

The Dynamics of Relapse Patterns, Recovery, Addiction and the Enneagram: Some Thoughts to Ponder—by Michael Naylor, M.Ed, CCS, LADC, CCPC, Director of the Maine Enneagram Center for Transformation & Change.

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The following identify *some* of the patterns, pitfalls and misunderstandings that contribute to an individual relapsing back into their substance abuse patterns, and back into the reactive and protective patterns of their Enneagram type. This is a work in progress and not a final conclusion. Take what you need, leave the rest, and believe nothing that does not resonate with your own common sense and experience. Open curious mind, open heart, relaxed body.

How to Help Those in Addiction Recovery

1. What assists individuals who enter recovery more than anything else, more than the head center knowledge one possesses on Type or on Recovery Theory, is the ability to feel and extend unconditional kindness and caring to the individual struggling. This unconditional kindness is the one thing that can penetrate the defenses, confusions and sufferings of the addicted individual. More than anything, creating a welcome mat of non-judgment is the key.
2. In addition, your clear capacity to embody and transmit genuine humility is a second potent ingredient. What does humility look like? Well, it's the awareness that you too struggle everyday to be present. That because of the support and love surrounding you, you can edge your way through the next obscurity to your presence, that you are clearly aware that you are dependent on the support of others and grateful for what you have received. You *know* deeply that this is not a one-person show. I say this because people struggling with addiction spot quickly and deeply those who are not sincere, who are not treating them as equals, and who don't have earned wisdom and humility. This earned wisdom can translate into this: I truly don't know what the solution is for you, but I am willing to walk with you if you would like me too.
3. It is helpful and important to realize that when people are struggling with addiction, that in addition they are struggling with a broken heart and making efforts to protect their deep vulnerability, often in the style of the defensive patterns of their type. The Eight, in the face of their suffering, becomes the dragon to self-protect. It's an automatic survival response to cover over the devastation of shame, hurt, and sorrow that they are experiencing on a deeper level.

4. A huge growth skill that people in recovery must learn, regardless of whether it be early recovery, middle or late recovery, is how to bear with and tolerate the suffering they must slowly digest to access their heart and true nature. This begins with you in that your job, if you take on this assignment, is to be able to sit with and endure *their suffering* with grounded presence. This allows them to see that it is possible, and as you endure their suffering you are teaching them also how to do this. Your unconditional acceptance of their state of being teaches them, models for them, how to practice this, how to be with whatever manifestation of personality arises, how to watch it, see it, and experience it little by little. This alone will wake up their will to heal.

5. Behind all the suffering and chaos that an individual struggling with their particular addiction is mired in wherein they look like they are unable to comprehend anything with accuracy, one thing they do sense and feel in the depths of their being is the *authenticity* of those who seek to help them. This means that truthful speech that is not judgmental and condemning, touches them. And, to the extent that you are aware that you are as asleep as the next person (i.e. as Richard Rohr, a Type One, said to Oprah, “On a good day I am 30% present. Hey, that’s progress. I used to be present only 5% of the day.”) then you will extend help from a place of right-sized-ness. This is true: we have all fallen in our own way, many times. People struggling with addiction, regardless of their Type, *feel this*. If you’ve made peace with the times you have fallen, all the times your fast-as-lightning, deluded personality took you into the far reaches of the Matrix, this *peace* you have arrived at will penetrate the addicted person deeply. It will be in your presence. Cultivate this and you will become a doorway for others. It is a deep invitation to stick with the difficulty, that there is great hope, that they can do this!

6. The temptation to give advice is a whopper of all temptations. The tendency to take on the *I-know-what-you-need-to-recover* mindset is compelling and often inspired by the feeling that I-see-you’re-in-trouble-and-I’m-scared-for-you. I’m also in pain because it hurts to see you suffering. Truth is, you don’t know their way home. *Don’t know*. You have your experience of recovery and spiritual growth. This is your experience, strength and hope. Remember, one person’s medicine is another person’s poison. There is no one way home. Some find a church community. Some find Smart Recovery. Some get sober through therapy. Some through AA. Some through Zen Recovery. Some through a particular spiritual path. Some by helping others get sober. Yoga, martial arts, fitness can be paths. (And this: Al-Anon is one of the best places to learn that *you cannot control, cure, or change* another person. As Andy Warhol was quoted: “You can do nothing to make someone change. In fact, they may die before they decide to change. But when they have decided to change, you cannot stop them.”)

