

Intensity Addiction

I know I have been criticized for the over simplification of very complex human dynamics and yet why not put it out there when I have an insight? I feel that as long as I acknowledge that the insight includes me, then, well, it's OK. So here goes.

It started with me wondering what's going wrong with the effort of basic human values to guide humanity? There must be something affecting the potency of these values that are taught, but that people struggle to live by. Maybe it has something to do with power and the corruption that grows as does the power that is wielded. I accept that and yet it doesn't seem sufficient to explain the struggle that people undergo. It seems to me that there is not only an external influence, but also an internal influence that makes us vulnerable to rhetoric that leads us to accept pathways that are lit with benedictions of "goodness" and yet lead to the darkness that endlessly repeats in each generation.

It came into my awareness that when we are attracted to do things that eventually we can't control, well, what ever this is, it falls into the category of an addiction. I mean if I can't control my involvement with something, then it's likely that something has taken over my free will and choice. That's kind of what an addiction does; it takes one over. We all have experienced episodes of addiction even if it was as simple as some food, gossiping, working, gaming, texting, online streaming, TV, exercise, or even reading. While we were able to separate from some of these, or at least moderate our involvement, to others we are likely still enthralled by them. In this, I too have deeply experienced various levels of addiction. I am still engaged with one or two. Chocolate is one of these. As long as I'm not in the presence of chocolate, I'm OK. However if chocolate is around me I have no control over eating some. Still, it's not like I can't control how much I eat for once I eat a piece...or two...I can stop. But not so in the past as I would at times binge on eating them. Another mild addiction, one which I was able to manage; if not totally able to liberate myself from, was Coca Cola. I was able to get it down to just a sip or two at 2:00 pm. However, if I didn't get it I would feel cranky and very tired. It was amazing how little as a sip or two would take care of the craving. From other ones I have been able to completely disengage from such as spiritual and recreational drugs. However I can't say that I did it through will power alone. It was more like by engaging in them too often I became run down. My immune system weakened and I became very sick and the pain of that sickness was what permitted me to kick the habit. One such drug was marijuana. I enjoyed smoking a bit of marijuana in the evening. Enjoyed it right up to getting pneumonia combined with pleurisy, the inflammation of the lungs. The pain was in my chest and was so sharp that I felt that I was having a heart attack. Off to the emergency room. Didn't tell them about the marijuana and when the diagnosis came back as pneumonia and pleurisy, taken care of with a powerful shot of antibiotics well... After recovering and wondering if smoking contributed to the issue with my lungs not functioning properly and not really ready to make a conclusion, and being ever optimistic, eventually I started to smoke again. Whoops, Slammed! Another episode of pneumonia and pleurisy. Too much pain! Smoke = Pain Yeow!!! I never was what I'd call a masochist. "Hey, congratulate me. I quit smoking." Still there is a type of addiction that seems to be somewhat beneficial and that is my unceasing drive to understand what's not working right if not just in me then with others or even humankind. I often tell me my purpose in life is to save us from ourselves and thereby save the world. I call it an addiction because I can't stand anything that affects me beyond my understanding and I can't let go of it until I do. Well, maybe this is more of an obsession. I'm not sure what the difference is. Anyway, this said, I threw myself into

seeking the root cause of addiction. This is what I discovered and I would like to share it and maybe it applies to you as well. I have come to an understanding that it is my need for Intensity that addiction satisfies so completely. In other words Intensity is the motor that energizes the seductive power of addiction.

I mean, I decided to traveled back down the chain of events from addiction back to what got me into it each time. In this way I met up with what really captured me and it was this thing, Intensity. Intensity staring me in the face with a big grin. "Ola mi amigo. Back again? So happy you enjoy hanging out with me." Yes Intensity, however Intensity wasn't alone. No, there was another grinning face. Hanging tight with Intensity was Boredom. Boredom is a feeling that drives me and I'm sure most people absolutely nuts. It can't be withstood and it is like being attacked by a swarm of bees...you just got to get away! It seems to me that the most effective release from Boredom is some level of Intensity. However, a caveat. There is nothing boring about Intensity nor is there anything that becomes more intense than an extended feeling of boredom. They are amazing partners and work so well as a team. Of course intensity in moderation, which includes the benefit of some peaks, is healthy. However I'm not sure that in looking back, intensity even in what I have felt was in the category of moderation was not already in excess. One's lifestyle may seem moderate however that may in itself be an illusion put in place by Intensity. Best to ask the people who you hang out with. Of course when addicted one hears only, "Keep on keeping on."

