

Addiction:

**Everybody's Talking About It;
Nobody Knows What to Do About It.**



Keith Keller

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“The Infinite Recovery Handbook.”

Recovery is a skill that can be learned by anyone.

“Addiction is the smallpox epidemic of our times”

~ Keith Keller

In my conversations with clinicians and people who work in the recovery field, alcoholics, addicts, and those who are simply concerned or involved in the whole addiction/recovery arena, I’ve noticed a pattern emerging. The conversations go around in a circle. Maybe you’ve noticed the same thing.

It goes something like, *“I have a loved one/friend/client who struggles with addiction, and I don’t know what to do.”*

Followed by, *“I feel so bad, but they made their own choices.”*

Followed by, *“If we enable their behavior, they won’t hit bottom and change.”*

And finally, *“But they don’t seem to want to change anyway. I don’t know what to do”*

A long time ago, I was the person they were talking about. I struggled and just assumed life was supposed to suck. I didn’t have a choice; I drank and drugged against my own will. No one in my life really enabled my behavior, nor did they set limits—they were just uncomfortable and avoided dealing with it. Regarding change, I had no idea what was possible. I didn’t know how amazing my life and recovery could and would be.

The Problem of Addiction

The problem of addiction is one of the most misunderstood issues there is. For many, it's awkward and uncomfortable to discuss. When I was coming to terms with it, I think I would have been more comfortable telling family, friends or coworkers that I had cancer, diabetes or even hemorrhoids.

Addiction is a lot like sex. Am I right?

Sex is just something you must experience to fully comprehend. You can hear all about it, read about it, and you can talk about it. You can even watch it, but until you experience it for yourself, you won't understand what all the fuss is about.

Addiction is the same way. Conveying addiction to a nonaddicted person is challenging. Words, pictures and even real-life scenarios fail to fully illustrate the complete reality of the experience of addiction. Because it uses an example that most people relate to, I like the following illustration.

Imagine that you eat doughnuts. Not just casually—you are seriously into doughnuts. More than a mere habit, you actually crave them on a daily basis. When you awaken in the morning, doughnuts are one of the first thoughts to form in your mind. You are already thinking about your next doughnut from the time your eyes open.

Unfortunately, doughnuts are becoming an issue. You'll do whatever you have to do for your doughnuts. You have to wait for your doughnuts; your employer expresses concern and your job is threatened because you're late for work.



Your health suffers and you gain weight; your significant other is unhappy about that. Your friends and family are concerned, because they see a change

in your personality. The “you” they know and love is gone; you’ve become someone else. You feel resentful, even angry that everyone in your life is judging you. You decide to quit, settling the matter but it fails miserably. You’re not in control anymore. How did things get this bad?

Now, as you begin to think about solving the problem of addiction, somewhere in your mind, maybe even just subconsciously, is awareness that there is stigma about this issue. A prevailing atmosphere of social disapproval influences the collective attitude toward addiction. When you think about it, you would rather tell your family, friends or coworkers that you have cancer, diabetes or hemorrhoids than tell them you are addicted to alcohol, opiates or a behavior like gambling or online gaming. Even though it is an official medically recognized illness, addiction is the black sheep of diseases. While society responds with compassion and understanding to illnesses like cancer and diabetes, addiction conjures misunderstanding and apprehension.

Consider the example of two life-threatening emergencies, an overdose and severe chest pain/heart attack.



Overdose

- Enter the healthcare system via EMS
- Stabilized with Narcan
- Help options vague
- Treatment minimal
- Insurers resistant- push for discharge or outpatient treatment
- Resources lacking
- High end outcome is 4-5 day detox
- Follow-up minimal
- Price tag: between \$5,000 and \$10,000 (insurance opposes treatment)
- **Stigma, inadequate systems in place to assist.**

Perception—that the addict chose to be in the situation, and suffered the consequences of his/her actions. Reality—the ability to make choices is overruled by the pleasure/reward center. Addiction overwhelms responsibility.

Chest Pain/Heart Attack

- Enter the healthcare system via EMS
- Stabilized with aspirin and nitroglycerin
- Fast-tracked w/ diagnosis
- Admitted to a telemetry unit
- No issues from the insurers
- Cardiac catheterization
- Hospitalized until all discharge goals met
- Extensive follow-up, VNA, outpatient cardiac rehab
- Price tag: about \$200,000 (covered, no questions)
- **No stigma, systems in place to assist.**

Perception—bad genes. Reality—years of diet choices, lifestyle choices and non-compliance with medical advice are primary causes of this condition. Heart disease is a “lifestyle” illness.