7. This happens frequently: When an individual enters recovery, usually by crashing and burning somewhere out on the lunatic fringe of oblivion, in short order they are overwhelmed with the shocking awareness of what they have done, where they have failed, and what horrors they were a part of. Their core fears will be alive and screaming (You are rejected, unwanted, not lovable, condemnable, a nobody, a lost cause!), all suggesting that they are hopeless and recovery impossible. This is not the time to say, “Well, all of this is the result of trauma you experienced.” Although this may be true to a certain extent, this only adds more turbulence to their inner world. They will not be ready for this kind of introspection until they have settled on solid ground. Bringing the Enneagram into play before there has been a settling in their body, heart and mind will not likely help them. *Timing is everything*. Many aren’t ready to look at their Enneagram dynamics or family history until they’ve been clean, sober, addiction free for several years. And many don’t open to the deeper arena of inner work until they’ve been sober 10, 15, 20 years. Everyone has their own *time*. Be careful not to push it too soon. Most important is your presence and open heart and your trusting affirmation that they can find their own way.

8. Becoming aware that you are being possessed by your addiction takes tons of time. Often years. People don’t arrive on a recovery path without having experienced the nuances of their addiction and felt personal suffering repeatedly. (As is said at a 12 step meeting, “We’re all here because we’re not all here.”) Watching someone struggle with their addiction is so challenging because you can see they are lost *but they can’t see it*. With compassion and clarity you can share the facts that you observe, but there is something inside them that reframes your facts into “Nope, that’s not true!” One reason this occurs is that substances completely destroy one’s ability to remember objective reality. In the wake of the addicted person’s life is a *fog-stream of impressions*. The more shameful their experiences, the thicker the fog stream. No one chooses this. No one consciously denies reality. It takes time to develop the strength and *the eyes to see* the addiction prison you are captured in. Some profound force in oneself (the Denying Force) wants nothing to do with seeing reality. Now, those of you who don’t struggle with substance/behavior addiction, if truth be known, have this same mechanism operating everyday of *missing/obscuring /forgetting reality*. That’s the whole work of transformation, discovering how much of every day you are not present to, and how you misremember moments when you’ve gone off the rails with anger, resentment, vanity, reactivity, disassociation. We fall every day. As my teacher said, “You must understand that you have your hands full with yourself. You are not in a position to *save* anyone.”

The Challenges of Maintaining Addiction Recovery

- 1. I stop using the practices and the support system** that got me sober and clean, and helped me get healthier. *I drift away*. I return to my type’s default in a heartbeat. I am

unaware (in the beginning) that my personality patterns are wired to moving me away from what brings me growth, joy and happiness. One day the initial excitement of recovery *will go flat*. (That is, I reach a shock point, but it doesn't feel like a shock point. It's tricky! I will forget why I started. I'll be bored or indifferent. I imagine that since I feel good, I don't need help, I don't need to continue to step into my next level of growth and vulnerability. I forget quickly how good it feels to be open, to experience my heart.)