I can't say that I have personally experienced the following form of intensity addiction...luckily. However, it is affecting my children and grandchildren, so I feel that I can at least benefit from taking a look at it. Yes, just look at the rapid spread of social media and the incessant drive to be in touch with someone. Listening to my children and to my older grandchildren who engage in this form of intensity, they express the view that it's normal and healthy as a form of direct social interaction, believing that being in touch through technological devices is a positive social behavior. Is it though? The same goes for collaborative internet gaming in which my older son engages and who believes that it is a very positive social activity even though he has no direct personal contact with most of the people with whom he is playing at any one time. Then there is Facebook in which people brag about the hundreds of friends they have, most of them people whom they never have met and yet they feel this is an acceptable viewpoint of socialization. But how much of their day is being engaged in this style of socializing. I know my older son often plays through the night. I know that some of my children share everything on facebook, even, "Hey, I burped." Or do they just Tweet that? How about people texting while driving even though they know it's dangerous? Nothing more disturbing to me to see the driver ahead of me with a bobble-head of a head. I guess I'm suggesting that this is all indicative of addictive behavior and is so soundly accompanied by its protector, Rationalization, the warrior that supports and maintains these forms of addiction.

So let's take a look at Intensity and the insatiable drive to satisfy it, which I am suggesting is the primal cause of addiction. Taking the "enlightened medical model's view" of addiction, addiction is now categorized as a disease and like any other disease, it is an illness. Being an illness, it by definition has no positive virtues. So, because Intensity Addiction is not currently listed as a recognized addiction, I would like to introduce it as such. Because I don't know of anyone who isn't affected by it, it seems to me that it must be the most widespread undiagnosed illness that affects humankind.

It seems to me that like all addictions the need for intensity operates at the subconscious level and is subtle in its causal influence on human relations. What I am sensing is that Intensity

actually operates behind all addictions and that it deflects attention from itself by camouflaging itself as an addiction. In this manner it hides itself so effectively that as one overcomes an addiction Intensity just shifts into play another outlet. Clinicians discuss this shifting as a consequence of a person having an addictive personality. To be clear, I'm suggesting that Intensity is giving birth to all addictions, Parent to the Child.

I don't know much about hormones and their relationship to the syndrome of Boredom/Addiction, but I'd like to throw this in because I feel it belongs. (I hope people who are more conversant with this topic will email me their input at Jonathan@Outfar10.com.) I experience my feelings as an outcome of their interconnection, which results in some hormonal release that deeply influences my circumstances. So, along with the subconsciousness of addiction, Intensity has formed a directive controlling biological partnership with my body's endocrine system. It feels as though these hormones are released as I begin to experience boredom and increases to the point that I am eventually cast into the struggle to end the boredom. A healthy person gets up and does something mildly intense like going out to a movie, or engages in some form of sports, or goes to visit a friend, or engages in a satisfying hobby. However, because we're taking a look at addiction, I'm looking into the heart of the unhealthy aspect of Intensity. The drive for intensity and my experiencing it, makes it like a drug and like any drug it loses its affect unless the potency is increased. So, what may have started out as an activity that was enjoyable, now it's an activity to seek that release and it requires a more potent form. To me it seems that the hormones that best release me from that kind of boredom are increased when I engage in more challenging and daring activities like I would experience by engaging in a high risk physical or psychological activity. Being successful provides the release but so does failure, just in a different way. There is a great deal of intensity from riding on the emotional pain of frustration, anguish, disappointment, inadequacy and especially loneliness. If these painful feelings are not moderated some of us can slip into depression or other social/psychological episodes, which are even more stressful and therefore intense. Definitely not boring.

I doubt that I am alone in this. For sure emotional pain, risky behavior or various forms of pleasure causes and results in a hormonal release so connected to intensity that it completely alleviates the angst of boredom. When I can look objectively at pleasure and high risk behavior, which indeed activate the hormones that releases me from boredom, and then compare these forms of intensity to that from pain, they seem to be an inefficient hormonal releaser because they are so temporary. However the pain either of emotional problems and/or long-term physical illness are excellent prime releasers of the hormones because these illnesses are long-living in nature and as such they provide a much more continuous production of the addictive hormones upon which Intensity feeds.

So, long-term emotional or physical illness keeps the hormonal level pumping. When I realized this I then began to have another insight. Because an improvement in health diminishes intensity, and thus diminishes the release of the hormones, it is understandable then why people who seek therapeutic intervention, be they either or both physical and emotioanl, may subconsciously resist and /or fail to comply with the therapeutic interventions. This all too often interferes with the completion of the prescribed form of therapy. Can we see that seeking help for our personal problems, which focuses on the problems and their causes, would be undermined by the subconscious drive to keep intensity active? Should the therapist acknowledge and then be able to anticipate this dynamic I suppose they would provide additional

support by incorporating an increased level of education and a more frequent interactive system of monitoring.