Looking at the issue of choice, the heart attack victim is actually more responsible than the overdose victim. The chest pain resulting from an artery blockage in the muscle wall of the heart, myocardial infarction or heart attack, was the result of years of diet and lifestyle choices. Anyone under routine medical care will receive warnings regarding these things which they will heed or disregard.

To the unenlightened, the addict freely pursues a self-centered life of indulgence, incurring the consequences and collateral damage. From that superficial and erroneous perception that people choose addiction arises much of the stigma and the belief that the addict lacks willpower and moral compass. Nothing could be further from the truth. The brain is hijacked, and the analytical mind is overruled every time by the pleasure/reward center. The ability to choose is lost. That's the part of addiction—the utter loss of control—that, much like sex, must be experienced to be fully understood, unfortunately.

The assumption that the addict makes a choice is the basis of our legal system that incarcerates rather than rehabilitates. The net effects of stigma are that we, as a culture, hold the worst opinion of and give the worst treatment to our most vulnerable and at-risk people. We marginalize the addicted, and demonize them as being outside society.

When we need to have the problem explained in terms of doughnuts, recovery from addiction has some formidable barriers to understanding. For years, we've had the traditional twelve-step model and, more recently, a variety of alternatives. For the suffering addict, these are vague and mysterious options, and many perceive successful recovery as impossible. When the prevailing modalities drill into the alcoholic/addict that they will always be defective and diseased, and that won't change, the wrong message is being delivered.

What if instead of saying “Hi, I’m Keith, an alcoholic/addict,” I could say, “Hi, I’m Keith, alcoholic/addict in the process of upgrading to new possibilities?”

But what if there was a better way? What if instead of saying, “Hi, I’m Keith, an alcoholic/addict,” I could say, “Hi, I’m Keith, alcoholic/addict in the process of upgrading to new possibilities?”

Infinite Recovery



I'm Keith Keller, and I've been in recovery for 28 years now. I'm a registered nurse, holistic and transformation/motivational practitioner, and I'm the author of *The Infinite Recovery Handbook: Beat Addiction and Have the Recovery and Life of Your Dreams*. I'm a recovery expert and activist—and my life is a mission to help those who suffer as I once did.

Recovery is a skill and can be learned by anyone.

The solution to addiction is still recovery, but not the go-to-a-meeting-every-day for the rest of your life, obey your sponsor, constant fear of relapsing recovery of the traditional twelve-step model... I'm referring to sustainable, transformational, step-into-the-greatness of your infinite potential recovery. Infinite Recovery.

Every day, I see people struggling; it's needless and it breaks my heart. It doesn't have to be that way. By understanding and learning a few basic principles that will be known to schoolchildren in a matter of years, it is possible to transform.

Infinite Recovery is a new model that takes the best of everything that's come before, incorporates it, builds on it, and takes the next logical step—it teaches you to become an upgraded version of yourself who is free of addiction. It teaches the skills of recovery in a step-by-step, coherent manner that can be learned by anyone. The new scientific principles of neuroplasticity, epigenetics, and some basic properties of the quantum model make this absolutely possible.

The old paradigm taught us that the brain was fixed, and, once damaged, could not be repaired. Today we know that the brain can change, grow and be repaired throughout the lifespan. The old paradigm conditioned us to be slaves to our genetic destiny; today we understand that the DNA blueprint of our genes is interpreted daily by our environment, life conditions, and most importantly, our thoughts. The new physics incorporates the element

of our consciousness. The old paradigm conditioned us to be victims in a cause-and-effect reality. The truth is that we observe our reality into existence from limitless possibilities. We can stop living by cause and effect, and instead, learn how to cause an effect. This is the future of recovery. This is exciting. This is real, and it's why Infinite Recovery is different.

The hardest part isn't doing the work. The actual hardest thing here is making the decision to change, and getting started.



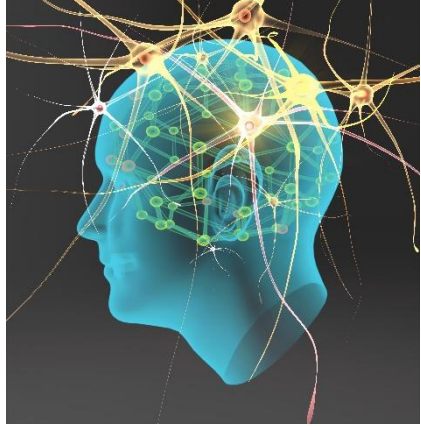
The Solution to Addiction

If you're like me, you spent years of your life learning how to be addicted. You could say I was an addiction expert. Now I'm a recovery expert, and to do that I had to learn to prune out and dismantle all the hardwired thoughts, feelings and behaviors of my addicted lifestyle and install new healthy ones. Hardwired? Yes, literally, because that's how the thought pathways in the brain work. When we practice something over and over again, the brain will build a little pathway into a superhighway over time. We need to learn how to think differently.