2. My **Core Enneagram wound/trance pattern** slips back into the driver's seat. It's so familiar I don't realize I'm looking through the eyes of the core trance pattern of my Type. I contract and return to my Enneagram default feeling states and reactions. I don't realize that my core Enneagram pattern and my addiction patterns are deeply interconnected and without thinking, *they take over*.
3. **I fail to surround myself** and align myself with people who care for me, care for my transformation, and who inspire and challenge me to stay on course. I **stop talking with folks** about what is real and true inside me. I stop telling the truth and allowing others to see me at depth. I get **invisible** and **stop being vulnerable**. To continue on the road of transformation, I must understand one primary truth: when my patterns emerge I will most likely be the last to notice it. Close allies must be the eyes I need to catch me in the act of relapse. I'm only as healthy as the company I keep.
4. After the initial *come to truth moments* that launch me on the Recovery Road, the moments where I feel my heart and soul and the reality of my addiction, the suffering I've unwittingly caused others and myself, my patterns slowly cover my newly open heart once again. My Inner Patterns, and my Addiction Identity does its work, and I lose contact with the clarity that brought me into recovery. Thus the importance of being in recovery groups to see these patterns.
5. The **Addiction Identity**: is a an "I" that has gotten created thru one's addiction. It talks, whispers, threatens, lies. You must learn its language and its ways. While you are at a recovery meeting or a wonderful workshop, it's in the parking lot *doing push-ups* or *learning new Jedi tricks*, ready to jump you when you fall asleep after leaving the workshop, recovery group. It's tireless and patient, and can wait *years* to re-emerge, or shape-shifts into a sneakier/trickier form.
6. Unbeknownst to me, I have a **hidden belief** that I'm not really wanted or cared for, and that I don't deserve to be joyful, that I don't deserve to resurrect my life and live free of my history. I begin to act as if it's true. I am unaware *that I feel I deserve to continue to suffer* for the suffering I've caused others and that I am unforgivable. Unless I forgive myself I will self-sabotage my efforts right at the peak of my success. *Success becomes a relapse trigger*.

7. I place all my hope for alleviating my suffering in **finding a relationship, or finding work, or being successful in the world**, instead of working on myself with equivalent efforts. Of course, this is human, and the trick is no know how easy it is to have your inner work co-opted by the pull of the external world. I also do this because I don't have tools or the ability to stay with my experience, to ground and self-sooth myself, to get the support I need, to stay centered in the face of my suffering.
8. **I pick up other addictions**: food, sex, porn, gambling, shopping, workaholism, over-eating, etc., to help me avoid feelings of emptiness, shame, anger, sadness, which wakes my addiction up. Whatever I use to fill my emptiness inadvertently wakes up my addiction. *There is always another addiction waiting.* Know this in advance and you will be prepared.
9. **I stop taking the next growth action** that keeps me on the edge of transformation, moving towards healthy expansion (the principle of the Hexad: you are either moving in the direction of growth, or being gravitationally pulled back to your default.). I fail to attend to this law: "You either grow or you go back to your default suffering." I settle into a *new* familiar and stop growing. I think, "I've done enough growth. I'll just lay back and coast." My old patterns *turn on*.
10. I'm not aware that moving in the direction of growth means stepping into new and unknown territory. **I will feel vulnerable and unsure each time I do this**, and the core activity of my Inner Critic will intensify warning me that death awaits me if I continue to grow. All my fears, shame, doubt, uncertainty, and trance of my Type (core wounds) will get triggered when I take the next challenge of growth. Instead *I begin to settle for the status quo* because facing my Inner Critic and dealing with my core wound/trance is so challenging and painful. *I stop leaning into the discomfort of growth, and into the positive possibilities that my recovery is bringing me.*
11. I'm unaware of the power of my **addiction identity** that I'm deeply attached to. That is, I've developed a sense of 'self' through my substance use, a *false "I."* This is no small matter. For a considerable amount of time after getting clean and sober, I will feel as if I don't really have an identity if I'm not using substances. I'll feel out of place, uncomfortable, lost, without direction. This substance abuse 'identity' can feel like home, like 'who I am' on a very visceral level. When I experience stress, suffering, loss, humiliation, shame, sadness, anger, this 'identity' will wake up giving me a sense of the familiar feelings, a false sense of power, a false sense of 'being someone,' and a false sense of 'belonging.' Drinking, using substances brings me back home to the familiar. This is why many relapse in the first year or two of attempted recovery.
12. **I return to my familiar friends, family, neighborhood** and slowly but surely return to perceiving reality through my old, conditioned impressions. Each growth step means

letting go of an ego-identification and can feel as though one is dying. (Recovery slogan: I'm only as healthy as the company I keep.) My old unhealthy Enneagram type patterns get activated by being in the environment that created them. I likely will experience **survivor's guilt**. That is, how can I be liberated if my family and friends are still suffering with addiction? How can I abandon those who I love and are mired in addiction, and walk towards freedom? This guilt can be unbelievably difficult to let go of. My attachment and love of family and old friends can lead me to my self-destruction.

