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If nothing ever changed, there would be no butterflies.

7 Tips for Outsmarting Your Addiction

Tell Yourself The Truth



Do you ever try to convince yourself that things in your life aren't really how they seem to be?

Do you tell yourself that things are better or worse than they actually are?

Like most people, you may be using addictive behaviors in order to change unpleasant situations and feelings that you experience. When you are feeling something that is difficult or out of the range of your "comfort zone," the most natural thing to want to do is to find a way to change it so the uncomfortable feelings go away.

For example, if you are facing the prospect of losing your job, or a partner is talking about breaking up with you, it may be difficult to be honest with yourself because

of the discomfort this could bring up for you. You might tell yourself that this isn't really happening, or find a way to distract yourself.

At that exact point, you have a choice – you can either try to numb your fears and anxieties about the situation by engaging in an addictive behavior, or you can tell yourself the truth about your reality and deal with it in healthier ways.

Becoming willing to tell yourself the truth is the first step in **outsmarting your addiction**. No matter what is going on in your life, when you are honest with yourself you will respect yourself and be on the path toward wellness.



Ask Yourself “Why NOT Me?”

How many times have you asked yourself “Why ME?” when your life took a turn you didn’t expect?

When your life circumstances leave you feeling frustrated, sad, lonely, angry or ashamed, it is easy to begin to experience some self-pity.

When you find yourself asking “Why is this happening to me?” you might want to turn this around and ask yourself **“Why not me?”**

Sometimes it helps to know that you are not the only person going through tough times. Understanding this can help lead you out of the shameful feelings you may have, allowing you to face the truth about your reality.

Difficult things happen to people all the time – it is part of being human. You have a choice about whether to be “in the problem” or “in the solution.” If your life seems to be full of problems, it is best to face them head on and begin to find solutions.

Asking yourself **“Why not me?”** is the second step in **outsmarting your addiction**, because as you feel less isolated and more connected to those around you, the less need you will have to engage in the addictive behaviors you have used in the past.

Take Full Responsibility For Your Life Choices



Do you have a tendency to blame other people and situations for your lot in life?

Is it sometimes hard for you to admit that your choices are contributing to the life you are living today?

Although you did not choose to be an addict, every time you indulge in an addictive behavior, you are making a choice to continue turning your back on your own life. You have the right to make that choice, just as you have the right to change and grow. Ultimately, it is your decision, and it always will be, regardless of your life circumstances.

If you are unhappy with your situation, it is **your responsibility** to do something about it. If you need help to do that, reach out! You may be surprised at how many people will be there to assist you when you make the healthier life choices necessary to **outsmart your addiction.**



Be Curious About Yourself

Are you curious about the underlying cause of your addictive behaviors?

Do you wonder what your life would be like if you stopped your addictions?

When you can be curious about yourself and your life, you can then develop your ability to be more spontaneous and increase your enjoyment.

For example, the more spontaneous you can allow yourself to become in your life, the less need you will have to try to control the people and things around you. When you decrease your need to control situations that

are actually not in your control to begin with, you will also decrease your need to engage in your addictions.

Having the willingness to be curious, spontaneous and more able to go with the flow of life is the next step in **outsmarting your addiction**. You will then be able to accept the surprises that life brings everyday, without feeling like you have to change your reality with addictive behaviors.

Make Friends With Your Inner Critic



What kinds of messages does your Inner Critic tell you? And whose “voice” is that, anyway?

We all have one of those message-centers in our heads – you know the one, the little voice that tells you all kinds of negative things about yourself and the world around you. This voice may tell us that we are fat, ugly, lazy, stupid – the possibilities are endless!

Perhaps there is something you really want – maybe it’s a new job, or a relationship, or a car, or maybe you want to stop an addictive behavior that seems to be overtaking your life. This voice is the one that will tell you all kinds of excuses about why you’ll never have it. The most common excuse it comes up with will be some version of “how unworthy you are” to have what you want.

“Making friends” with that inner voice does not always mean accepting what it tells you as the truth. What it does mean is that you must learn to both hear the message and explore it to see if there is any truth to it. In order to **outsmart your addiction**, you must be able to distinguish between fact and fiction. Then, if you do discover any truth in the message your **Inner Critic** is giving you, you will become more able to make a choice about how to change your behavior.

