

Free At Last



7 Spiritual Tools for Conquering Your Addictions

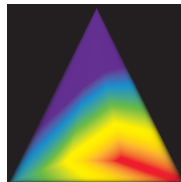
by Sophia Sageheart

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Many names in the case studies have been changed to protect the privacy of the people who have chosen to share their stories.

The facts of the stories remain unaltered.

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Table of Contents

Introduction

Chapter One: The Spiritual Meaning of Addiction

The Blame and Guilt Game

Chapter Two: First Tool - Ask Spirit for Help, Listen for the Answer

Prayer and Meditation

Chapter Three: Second Tool - Change Your Self-Image

Visualization and Being Impeccable with Your Word

Chapter Four: Third Tool - Get a Little Help From Your Friends

Finding the Right Church, 12-Step Program or Spiritual Community

Chapter Five: Fourth Tool - Change Your Mental Diet

What are You Reading, Watching and Listening to?

Chapter Six: Fifth Tool - Express Your Divinity

Using the Arts for Emotional Healing

Chapter Seven: Sixth Tool - Forgiving Yourself and Others

Forgiveness of Self, Forgiveness of Others, There is Nothing to Forgive

Chapter Eight: Seventh Tool - Open Yourself to Total Transformation

Living in the Now, Experiencing the Presence

Chapter Nine: How to Help the Addict You Love

Holding the "High Watch" for Your Loved Ones as They Battle Addiction

Conclusion

Introduction

Our bodies are the living vehicles for Spirit. They are the good and faithful servants of our souls. If we saw someone abusing a horse, we would call the police and have it stopped. However, we see people abusing their bodies on a daily basis and we feel powerless to do anything. In fact, no one can help an addict conquer addiction other than the addicted person.

But how can an addict give up an addiction? It seems impossible. When I was a young woman, the idea of a day without drugs was a dark prospect indeed. I lived for heroin, methadone, cocaine, whatever was available. I was not living for myself, and I certainly wasn't on track to a purposeful, meaningful life. You may say, "Well, I'm not into anything like that. I smoke cigarettes, and that isn't nearly as bad." But there is no doubt that cigarette smoking is dangerous and causes serious and often fatal diseases. Nicotine addiction is so insidious that I have seen cigarette smokers become socially isolated because they can't give up their habits to ease someone else's discomfort. Food addicts and people with eating disorders usually know that their addiction can be deadly and at the very least can destroy their self-esteem. And then there are sex addicts who endanger their relationships, put themselves at risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases, and slowly erode their reputations through their addictive behaviors.

All of these substances and behaviors have a useful place in the pantheon of human experience. Drugs help ease pain in times of physical trauma, a glass of wine is a wonderful way to relax after a hard day of work and tobacco is a part of the spiritual tradition of many Native American tribes. In addition, we have to eat, and life without sex would be less than fulfilling for most of us and would eventually lead to the end of the human race.

However, addicts—whether they are addicted to cigarettes, alcohol, drugs, food or sex—are not in control of their lives. We all have a unique talent, a unique purpose in this life. But the addict's purpose in life becomes perverted by addiction. It may be that the addiction is part of her spiritual journey but if that is the case, then its purpose is to lead her to a more healthy life and the sooner, the better.

Addiction is not a disease in the sense that cancer or multiple sclerosis is a disease. It is the result of our choices. Because it is the result of our choices, we can make other choices. Kicking an addiction is simple, but it's not always easy. In fact, it may seem downright impossible. But it isn't. If it were, there would not be

Free At Last

so many of us who have done it.

Who needs to read this book? Addicts of all persuasions, their family members, ministers and church groups, mental health practitioners, teachers and anyone involved in recovery.

According to a report by National Public Radio; “Cheap and very pure heroin is creating a growing addiction crisis across America. Heroin -- much of it from Colombia -- is replacing crack cocaine as the drug of choice, particularly among the young. In Massachusetts, for example, more than 4 percent of high school boys report having used heroin. . . . Heroin is pure enough to snort these days, and younger people are getting into it. In the Boston area, the number of 18 and 19 year olds seeking emergency-room treatment related to heroin use doubled between 2000 and 2002.”

But it's not just hard drugs that are the problem. Cigarettes, dope, bulimia and anorexia, overeating, booze, sex, video games, violent television, gambling—indulging in any of these behaviors or substances to excess can become an addiction that eventually wrests control of our lives and perverts our true purpose. Addicts are never able to truly speak for themselves. Instead the addiction is always speaking through them. If we cannot be authentic, then we cannot experience the divinity within, and that is tragic.

The Origin of the Tools

While this book speaks specifically toward addicts and their families, the tools described here can be used by anyone who is need of spiritual direction. They can be used to heal depression, unhealthy relationships, and the everyday problems that most of us confront.

I have put together these tools from my own experience as a former heroin addict and cocaine user. The people I have known who have successfully moved from addictive lives to lives of fulfillment and purpose have also used one or more of these tools. These tools are not steps to be done once and then forgotten about. They are habits of life. While I am suggesting a certain order, this may not necessarily be the order that you use. It may be that you have already discovered one or two of these tools for yourself and that is why you are reading the book.

The foundational teachings for this book include A Course in Miracles, The Four Agreements by Don Miguel Ruiz, The Path of Prayer: Reflections on Prayer and True Stories of How It Affects Our Lives by Sophy Burnham, The Science of Mind by Ernest Holmes, and The Holy Bible, Standard Revised Edition. I also incorporate the practical teachings of Sadhguru, Deepak Chopra, Joan Borysenko, Rumi and other spiritual teachers.

The truth is that it is easy to get clean, to kick the habit, to get the monkey off your back. The hard part, as most of us know, is staying clean. The physical

Free At Last

withdrawal may be extremely painful and grueling. And yet it is short-lived. The emotional hook is the one we just can't seem to extract. And so you'll find that these chapters don't just deal with physical addiction. The tools are to help you change your life so that once you get clean, you can stay that way. Will you fall? Perhaps. I did. Just once. It was a hard fall, but I didn't stay down. I had the spiritual resources to get back on my feet, dust myself off and move forward into a fulfilling life.

If you are sincerely looking for help, then you can conquer your addictions. Here's to your new life.