As I was increasingly able to acknowledge my struggle with life's experiences being a result of the influence of Intensity Addiction, I strove to dive ever deeper into my mind to connect consciously with that aspect of myself. This of course has been very intense. Hmm. At first I was aggressive in seeking it out, being so pissed off that I had been under a compulsion beyond my awareness. This resulted in just disabling me even further. I had been reading *The Art of War* during this time and it was suggested in these writing that getting to know one's enemy was critical in overcoming their threat. So I applied this to the best of my ability and it kind of worked, but because I was still approaching it with a hidden aggression it was easy for it to see me coming for it and it was able to keep me at a distance. "OK. Maybe I should consider a new way of perceiving all of this and perhaps an open avenue may present itself. Good idea. Well, let's see. Intensity is part of me, yeah, so why be so aggressive for all that does is to reinforce the strength of intensity and the all consuming addiction." That's when I was able to intuit the possibility of choosing a more empathetic approach than that of seeking to control and then to rid myself of it.

I'd like to introduce the concept of forming a respectful relationship with the Intensity and the benefit of my learning how to manage this relationship. Remember what happens to us when we are Bored and how Intensity alleviates the feeling. So, why fight it? I moved myself to be less judgmental and more accepting of the drive for release through intensity. After all, its obviously a part of my nature if not all human nature. This resulted in a reduction of my conflict with it. By viewing Intensity as part of myself it gradually came to me that I needed to make an effort to consciously open my mind to the benefit of engaging with Intensity in some form of a healthy working relationship and bring it into the open. I began to focus on empathic communication as a guide in this process. Seemed like a good approach.

In the empathetic approach to Intensity, I experimented and eventually found that the focus need not be on the existing set of problems, but rather on what those problems do to keep the addictive hormones flowing. It was so important to learn how to communicate with myself in the following way. "Of course I have all these problems that seem to be caused by my personal problems and my problems with other people, but I really have to accept that this dysfunction is initially caused by own feelings of confusion and yes, inadequacy. I have to reinforce myself with the understanding that in Intensity Addiction I use intensity to divert myself from working through personal and interpersonal problems. From this viewpoint then Intensity is not controlling me, rather I am actually using Intensity in an abusive manner."

I had to create an internal dialogue that brought into my thoughts that the addiction to Intensity influences my subconscious mind and somehow directs it to create convincing self-protective distortions manifesting as imbalances in my perceptions and conceptions. "Yes, my perception is somewhat distorted and this causes me to focus on a segment of the whole, and to believe that a specific segment is the totality. Naturally, when I am operating only on a portion of the "reality" it is undermines my state of awareness. Operating on a partial "reality" causes poor performance, and thus the decisions and the operationalization of those choices are ineffective and destructive to my goal of a healthy life. The addiction causes this misperception of the "reality", and in doing so defends itself/me by remaining unidentifiable/invisible to the being who I am. This misperception of the cause of dysfunction naturally misdirects others who would extend assistance to me, and further intensifies the situation."

This dialogue really helped, but it didn't happen overnight. I worked hard on keeping aware of the situation and began to write out dialogues and adjusted them over time to keep me within the effort to establish and then to maintain an empathetic relationship with Intensity. At a certain point Intensity began to relate to me on a less suspicious level. After all, I initially was very aggressive in seeking to root it out. In our discussions Intensity helped me conceptualize that when enough people are caught up in this, it by extension influences the culture and if that culture is powerful, that distortion can bring the dominant culture to misperceive circumstances both internal and external. If this is sustained long enough it evolves into a state of Cultural Addiction to Intensity that often leads to a compulsion that invariably leads to the ultimate in intense competition, warfare.

From my experience, developing a balance in life requires a conscious relationship with Intensity. This allowed me to recognize that having moments to engage in a healthy intense interaction respects its rightful place in my makeup and then it no longer needs to fight for its survival. Reducing its feeling of alienation lessens its resentment and the consequent disabling influence that drove it to separate from our team. In short we unconsciously, due to the previous imbalance, was threatening its existence, forcing it to seek our attention through fostering an imbalance that made it impossible to ignore its presence as part of ourself, addiction.

Living in balance breaks the self-defeating and self-destructive hold that Intensity had to have on me and thereby alleviated in some small way the sad state of the human condition. Living in balance helps level-out the hormones. The result led to my ability to increasingly live in a more functional manner, which supports and reinforces the work I do to achieve this balance. It is very challenging and satisfying and in being so, is far from boring and satisfies the healthy drive for Intensity.