Suppose you are spending more money than you have, for example. Your **Inner Critic** might be telling you to slow down and pay off some of your debts before you make any more unnecessary purchases. Listening to this inner voice could prove to be a very positive strategy for your future peace and happiness.

On the other hand, your critic could also be telling you what a stupid person you are for spending money that you don't have. It might tell you that nobody else is as foolish as you are when it comes to buying too much. This will only serve to make you feel even worse about yourself than you already do, which may not inspire you to make any positive changes. In situations like these, you would be wise to not trust your inner voice or to take its advice!

You have created your **Inner Critic** because you want the best for yourself. This voice may sound very much like your parents or teachers did when you were growing up. By unintentionally constructing these "negative" messages about yourself, you

may in reality be trying to motivate yourself to do your best. However, while these messages may have worked fine as a coping mechanism in childhood, they can wreak havoc in your life as an adult.

Even so, be aware that your **Inner Critic** may really want you to succeed, and may well have some important things to tell you about yourself that will lead you toward success.

Befriend this part of your critic and learn what you can from it.



Surround Yourself With People Who Want The Best For You

Do you feel that your relationships are not as supportive as you'd like them to be?

As you make the choice to live a healthier and more joyful life, you may find yourself running into opposition from the very people you thought would back you in this new direction.

This generally occurs because those people are used to you behaving in certain ways. For example, if you decide to stop using drugs and alcohol, there may be people who actually encourage you to keep using them. The reason for this is that if you stop your addiction, then others who continue theirs

may find themselves seeing their own behaviors more clearly, and they may not want to do that.

In order to **outsmart your addiction** and live a healthy life, you will need to surround yourself with people who truly want you to change and grow. These are people who will celebrate your successes and encourage you when you go through the inevitable harder times. You will also want the best for them, and this mutual support will become the building blocks for the new dynamics in your relationships.

Don't be willing to settle for less!

Ask Yourself “What Do I Really Want In My Life?” And GO FOR IT!



Do you know what you want from your life?

Do you believe that it's pointless to stop your addiction because your life will never be any better anyway?

The truth is that you are the only one who can decide the direction of your life. Even when it feels like you have no choices, you are actually choosing the behaviors you are engaging in—and making the decision to have, or not have, what you really want in your life.

The last step in **outsmarting your addiction** is to ask yourself some tough questions in order to determine the course of your life. If you want to go down a different path than

the one you have been traveling, you must first have a sense of where you want to go.

When you ask yourself “**What do I really want in my life?**”, your starting place may be a simple answer such as “I want to stop using drugs” or “I want to be in a healthier relationship.” Or perhaps you long to change your disordered eating patterns so that you can enjoy food and stop being ashamed of your body.

Whatever it is that you want, you can have it!

The trick is to become more self-aware of your desires and needs, and then to discover what you need to do to accomplish your goals.

You may want to do some research on the Internet, or go to the library to find more information. Perhaps you know someone who is already doing what you want to do, who might be a mentor or “sponsor” for you. It may be wise for you to enlist the services of a counsellor who can help you make sense of your life and assist you in taking some new and improved steps.

The Bottom Line

In order to **outsmart your addiction**, you will need to change your “same old, same old” patterns and choose something different. It is amazing how even small initial changes can create a much healthier life than the one you have been living.

Even if you are feeling afraid at this moment, don't let that fear hold you back from **outsmarting your addiction** and living your best life.

You can do it, and you don't have to do it alone. Reach out for help if you need it!



Candace Plattor, M.A., R.C.C., is a therapist in private practice, helping people overcome addictive behaviors such as substance misuse, eating disorders, gambling, internet addiction, overspending and codependency in relationships. With over 20 years of experience, her #1 priority is to assist people in making the choice to stop their addictions so that they can lead rich and meaningful lives.

Candace offers individual, couple and family counseling. She also counsels family and friends whose loved ones are struggling with addiction, helping them to set appropriate boundaries and put more attention on their own lives. This not only improves their quality of life but also helps their addicted loved ones.

For a free 15-minute telephone consultation, call Candace at 604.677.5876, or you can reach her by email at candace@candaceplattor.com.

To find out more about Candace and the therapy services she offers, visit her website at www.candaceplattor.com.

