

Vibrations

Whether we believe it or not, we are always attracting people and experiences that are in alignment with the vibrational level of our primary thoughts and feelings. Like vibration attracts like vibration. We're all doing it. It's a statement about humanity.

This is also what keeps us stuck in our unproductive habits, self-limiting beliefs and addictions. Our conscious and unconscious thoughts keep drawing these experiences to us. It happens in so many different and unexpected ways that we think we have no choice—that we're doomed to live one way or we're powerless to change. But looked at from a larger perspective, it's really just one of the laws of life operating in exactly the way it's supposed to.

What does it take to shift the results we're getting and the experiences we are attracting? It takes applying what I described at the beginning of this chapter: Start thinking about "the other way." What it would be like to live without our unwanted habits? Think about what attracts you—feelings and experiences like personal freedom and power, prosperity and love, gratitude and how great people are, about all the new ways that life can be. Focus on the positive aspects of life and eventually, as your thinking and behavior changes more consistently in those directions, you will attract those kinds of people and experiences that you really want.

It's easy enough to suggest this is what we should do, but it is another thing to actually live it. I also know that from where you may be standing, this is all a pretty major stretch. Am I right? In fact, it probably seems almost, if not entirely, impossible.

All I'm going to ask you to do is this: Please don't dismiss the idea entirely. Keep an open mind to it.

Two Keys to Change: Release and Redirect

Most of us don't find it easy to change our thinking. It's kind of like the air we breathe; it's so natural to us that whatever thoughts come to us seem like "just the way we are." That's why shifting our focus from what's wrong, bad or negative about ourselves, our lives and our habits will take time and practice. It will also take some new habits of thinking that most of us aren't used to. Let me describe what I mean by that.

1) Whatever kind of habit, behaviour or addiction you have at the moment is there because you are actually holding on to it and won't let it go. I don't mean that in a harsh or judgmental way. You simply don't realize that by your continuous thinking about it, you're actually holding on to it.

The reasons you're holding on could be many. Perhaps you felt hurt at some time in your life and are using this habit to reduce the pain; or you developed a negative belief or image about yourself and this behavior helped you to feel better. Maybe your habit makes you feel so much better than you normally do, and you haven't found anything else to make you feel as good; or you feel so negative about yourself that you keep using this behavior to avoid those other feelings. I'll explore some of these later on and give you opportunities to reflect, reinterpret and let them go. However, what's important right now is that your continual thinking about your habit is what's keeping it with you.

2) In order to be free of your habit, you're going to have to let go of those thoughts and consciously focus on something that has nothing to do with your bad habit. Focus on something that has a higher vibrational feeling. However, you can't force yourself to do this. It has to be a free choice.

3) “So how do I stop myself thinking about what I’m thinking about?” Well, you can’t. When we try to stop ourselves from thinking about something, we’re actually giving more attention, thought or energy to it. It’s like the statement, “Try not to think of a pink elephant.” By trying not to, you often can’t help but do it.

That’s how we get stuck. By trying harder and harder, we get even more stuck. That’s *insanity*: Doing more and more of something we think will bring us a desired result, but doesn’t, yet we keep on doing it. In fact, with our habits, it’s not only NOT getting us the result we want, it’s actually locking in our thoughts and feelings further and creating the opposite experience from what we’re intending. This is continued insanity.

4) So how do we shift our thinking? It starts with *awareness* and *noticing* what our thoughts are in the moment.

I’d like to illustrate this by one of my marathon experiences. After I got injured, whenever I’d run, I would start to experience some pain in my knee. As soon as I’d feel it, my thinking would be something like, “Oh shoot, it’s there again.” Or, “Oh *bleep*, here we go again.” I knew better; I was already somewhat aware of the power of thoughts and beliefs. But this is the way our mind works. When we feel powerless, that’s where our thoughts go—to our problem. As a result, I’d begin to focus on my pain again, and I would keep thinking that way for 5, 10, even 20 minutes until some part of my mind would say, “I’m doing it again! I’m focusing on the pain being an injury. Enough already!”

The reason I tell that story is because it is all about awareness. My intention before running was to watch my thoughts, to see when I was focusing on the pain and shift my thought pattern when I was able to. Being a beginner at thinking this way, my mind kept forgetting. So that was my experience: I’d remember, then I’d forget. I’d realize what I was doing, and then I’d forget again. That’s what’s so crazy about our thoughts. You can be right in the thinking pattern that’s keeping

you stuck and not even know that you're in it. But as soon as you notice it, you're beginning to turn it around.