13. I think that I don't need to continue my transformation work because I feel so good. I conclude after a period of intense inner work, ***that I'm finished and complete***. This is because ***I don't know better***. I'm unaware that my old patterns are always patiently waiting for me. It takes time to learn this. If I drop my practices—everything I've done that has brought me sobriety, reconnection with family, a renewed sense of self esteem which includes recovery meetings, counseling, working the Steps, meditation, etc—my less healthy Enneagram type-specific patterns that fuel addiction *return with a vengeance. Like old friends they welcome me back.*
14. I'm not aware of this principal of growth: **4 steps forward, three steps back**. After each growth cycle I will contract. This can feel discouraging and I can begin to assume that "I haven't grown. I feel as bad as ever momentarily. My patterns and my suffering seem to have returned. What's the point of continuing with transformation if I feel bad again?" The **I-haven't-grown illusion**, the perception that I haven't made any progress, is a powerful one that sets people up for hopelessness and despair. Thus, the importance of a support network who can help you cut thru this delusion, who can spot it when it's occurring. In fact, growth appears to be a journey downward on a spiral where we experience healing on deeper levels of *the same wounded patterns*. We engage and feel them at deeper levels. (See the Nine Stratum and Excavation of the True Self in *Wisdom of the Enneagram*.)
15. **I don't 'give back' and help others with my gifts**. I don't find a way to contribute to the well-being of others. In the Gurdjieff work, this is described as the three lines of work. Work on self, work for and with others, work for the work itself. This is the AA principle of **"You can only keep what you give away."** If you are not serving others in some way, your addiction will serve you up! Problem is, when people start to feel better, there is a little voice that says, "Now that I'm healthy, I can return to my life and do what I really want. I'm grateful for the inner work I did, but I want to get back to my life."
16. I don't realize that feeling 'good' is something I will need to develop tolerance for. It's ego-alien and when I begin to feel good, I feel I'm in strange territory.
17. I don't realize that I will need to develop great compassion for seeing my Enneagram patterns replay inside of me hundreds of times before the Type patterns weaken. I'm

not in control of how quickly they will change and make the mistake of thinking that once I see a pattern, then it will quickly change. I'm disappointed as I learn otherwise. Great patience is required.

18. I feel like I'm **only allowed so much help**, and when I hit with a new crisis (which I will!), I don't ask for the needed help. I believe I've used up my '**help quota**.' I believe that getting help is a *short term activity that I will outgrow*. This happens with people who are five, ten, fifteen, twenty years clean and sober from substances or self-sabotaging behaviors. As Gurdjieff and Bennett said, the farther you go on this journey the more difficult it becomes, at least for a while. Having skilled guides continues to be important. (Read the first part of Gurdjieff's book *Life is Real Only When I Am* to see what confronted him on his journey.)
19. I don't realize that spiritual growth is like **peeling an onion**, or as Riso-Hudson say, excavating the true self. That the more growth I experience, that my undigested suffering reveals itself. This will be a back-and-forth dance of expansion, and then healing deeper suffering. It's a slow process. The hope of most people in recovery or those involved in transformational processes is that things will happen quickly and in a linear fashion. Welcome to the Labyrinth! (Beware of get-essence-quick-schemes/workshops). There is no fast change. Real change is one small step at a time, sometimes backwards, sometimes to the side, sometimes through an underground tunnel. Not linear.
20. I don't consciously anticipate what my addiction-triggering might look and feel like, and don't make a plan of action to respond when an emergency arises and old patterns are activated. That is, what are the likely circumstances or experiences that could trigger my addiction patterns? And what will I do when this occurs? Who will I call? What do I need to avoid? What feeling states make me more susceptible to relapsing? This is called mindfully making a **relapse prevention plan**. Knowing my Enneagram type's reaction patterns is essential. These patterns will be triggered and triggered. The more you develop a grounded awareness, the more that the waves of these patterns can be navigated. *Sensing the body is essential*.
21. My emergency medical kit should include a **mentor (s)** who know me well (sponsor, therapist, teacher), a **group of spiritually-minded people** who I meet with and support me (AA group, Diamond Heart group, Essence group, Gurdjieff groups, church group), a **daily mindfulness practice** to my suiting, a **spiritual or creative path** that has deep meaning for me, and awareness of my **default Enneagram patterns** and how to stay conscious when they are triggered, etc.
22. I don't make **amends** when I need to. Making amends builds in a deeper and deeper awareness of my triggers and over time will allow me to not *act out* my suffering on

others. **Making amends** builds in a memory that can give me enough presence to see *in the moment* that I've been triggered, and thus can contain my reactivity.