In doing the work to maintain my balance, which is conceptually challenging due to it being so amorphous it helped me to create a metaphor that helped me to conceptualize balance in a more concrete manner. The metaphor was to view my functioning in a mechanical way and to do this I used the image of a six cylinder automobile engine. It is easy to understand that an engine would be malfunctioning should only three of the six cylinders be firing. The three functioning cylinders would be overworked in their effort to do the work of six cylinders. This of course would lead to their breakdown. In a similar manner in our technological society most humans are operating with only a limited part of their potential being available. It is said that we are only operating on 5 – 10 % of our brain. Well, how can we be functioning in a healthy manner with so little of our needed capacity being inactive? Given the addictions that consume us, there is insufficient energy to activate the 90% of our capacity. I may suggest that in our metaphor the three human cylinders that are overworked are 1. The body, 2. The intellect, and 3. The emotions.

The goal of a balanced perception of reality is the ability to see both the overview and the individual parts, and how they integrate into a functional whole. By identifying the parts that are functional, partially functional, and not functional, one would be able to assess their current status, and initiate a program for involving the underutilized and non-operative parts into the whole. As one activates the dormant cylinders the load on the active cylinders diminishes and overall functionality increases.

It is important to define these "cylinders," and their human function:

- I. Physical: Presence of the form
 - a. Functioning body
 - 1. Sports
 - 2. Hunting/Fishing, Farming
 - 3. Crafts
 - 4. Self-Defense
 - 5. Home skills
 - 6. Reproduction
 - 7. Self-defense
 - 8. Sensory Perception
- II. Mental/Intellectual: Functioning of the form
 - a. Knowledge of Functionality - Understanding
 - 1. Knowing how the body functions.
 - 2. Knowing how the environment functions.
 - 3. Knowing how to make tools.
 - 4. Know how to build and to alter.
 - 5. Knowing how to fix what breaks.
 - b. Cognitive
 - 1. Intellect
 - 2. Science
 - 3. Communication
- III. Emotional:
 - a. Signals that there is a breakdown in the functioning of the system.
 - 1. Anger, Jealousy, Greed, Envy, Fear, Anxiety, Depression, Alienation
 - b. Signals that one is on the right path
 - 1. Satisfaction, Empathy, Joy, Compassion, Humor
- IV. Intuition: Insight into and awareness of the unknown as it affects life.
 - a. Expressions of what we feel in ourselves, and in others.
 - 1. Support, encouragement, acceptance, appreciation.
 - b. **Feelings**: The language of the Life Force
 - 1. Listening Skills *
 - c. Paranormal
 - 1. Telepathy
 - 2. Telekinetic
 - 3. Premonition
- V. Creativity: The expression of the Life Force:
 - a. The arts
 - 1. Dance, Poetry, Painting, Music
 - 2. Medical/Healing
 - 3. Martial
 - 4. Culinary
- VI. Spiritual: Being the Life Force
 - a. Understanding how the parts interact to create the whole
 - b. Living the interconnectedness/oneness of all things.

Learning to access our feelings, and the feelings of others enables us to activate the Intuition, the fourth cylinder. The feelings are its fuel. In order to learn how to access our feelings, we have to develop the ability to listen to our feelings, and to listen to the feelings of others.

To activate the fifth cylinder, Creativity, it requires our ability to be nonjudgmental and unconditional in the acceptance of our own creative expression. In addition, the effort requires us to be able to accept the judgments and the conditionality of others as behaviors that are exercised without their awareness and so we don't have to feel put down. By achieving this consciousness, we become free to explore and to express ourselves in truly creative ways. The result is an increased ability to unconditionally accept others in their expressions, which results in relationships that are truly respectful.

In developing this state of unconditional acceptance of ourselves and others, the sixth cylinder, the cylinder of Spirituality is activated. Spirituality is the feeling of Oneness with all others, all things, and all "realities." This connection bonds the six cylinders of our Being into the whole, and we become wholly functional. In this development we are empowered to direct our focus and activity where ever our healthy minds directs. As we become more functional our true identity is more fully revealed, and in doing so, our uniqueness and the identity of our relationship to the whole is made evident. In this way we come to realize our value and this promotes our integration into the Whole. Such an integration is essential to the Whole, for without the integration of the parts the Whole is less than fully functional. Intensity is definitely one of the parts of the Whole.

With the increased integration of the "cylinders" the tension of the imbalance diminishes, and the hold of Intensity in its Addictive form lessens. We now experiences a new fuel, which more efficiently powers our system than that which was previously available from the tension of imbalance. As our drive for imbalance/Intensity diminishes, so in part does society's imbalances diminish. People begin to have a bit more of an overview. Now, not only do we have a more energy, the power from this energy is being more correctly directed to the benefit and welfare of the total society. Whereas in the past the energy was being directed mostly to a certain segment of society, now, with this awareness of balance consciously in place, the impoverished people are starting to derive more energy to function, and thereby to be more capable of being contributing members. This new fuel, derived from balance brings society to a higher, safer, and healthier functioning level in which everyone benefits.

* Refer to the Abstract on "Listening Skills," in Outfar10.com