So that's stage one: Watch it, notice it. Pay attention to whenever you're doing or thinking about your habit.

5) When you notice that you're doing or thinking about your habit, use this as an opportunity to re-direct your thoughts onto something else that is at a higher vibration.

Almost anything will work here. You could focus on your gratitude for something in your life, such as your dog, your kids, your spouse or partner. In my earlier recovery days, I'd think about being able to help another addict. More recently, I have envisioned my book being read or being in schools and teaching kids about unwanted habits, or visiting First Nations communities and helping people be free from negative thinking and to find true happiness and peace. When I'm running my marathons, one focus that works well for me is the thought of being injury-free.

The key is to redirect our thoughts onto something we want or appreciate, instead of focusing on what we don't want or on what upsets us. It's not saying to ourselves, *"I've got to stop thinking about my problem, and here's why."* It's about choosing thoughts that actually make us feel better inside. Even if you don't feel that way immediately, at least you're moving in the right direction—towards putting your focus on something other than your habit or what you don't want.

The more we give our thoughts in this positive direction, the more we begin to build our new muscles of thinking. And the more that will bring us positive experiences within.

6) When you notice yourself choosing more empowering thoughts, acknowledge yourself. We spend so much time thinking about what we're doing wrong or trying to correct and fix ourselves, that acknowledging what's right is a significant step in creating this new mindset. Give yourself credit and appreciation for making progress. Just like the killer whales we talked about earlier, you too need positive reinforcement. Start noticing what you ARE doing, instead of fighting yourself for what you're not doing.

We Can't Fight It and Win

How many of us have ever tried to fight our addictive habit so we can overcome it? It seems like such a natural thing to do. We think we *need* to fight it—to have more willpower, to be better people, to somehow find a way to control our behavior—so we will win the battle over our habit or addiction. But does it really work? Logic would have us say yes, but many experts say no.

When we fight addictions or habits, we are actually giving them more energy. The more we think about them, the worse we feel and the more we keep fueling them and perhaps even causing them to persist. The same is also true on a societal level. Think about the war on drugs. That started back in the 1970s, but how's it going? Are there more drug problems or fewer since we declared war on it?

Now consider the ways we try to deal with our unwanted habits and addictions. Whether we are thinking about doing them or not doing them, the focus is still on *doing it* so we give it power. We worry about them and resist them. We scold, criticize and beat ourselves up for doing what we're doing. We try to blame or guilt ourselves into better behavior. We have well-meaning people in our lives who remind us to "stop for our own good." In other words, they bring more attention to that which we want to stop and by doing so, unintentionally add more fuel to the fire.

So what's the result? We focus even more on the problem we want to get rid of. By giving it energy, it grows in our minds. This makes us feel even worse, so we do

the behavior again and again to get the "peace, comfort and relief" we need, even though we know there will be consequences. Eventually, we develop the belief that we are *powerless* against it. It's definitely a vicious circle.

Eckhart Tolle once said, *"One of the main tasks of the mind is to fight or remove the emotional pain, which is one of the reasons for its incessant activity, but all it can ever achieve is to cover it up temporarily. In fact, the harder the mind struggles to get rid of the pain, the greater the pain"*

Consider the view point that it is not that we are powerless against our unwanted habits or addictions; it is that we are so powerful, our thoughts are so powerful, that we are actually the ones keeping the thing that is unwanted in our lives alive. By redirecting our thoughts (and actions) away from the unwanted behavior entirely, and instead move in the direction of what we do want and what makes us feel good, the energy we were giving the unwanted habit starts to lessen.

This is why I believe we can't fight ours or anyone else's habits and addictions and ultimately win. Yet that's what most of us are trying to do.

Seeking Outside or Growing Inside

Earlier I said that when we engage in our unwanted habits and addictions, what we're doing is seeking outside of ourselves for something to make us feel better. That is, some kind of habit, substance, behavior or experience that will move us in the direction of the better feelings that we all want and need.

What I'm talking about now is shifting that source of "power to make us *feel* better" from outside to inside. In other words, starting to grow choices and habits of thinking, feeling and behaving that will make us feel better from the inside out. I'll be the first to admit that it doesn't work overnight. But each step we take in that direction, builds this experience within us. It's these positive experiences that will eventually lead us to release our old habits and replace them with new ones that make us feel better about ourselves and our lives.