23. I begin to take short cuts. This will happen.
24. I don't **practice good self-care**: eating well, meditating, exercising, getting enough sleep. This is called **H.A.L.T.** in recovery circles (am I hungry, angry, lonely, tired?).
25. **Instinctual imbalance**: *Low social* makes it difficult to ask for help, *Low Self-pres*—I don't have practical intelligence or ambition to put myself out in the world, *Low sexual*—I don't have the passion, energy, charisma and courage it takes to step out of ruts and break through habitual patterns. *Dominant sexual*: I get stuck on intensity and can't weather the down, slow times; *dominant social*: I hook up with lots of people but lose contact with my particular needs and my personal recovery priorities, *Dominant self-pre*: I go to work addictively and get addicted to comfort and routines, while not challenging myself to grow.
26. I experience **Addiction Amnesia**. I forget where I came from. I forget the incredible suffering my substance use has caused me and others. Amnesia sets in, and I innocently begin to use again. It's as if your Inner Critic does a Jedi trick on you, saying "You can use. You don't have a problem. Look away from your suffering. It's not real." And wipes your memory banks of any remembered suffering. This wouldn't be such a bad thing except that when I relapse, I feel such horrid shame that it's hard to start over again. As one mentor said to me, "It only takes three days to forget everything that is important to your growth and recovery. Addiction is a *forgetter's disease*. Stay close to those who possess wisdom."
27. **Euphoric Recall** begins to play through me. I become enchanted on imagining past drug experiences, idealizing the good times, and forget where it has taken me. It's like my Inner Critic runs film clips of all my great times using and edits out all of the suffering. I get mesmerized by the edited movie. I relapse.
28. I fail to realize that **undigested suffering or trauma will be triggered** and will need real attention. After several years of being clean and sober, I suddenly begin to experience deep feelings of emptiness, sadness, grief, rage or shame. This *will happen* if I continue to be clean and sober and work a healthy recovery program. It is not a sign that I am failing in my transformation. It is a natural unfolding. It is then that I must get the help I need.
29. I fail to notice that a particular spiritual path/practice is no longer working and that I need to replace it with something that has more meaning and significance for me. I **stay rigid in one system** and don't broaden my reach with new healing experiences. I stay in a state of boredom and become apathetic.

30. After graduating from rehab, a half-way house, a prison program, and on my own in the world, my will to continue my practices *will* weaken. The question is, what will you do about it? Will you succumb to apathy, or move through it? I must develop the will to persist in my practices, to go after what I need, to put this first in my life. Easy to do in a rehab, or a prison system, or a halfway house, but once on my own, my enneagram type patterns of avoidance greet me.
31. Important principle: Gurdjieff said, **“It’s not difficult to do spiritual work alone, it’s impossible.”** Strictly speaking, what this means is that our more difficult patterns, which we do not readily see, are seen by others. We need the eyes of others on us, until we gain sight to see ourselves. And...we need their support to move thru difficult periods of transformation. It’s rarely a solo journey.
32. I fail to realize that the further along one’s spiritual path, the **more subtle and insidious our patterns become**. As one teacher said, “Michael, you need at least three other men who are further along the spiritual path, because the healthier you get, the wiser you become, the better your ability to deceive yourself and others in times of reactivity. You will buy your own bullshit/self-deception, and convince others of it. Your Inner Critic will devise more insidious and clever reasons for going back to your addiction.”
33. I don’t understand that as I experience more joy and freedom, that it will be accompanied by anxiety and fear because, in essence, my ego structure is weakening and I am stepping into **expansive** and **unknown territory**. My Inner Critic will send fierce messages to go no further and will flood me with feelings of disorientation and fear. Better to go back to **known suffering**, than step into new, unguarded territory, even though I feel better when I do. This mechanism of returning to known suffering is powerful. It takes time to tolerate joy and understand that a new sense of self is developing, and that this is trustable.