. Nothing tastes so good as thin feels". It also helps to stand in front of a mirror and then see yourself thin, closing your eyes and saying your positive affirmation over and over. Believe it. Feel it. See yourself thin in your mind. Anything the mind can believe it can achieve.
4. If you are normally perceived as unfriendly by others, then whenever you meet someone and they ask how you are, say, "I feel wonderful" or "I am just great". It is just as easy to

say the word wonderful is it is to say, "Oh, I'm OK". Whatever you say will actually trigger those feelings in you. If you say you feel lousy, then you will start to feel lousy.

To use positive affirmations effectively, you will have to find the positive wording that works for you. The most important things in doing this is being persistent, in other words, doing it every day, over and over, many times. You will find that what you say is what you feel and what you feel is what you do. Our words have a powerful effect on our well being. There has been a great deal of research done by psychologists on the subject of positive affirmations. The only people it does not work for are the ones who don't try it.

KEY #5 To change, you have to take it one step at a time -within a time frame.

Very few people ever fall into an addictive habit by a blowout. Bad habits are developed by a series of slow leaks, not just a sudden blow out. No one becomes a smoker overnight. Normally most people did not end up in prison from just one act. It is something that happened over time. A long series of events that lead up to doing what we did or acting the way we act. One step builds on another. The hard part about quitting a bad habit is that there never is a day when you notice you finally have a bad habit. When do you say that is enough, now I have a bad habit, I am hooked, I have to quit now. It comes so slowly over time that you just gradually accept it as a part of your way of life.

Have you ever hear of the example of comparing a habit to wrapping thread around your thumbs? If you wrap one single thread around your thumbs, you of course can break that it very easily. Even if you wrap 10 threads around your thumbs, it is a little more difficult to break but you are still able to break free of the threads around your thumbs. However, if you wrap 100 strands of strings around your thumbs, then you are bound up tight and cannot break the thread. Habits are like the threads. Repeated over and over the habit gains strength in our life. The more we do something, the harder it is to stop doing it; the more we are tied up by it.

So, when an action is repeated over and over again, it becomes conditioning. Just as habits do not come about with one single, isolated act, overcoming them normally takes more than one quick change of behavior. Most people cannot stop smoking "Cold Turkey". We cannot lose 55 pounds in one month. We normally cannot just stop swearing in one day. We have to build some kind of a plan of action into our life that will come one step at a time. We have to begin again to have that touch-burn reaction that connects the enjoyment of the pleasure that comes from persisting in the habit to the terrible, life-trashing consequences of that persistence. We must build a desire to change that is so strong that it will overcome the past desire to persist in the habit. We must take the new action, the steps to change, and repeat them over long periods of time. But first, we have to first believe with all our hearts that we can change and say to ourselves, "I can do it for one hour" that will be a starting place. Then be strong for half a day. Then be strong for one day, then two days, then a week. Finally, you will find yourself counting months. Then with that success, go for a year and then years. Finally, a permanent solution will be reached because we wrapped the threads of a new good habit around our fingers so many times that a new bond is stronger than the bond of the old habit. A new, good, habit will then have been created.

KEY #6 Report back to someone.

But, many times, despite our strong and persistent efforts, a habit may be too addictive to overcome without help from others. If they are serious enough (like drugs or pornography), you may need help. Normally you can get the support and help you need from a trusted friend or family member. Sometimes we need to join a group of friends. That is the purpose of groups like AA. Most bad habits we can break on our own. But if you are truly fighting the good fight but keep falling back into the habit, even with a little habit, it can be overcome more easily if we have a family member, fellow offender, friend or religious leader to help us. That is why they have support groups like Weight Watchers and Alcoholics Anonymous. It gives you someone to report back to. Often times where there is no accountability there is no responsibility.

Having someone to report back to makes you accountable. Just simply knowing you have to report back to someone that expects you to succeed is a powerful weapon in the fight to break bad habits. People almost always rise to the expectations of others around them. Please recall, however, that this force can also be a bad thing if the expectations others have of you are bad. This is related to the need to change your environment. Groups like AA become the better environment. Having someone who is expecting you to succeed will give you strength and a reason to do it. The more reasons you have for being successful the more chances you will have of succeeding. You can create your own "Habit Breaking Anonymous" club.