This process can happen naturally over years and decades. For example, if I follow the suggestions of the twelve-step model, in 3 to 5 years I will probably achieve a noticeable outcome, with a little luck if I work hard. However, the concerns I have with that are the probably, luck and work

hard parts. It sounds chancy; there is nothing wrong with hard work, but I want us to recover smart, not hard. There are more effective ways we can do this.

When you think about something, you can actually make it so real in your mind that your body reacts as if it's happening in the real world instead of your mind. Sadly, anxiety is a great example. When you worry that something bad is going to happen, your body reacts with anxious feelings like tense muscles, upset stomach, racing heartbeat, etc. Real things happen to your body because of your thoughts. What I've learned to do is harness that same principle for a positive outcome instead of a negative one. Anyone can do this.



It takes some practice to channel your thoughts into something called intention-focused awareness, where you actually start to rewire those pathway circuits in your brain. This uses a fundamental principle of neuroscience. Also helpful is connecting those thoughts to elevated, or positive emotions because they stick better. There are a few simple do's and don'ts, and a great way to accomplish this is in a basic form of meditation that I teach in my new book, *The Infinite Recovery Handbook*. When presented as simple directions that anyone can follow, recovery really is a skill that can be learned.

When we do this type of work, some interesting things start to happen. First, as in the undesired effect of anxiety, the positive thoughts have a positive, even lasting, affect on your body. You start to change. Your body starts to become the body of the recovered version of you ahead of actual experiences in the real world. This is an inside job in the truest sense.

The second thing is that, as your thoughts, feelings and even your body start to transform, your environment will begin shifting to reflect this. Because your choices and behaviors change, so do situations and circumstances. However, it's also true that a different version of you will produce a reality based on different possibilities. In this way, it's even possible to connect yourself to possible realities of the future version of you, and draw them into your existence. What's possible? Anything's possible.

This new way of being requires a new way of thinking, a new way of looking at things. The universe is a pretty neutral place that will support me if I allow it to. I just have to be willing to do my share of the work, and it really just starts with a powerful decision. I decided I wanted to recover from my addiction, and that decision had as much or more intensity, conviction and energy than any decision I'd ever made. When I made



that decision it was the start; I did the next thing in front of me, then the next thing happened, and the next thing after that, etc.

Anyone, and I mean anyone, can go from crisis to resolution to transformation. I wrote *The Infinite Recovery Handbook* to show you how. It's the book I needed 30 years ago, and it's the book anyone who is questioning whether they have a problem needs today. It's the book people already in recovery but mystified by the process need, and it's the book that people already succeeding in recovery who want to go deeper need. And if there is someone in your life who is struggling, this book will give you the understanding and insight you need to help them. Real recovery is possible for anyone, and it's a skill that can be learned.

For the ostracized addicted population that sees no way out of the prison of their lives, this is a game changer. Not only is recovery possible, but so is

addressing, reversing and changing all the underlying things that caused addiction in the first place. Recovery this powerful will render addiction unnecessary, uninteresting and inappropriate.

As a society, we can walk a mile in the shoes of the addict; in a sense, we already do. The roots of addiction are in a society that has become harsh, traumatic and uncaring. We can achieve a much greater understanding of addiction, that thing that had to be experienced to be fully grasped. For those of us in recovery, society will look to us to model behaviors that will promote understanding. This will make necessary some bold action on the part of people establishing this new, upgraded recovery. I personally am up for the challenge.

Addiction affects so many more than just the addict—it's a plague on our culture. It's going to take a village, a community, to solve this problem. We hold the key to ending stigma. Addiction is not a choice, and a more compassionate approach will serve us if we can keep our eyes on a bigger picture. Even for those rock-bottom cases where change seems utterly impossible, there is hope, provided we can stop putting people in a corner. Like a bud pushing through a crack in the pavement, recovery can find a way if we know collectively what to do.

You can learn more at my website: <https://www.infiniterecovery.org/>

I invite you to join my recovery community and be part of this important conversation at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/291647781443117>

The Infinite Recovery Handbook: Beat Addiction and Have the Life and Recovery of Your Dreams by Keith Keller is available on Amazon.com and at select booksellers.

Comments? Questions? Contact me at keith@infiniterecovery.org