

Overcoming Addictive Behaviours  
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1. Note from Candace

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Happy Spring, Everyone!

Like most of you, I am breathing a sigh of relief that winter is now over. Because of the many snowfalls here in Vancouver, winter seemed to go on and on. But yesterday I noticed that our cherry blossom trees are just beginning to bud with little pink and white blooms – so very pretty! And seeing that made me feel refreshed again, looking forward to more sun and lots of flowers. I feel ready to tackle the world again. I hope you are feeling something similar in your own lives at this lovely time of year.

This newsletter is about being able to allow ourselves to be more comfortable with our uncomfortable feelings, in order to be able to rid ourselves of addictive behaviours. In a way, for me it is the same with learning how to get through winter so that I can enjoy the Spring that that follows close behind. I hope you find this newsletter helpful in your lives.

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## 2. Featured Article: Allowing Discomfort: The Secret to Successful Recovery From Addictive Behaviours

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### CHALLENGING YOUR "YEAH BUT's..."

You've given it a lot of thought. You know that your addiction is overwhelming your life and causing you a lot of problems. You really want to stop engaging in these self-defeating behaviours and have a better life. You're so sure you're ready, but...

"It's going to be so hard!" you tell yourself. "How am I going to get through the rough times without having that substance or behaviour to fall back on?"

The truth is, you're right! It will be difficult. When we have been soothing ourselves with long-held, dysfunctional patterns, habits or addictions, we have developed a "*comfort zone*" for ourselves. This means that we have been comfortable using these behaviours, and we will have to learn all over again how to live without them. For most people this takes some time, vigilance, commitment and yes – discomfort.

If you are at the point of feeling ready to stop your addictive behaviours, it is probably because you have already been living with the discomfort they have been causing in your life for a while now. But because there is also discomfort when we begin doing things a different way, even if the new way is healthier and better for us, most of us don't stop engaging in these self-sabotaging behaviours until they have become truly problematic for us.

### MY EXPERIENCE WITH DISCOMFORT

I often think back to the time when I was coming off Valium. Although it was over 20 years ago, I still remember it vividly. Because of the many lessons I learned from that experience, I choose to retain the memory.

When I was diagnosed with Crohn's Disease in 1973, the doctors prescribed many different medications for me. One of these was Valium, which I took faithfully for many years just the way the doctor ordered. At that time, most physicians did not have as clear

an understanding of either Crohn's Disease or of addiction as they do today, and I found myself paying the price for their lack of clarity.

Almost 15 years later I was still using Valium, as well as other prescription drugs and marijuana on a daily basis, mostly to manage the physical pain I was experiencing as a result of my illness. In the Spring of 1987, I finally made the decision to stop abusing these substances. I entered a residential detox centre in Vancouver and, like most people who are in that situation, I was feeling pretty miserable. Although there were several drugs I was detoxing from at the time, the one that I had the most trouble with was Valium.

It has been said that the withdrawal from Valium can be even worse than withdrawing from heroin. I am grateful that I have never had to come off heroin, but because I had been using so much Valium for so many years, my withdrawal symptoms were brutal. As the Valium slowly left my system, I found that everything I had used that medication to prevent became turned around and exaggerated. I had taken Valium all that time primarily to help me sleep and to ward off anxiety. During my withdrawal from it, I was virtually sleepless and extremely anxious most of the time.

The worst of these symptoms lasted for over a month and I often felt as if I was going crazy. As I look back on it, I'm amazed that I was able to get through it! But even then, as difficult as it was, I knew it was the right thing for me to be doing. There was no question for me that I needed to stop abusing all mind-altering substances ~ I yearned to live a drug-free life. So even though what I was doing felt totally "wrong" both physically and mentally, I knew it was "right."

I began to remind myself of that, and even developed a mantra that I repeated to myself many times a day. I would say to myself *"This feels wrong, but it's right. It feels wrong, but it's right."* In this way, I was able to stay in the discomfort that my harsh withdrawal symptoms were causing me. I was basically giving myself permission to be comfortable with my discomfort.

I still use that mantra sometimes. When I know that I am making a healthy choice for myself but the change of my habitual pattern feels uncomfortable, I will remind myself that even though it feels wrong, it is the right decision to be making. Unless I give myself that permission to sit in the discomfort of my feelings, I will not be able to make important, self-respecting choices for my life.

## THIS TOO SHALL PASS

Another tried-and-true mantra you can use is a familiar slogan which is often used in 12-Step programs: *"This too shall pass."* When I am having a particularly good time in my life and things are going really well, I recognize that this too shall pass and I will once again, at some point, find myself in another growth period. When I have difficult times in my life, I now know for sure that this too shall pass and that I will feel begin to feel

better. This understanding allows me to tolerate the discomfort that I temporarily find myself experiencing.

The purpose of addiction is to change how we are feeling, generally to keep us from feeling uncomfortable. Until you decide to allow yourself to sit in the discomfort of the feelings you experience sometimes, you will never be able to stop engaging in your addictive behaviours. Your need to mask your discomfort will always bring you back to making unhealthy choices.

## HOW YOU CAN HELP YOURSELF

The next time you're feeling some discomfort, try reminding yourself that even though what you're doing *feels* wrong, it really is right – and that your discomfort will pass. You can also choose to take some healthy, self-caring action, such as talking a friend or counsellor about what you're dealing with, or going to a support group such as a 12-Step program. You could also try journalling, meditating, taking a walk, indulging in a luxurious bubble bath or taking a nap.

Some people also like to develop their own mantras or affirmations to fit what they are working on at the moment. Some might include things like "I am choosing to care about myself today" or "I deserve to have healthy relationships in my life." You can let your particular life circumstances determine the creative affirmations you come up with for yourself.

Seeing your discomfort as a positive rite of passage out of addiction will help you to "make friends" with it and become less uncomfortable. As your resistance to the discomfort decreases, your chances of being able to stop your addictive behaviour and choose a healthier path for yourself will increase substantially.

Good luck!

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### 3. Counselling Services

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Is addiction making your life miserable?

Overcome your "addictive behaviours" and get your life back on track!

Counselling with Candace can help you and your loved ones develop more positive relationships, improve your emotional and physical health, and

increase your self-trust and self-respect.

Candace offers individual, couple and family counselling. 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.

Candace's therapy services are provided both in her Vancouver, BC office and by phone.

Contact Candace at 604.677.5876 to set up a FREE 15-minute telephone consultation or email her at [candace@candaceplattor.com](mailto:candace@candaceplattor.com).

To find out more about Candace's Addiction Counselling Services, visit her website at <http://www.candaceplattor.com>

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4. About Candace  
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Candace Plattor, M.A., R.C.C., is a therapist in private practice, specializing in addictive behaviours 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.

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5. About This Ezine  
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