To make this successful the person you report back to must be someone that believes in you and will encourage you. And it normally is best to do it in confidence and not as a public display to all your friends. If everyone knows you are trying to change, and they do not think you can change or do not want you to stop because they do it too, the peer pressure may become "the straw that broke the camel's back" and force you back into your old ways.

Being accountable to someone will build strength of character. Even if you have a setback, reporting back to someone that you have failed will force you to admit to yourself out loud (spoken words) that you fell short; and then you can forgive yourself and be freed up to continue toward your goal. Everyone falters; no one is perfect. Your helper, through this process, will give you the courage to try again. You can, as they say in the military, "soldier on".

KEY #7 Oil and water do not mix.

You may have seen an experiment in school where the teacher mixed oil and water together in a bottle and shook it up. It looks all mixed up at first but very quickly the oil and water separate out again. Oil and water do not mix. This is similar to that the rules of life. There are not two sets of rules in life. You can't do wrong and feel right. Oil and water do not ever mix and neither do right and wrong actions in our life. One or the other will finally dominate. For dieters, the saying, "You can't have your cake and eat it too", has unique meaning! If you keep over eating cake you will gain weight. If you have the self control to avoid over eating cake, you will have a much better chance to stay thin. We all live by the same set of rules in life. If you do

something bad or socially unacceptable, you will pay the consequences eventually. It does not make sense for us to think we can feel good when we are doing things we know are bad.

If every habit you wanted to quit was linked with a pain resulting from persisting in the habit, it would be easier to overcome it. As discussed before, the trouble is that engaging in most bad habits brings an instant feeling of pleasure. That is what makes it so hard to stop: that instant gratification. We want to do it. We enjoy doing it. And the certain knowledge that afterwards will come the terrible pain of remorse, and sometimes shame or guilt, oftentimes is not enough to make us stop. That time when the anticipation of the pain of failure is worse than the desire for the instant gratification seems to never come.

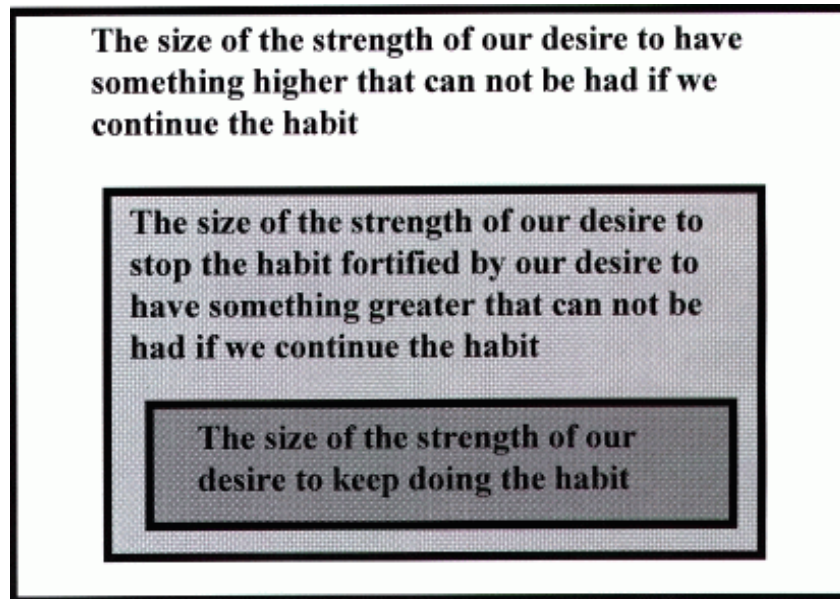
We need to somewhere, sometime, ask ourselves “when is that price too bad or too much?” “When is it so bad that we will give up the instant pleasures and quit now?” We have to come to the realization that oil and water do not mix. We cannot have our cake and eat it too. We have to choose between one life style or the other. When you are released, if you go right back to your old friends and your old habits, it is likely you will come right back here to your old room.

We have to make a decision. The way to make that decision is to just draw a line in the sand in your mind, and say that you will start today. You have to choose between the pleasure that you get now from doing the habitual deed and the pain that comes with the habit later. You have to choose to want to have the freedom from that pain that comes later, starting right now. You have to come to the realization that you cannot at the same time have both the pleasure and that freedom in your life that comes about by kicking the bad habits and addictions. Truly you have to come to the realization that you can’t mix the bad oils and good waters of your life.

KEY # 8 Have passion greater than the negative things you are doing now. Force new feelings into positive action.

Every weakness has its cause. Every person chained to a habit or addiction has a reason why they do it. Outsiders looking on may say the reason you use for allowing the habit in your life is just an excuse. However for those of us living with a habit, it is a very real reason; a reason how or why we were entrapped. The reason we just cannot quit.

If the habit has progressed so far that you no longer feel the pain that follows, then to break the habit, you have to have some greater goal or desire of spirit, where the thought of achieving it overcomes the hollow little pleasures our bad habits and addictions have been providing. Learning to have one central goal that everything else leads up to is our next step to achieving new habits. Having that one central goal can be the source of the power to overcome anything. That is to say that if you know you cannot achieve your one central goal in life until you change the way you live, it will give you great power in overcoming any habit in your life you want to change.



That goal has to be something very powerful and require personal sacrifices. It may be something like choosing between not being able to see your family or friends. When you are tempted to just do whatever you want to do in the urgency of a moment and then suffering the consequences you may want to try to think about those consequences first. Think about which you want more. Making that kind of choice will help you have the will power to control your emotions and stop the addiction or bad habit.

Now can you see that one of the most powerful keys to overcoming bad habits in our lives **IS TO LEARN HOW TO WANT SOMETHING ELSE MORE**. Having one central goal that is of greater value to you than the “value” of what you are doing now will change the way you look at bad habits that bring only that short-lived, fleeting pleasure. It will help you obtain a greater strength that will overshadow all desire to continue down the path that has led you to this place. But you have to really and truly want to obtain a new way of life. This will come by having one defined purpose in life that you want more than anything else: one overshadowing goal that will make any sacrifice you may have to make to attain the goal worthwhile. It has to be something where the thought of not having it seems more devastating to you than the loss of the fleeting pleasures you would be giving up. You have to realize that if you keep on doing what you have been doing, you will keep on getting what you have been getting.

An example might be using the desire to run in a marathon to help you become physically fit. You could also use that desire to overshadow the desire to smoke. You cannot run in a marathon if you smoke. Some other examples might be learning to always be 15 minutes early for appointments to help you stop putting things off to the last minute, so you will no longer be embarrassed and won't get a reputation as someone who just can't get her act together on time. You may have the goal of being involved in a charitable organization. It has been said that a sure-fire way to stop dwelling on your own problems is to help others with theirs. You have to find what works for you. If you don't want to become an offender again, you have to find

something you want so much more that it will keep you from ever doing the things again that caused you to become an offender in the first place.

KEY # 9 Find a way to start caring more about yourself

One reason we never break free of a hurtful rut is that we stop caring. We just flat give up. We start to feel that change for the better is hopeless. We feel total frustration about it. But you must look across the bridge to the other side of your life and **BELIEVE** you can be different, before you can pull it off. Our new goal and reward must be greater than the pleasure or relief from the bad habit.

In the lesson on self worth, we will revisit these ideas in greater depth. But for now it is important to believe that if we are going to have character, integrity and meaning in our lives, it is of utmost importance that we are able to feel good about ourselves; that we like ourselves. You may have heard the concept of “dressing for success”. If we dress in a way that signals to others we don’t have much respect for ourselves, then others will follow our lead and not treat us with respect. It becomes a vicious cycle because when others treat us like a low-life, we feel like a low-life. Many people say they don’t care what others think; but, most of the time, that is only to pretend they are not bothered by something that really does bother them. If you want to change your life and overcome the bad habits that got you where you are now, then please believe that how you feel about yourself is one of the key elements in that change. You have to be able to visualize yourself as a good person. You have to see yourself as a stronger person. You have to be able to see yourself as being different. You have to want to become a better person. You have to believe that you can be better, stronger, more in control..... and then just do it. You can do this. You can.

KEY #10 Meditation and Fasting

Another tool that we can use to help us is meditation. Just being quiet, thinking and feeling good thoughts for a little while every day. It is a well known fact that it will make us stronger and we will have more self control in our lives if we will take just a few minutes to meditate every day. However, meditation is not merely taking a nap, resting or taking a break from your daily routine. Rather, it is purposeful relaxation and DEEP thought. It is sitting and visualizing your new self. Thinking about what you want to be and want to do and then believing in your mind you can do it. Just sitting for a few minutes every day and visualizing the new you. To meditate you need to be able to go somewhere where you won’t be interrupted. Normally, meditation is done for at least 30 minutes a day. It is a time when you can be alone. It is a time when you can just sit and reflect and think. It is a time when you can know that you will not have to talk to anyone for at least 30 minutes. Meditation will bring a spirit of peace into your life.

Many people are not willing to try daily meditation. They say they do not have time. To those people I refer them to Stephen Covey's concept of "Sharpening the Saw". If we go on cutting our "wood" in life with a dull saw, we will feel the stress of life bearing down on us. Daily meditation will help us focus. Help us sharpen our "saw" of mental self control. It will help us build resolve. It will help us feel like we have worth, value. The only way you will ever know the value of this is to try it. It has a power to bring peace and calm to your soul that can be had no other way.

In conjunction with meditation is the practice of fasting. Normally fasting consists of missing two meals in one day. If you eat an evening meal and then miss breakfast and lunch, that would be 24 hours of fasting without food or water. Of course many people cannot go that long for medical reasons. You do not have to do 24 hours. You do not have to go without water, if that would constitute a health risk for you. Diabetics or pregnant women cannot go without food at all, so the fasting has to be done mentally, or with things other than food. You will have to find your own method of fasting that fits your health needs. For most people, fasting is like exercise. It is very hard to start doing, but then once you start doing it, you find it exhilarating and look forward to it.

The very purpose of fasting is sacrificing something that we would really like to have in order to get something that we want even more. Sacrificing or giving up something strengthens our will-power muscle, which can then be put to good use to achieve other positive, life-improving goals. It is a key to building character. It will help us to develop the feeling of self worth within us and to bring an inner strength that develops self control. That is what we are trying to do in overcoming bad habits. We are trying to gain self control. Fasting can be one of the greatest tools a person can have to do that. Self control is the very point of the central issue of habits. We have habits we don't want to have because we don't have the self control to stop them, for whatever reason.

When my family and I lived in Georgia years ago, we learned a valuable lesson about fasting. We met a man who had hunting dogs. One night as we were visiting with him and his wife in their home, we heard all of his dogs barking like mad. We asked him why they were barking so. He said they were hungry. I asked him why he didn't just go feed them. He said he never fed them the day before they went hunting. Then he said one of the most profound things I have ever heard in my life. He said, "A HUNGRY DOG NEVER LOSES THE TRAIL". That changed my perception of fasting. I could see that would be true in my life too. Fasting would help me focus on important things in my life. It would help me overcome my weaknesses in life by helping me develop the habit of doing something that was hard to do.

I learned a similar lesson while I was a student at BYU. I had a teacher there who gave us some very good advice. She told us that if we would always fast for 24 hours before we took a test and then come to the test fasting we would do better on the test. I tried it and found it to be true. The feeling of being focused while fasting helped me to concentrate on the materials that I had learned. I always seemed to do better on tests when I fasted first. I have also found that when I am faced with problems in my life, if I will fast for 24 hours, it will help me focus my strength on being who I know I should be. It has greatly helped me many times when I was discouraged or needed strength in overcoming bad habits.

KEY #11 Being true to yourself is the final objective.

I have tried to make the words of Polonius in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* the motto of my life,

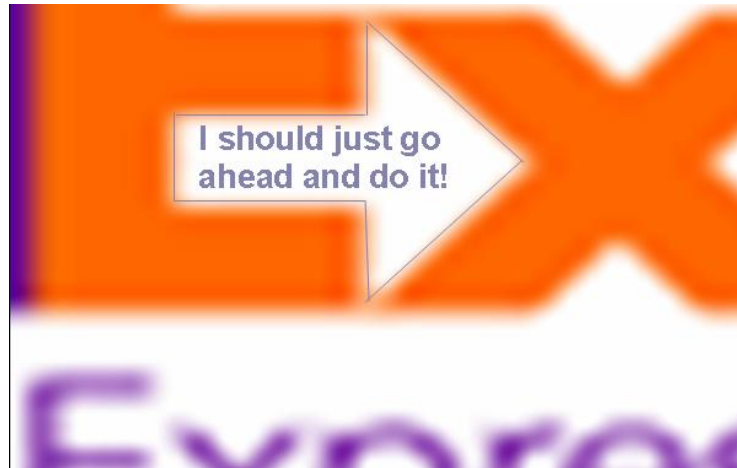
This above all, to thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man
Polonius in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*
William Shakespeare - Hamlet Act 1 scene 3

It helps to have a friend to report back to, but in the end, we have to report back to ourselves. Raise the bar with new sights to a better you! Raise your standards of performance to achievement in life. That will come by doing things like: learning new tasks, get an good education so that you can get a job when you are released, getting a higher salary at work by continuing to learn, showing loyalty at work so they want to keep you, being different so you have peace and a calmer home life. Whatever surrounds you in frustration, is the obstacle that needs to be overcome first. We have to decide who we want to be, what we want to achieve and how we are going to do that. Then “**Just go ahead and do it**” And you can if you will!

Discussion Items:

1. How can the material in this lesson help you?
2. Do you feel like there are habits or addictions in your life?
3. Do you want to change?
4. What are you going to do about that?

Here is the FedEx logo arrow from the first exercise, if you could not see it. If you are still having a hard time seeing it, let your eyes un-focus and then just look at the center of the picture looking past the writing and you will see the white arrow. The more unfocused your eyes are the more you will see it.



Every time you see the arrow in the FEDEX logos, you will see the subliminal message from me:

I should just go ahead and do it!

Let this be our motto for life.

Follow-up Handout

OVER COMING ADDICTIONS AND BAD HABITS

By Cordell Vail

We said that the key to overcoming an addiction was to find something that you want so much more, you will not do it again so you can have that something else. We said it has to be something that you want, that if you keep doing the other, you cannot have what you want more. We said if you find that something you want more, then you could stop the bad habit or addiction.

Why is that sometimes not enough to keep you from doing it again then? WHY? You have to find the answer to that question to overcome an addiction! Here are some reasons I have come up with:

1. You honestly do not feel that it is wrong and even feel that in your case, it should be allowed. So deep down inside you actually do not want to stop doing it.
2. You truly deep down inside emotionally have never really found something that you truly do want more.
3. You have tried and tried and keep failing so you feel like it is impossible to overcome the addiction and just give in to it and accept it as a part of your life.
4. There is so much joy and pleasure that comes from doing it that you cannot find something you want more.
5. You have not stopped being sorry you were caught or cannot do it any more rather than being sorry you did it so you keep doing it.
6. What you have chosen to want more is not enough. You still really want the other just as much if not more. Therefore, when the temptation comes you just cave in and do what you really want to do because you want that just as much.
7. You honestly do not feel like doing it will cause you to not be able to have what you have chosen to want more. You feel deep down inside that you honestly can have both. You can keep doing it and still have what you have picked as wanting more rather than honestly believing that you cannot have the other if you keep doing it.
8. You have gained the desire to stop doing it but you have not learned how to stop wanting to do it. You cannot fully overcome an addiction if you cannot stop wanting to do it.
9. You keep fanaticizing about doing it and reliving the pleasures of doing it in your mind, which builds the conditioning to keep doing it even when you want to stop so you can have something you want more. This conditioning will eventually overpower the wanting something else more and turns the tide back to wanting to keep doing the bad habit or addiction more.
10. You have picked something you want more but when you get discouraged or depressed you really do not believe you can actually achieve that or have that so you just give in and do it again anyway.
11. There is so much pleasure and enjoyment that come for doing it that you really honestly do not want to find something you want more and have only picked something you want more out of duty or need to follow the rules not real intent. That is especially true if the reason for not doing it is just because of a rule or law you feel you must obey rather than not doing it to gain something you truly do want more. Rather than a reward worth working for not doing it, it becomes avoidance of punishment.
12. You get discouraged and just give up and do not care what the consequences are any more. Therefore, you just do it anyway.
13. Sometimes you get so depressed or discouraged that you want bad things to happen or want to do bad things because it is so hard to not do them and you just do not want to fight it any more. So you just give in and do it again rather than going through the fight to not do it.

Can you list some more reasons on the back of this page?

THE REASONS I THOUGHT OF THAT CAUSE ME TO “DO IT ANYWAY”

14.

15.

16.

17.

18.

19.

20.

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