



Sober Buddha
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ADDICTIVE THINKING PARALOGIAS

THE LEARNING BENEFIT:

Addicts suffer from cognitively distorted thinking. These illogical patterns of thought, called *paralogias* (para - against, logia - logic) are caused by chemicals, trauma and habitual patterns of negative thinking. By understanding your paralogias, you can control them and bring your thinking more into line with reality.

THE FACTS:

Here is an example of how paralogical thinking works.

Logical Thinking - All men are mortal. Socrates was a man.
Socrates was mortal.

Paralogical Thinking - Socrates was a man. I am a man. I am Socrates.

The paralogical example is ridiculous, but addicts' thinking habits can be similarly absurd.

Consider these thought processes.

Logic or paralogia? Meth causes cerebral catabolism (death of brain cells).
I use meth. I'll be OK.
Alcohol numbs depression. I am depressed.
I need to drink.

Do either the meth user's "I'll be OK," or the alcohol abuser's "I need to drink," make sense? No, not to a non-addict. But to the user, both statements are logical. Consider the absurdity of the following story of a doctor's paralogia.

The Nasogastric Tube Story

An alcoholic surgeon continually pumped his stomach at night to minimize hangovers that would hamper his next day's surgeries. By repeatedly inserting the gastric tube down his throat, he eventually tore his esophagus. Instead of facing up to his drinking problem, he took a medical leave of absence citing esophageal trauma. The dishonesty of the surgeon's stated reason for taking a leave is shocking, but again, made sense to him. To heal maladaptive paralogical patterns like this, addicts need to first learn to identify them. To get you started, following are four commonly accepted definitions of addictive thinking.

Definitions of Addictive Thinking

- Inability to make consistently healthy decisions for yourself.
- Complete loss of will power.
- Inability to see logical cause and effect.
- Blaming and projection of personal faults onto others.

THE SELF-EXAMINATION EXERCISE:

There are 10 primary paralogias. Each one is named, then a short quoted statement characterizes how a person thinks, followed by symptom descriptions. Score yourself between 1 (I do not have the symptom) and 5 (the symptom is killing me!) for each symptom. At the end of the exercise, write down the 1-5 score in the blank line after each symptom. Finally, tally your total score.

1. Impatience / Instant Gratification

1 2 3 4 5

"I need to feel good NOW!"

You demand instant gratification without any effort.

You ignore the future. Serious disease, injury, incarceration, loss of family, job, social status of money is irrelevant.

Achieving sustained full remission (12 months clean and sober) is inconceivable.

2. Dyslexic Thinking

1 2 3 4 5

"Alcohol doesn't cause my problems; my problems make me drink."

Addicts believe substance abuse is a secondary problem.

Denial that substance abuse creates even more problems.

Overcoming this paralogia make take 12+ months of abstinence.

3. Emotional Hypersensitivity

1 2 3 4 5

"I do more work than everyone else and nobody cares!"

You constantly feel ignored, unappreciated, isolated.

You anticipate criticism from others.

Your are defensive and over-react to constructive criticism.

4. Feeling Shame More Than Guilt

1 2 3 4 5

"Sometimes I feel guilty for my past, but I always worry that there's something really wrong with me, like I can't fix it."

Guilt can lead to corrective action, apologizing and fixing mistakes.

Shame about your basic self leads to despair and resignation.

Despair comes from low self-esteem.

5. Catastrophizing

1 2 3 4 5

"I'm doing OK at work, but I'm jinxed. I know I'll eventually get fired."

Fear that anything going well will eventually fail.

Negatively sabotages your success.

Your pessimism does not disappear immediately when you cut back or stop using or drinking.

6. Contempt Prior to Investigation

1 2 3 4 5

"I've never been to a 12-Step meeting, but I know they don't work."

You judge things without actual personal experience.

You use a single negative experience to judge an entire group/program.

You miss opportunities for learning by being judgmental.

7. False Omnipotence

1 2 3 4 5

"Losers relapse, but I'm different. I can handle it."

Your false confidence ignores the likelihood of relapse.

You use false hope to defend against fear of failure.

Denying the power of addiction increases chances of relapse.

8. Projection

1 2 3 4 5

"Sure I have a drink now and then, but you eat like a pig!"

You ignore your own problems by focusing on other people's.

You deflect your guilt to avoid doing the hard psychological work of recovery.

By continuing to project, you perpetuate addictive behavior.

9. Dissociation / Minimization

1 2 3 4 5

"I barely remember that accident. It wasn't a big deal. Nobody got hurt or anything."

You block out the fact of destructive behavior by pretending it is unimportant.

Dissociating relieves your ego of guilt and tension.

You romanticize bizarre and risky behavior.

10. Repression of Affect

1 2 3 4 5

"I'm sorry I made you mad. I did the best I could. I promise to try to do better next time. I know I always let you down. I shouldn't let my problems get in the way."

When stressed, criticized or ignored, you turn anger and blame onto yourself.

Your silence worsens the depression.

You are unable to ask for love and attention when you need it most.

You refuse to admit physical illness.

You tolerate physical, mental or emotional abuse.

- ❖ To heal your paralogias as fast as possible, start working first on those symptoms scored 4 or 5. These are your most damaging issues.

- ❖ Take the test at least twice a year, and hopefully you will see your score for each symptom go down, along with your total score.

Scoring

_____ Impatience _____ Dyslexic Thinking _____ Hypersensitivity
_____ Shame _____ Catastrophizing _____ Contempt
_____ Omnipotence _____ Projection _____ Dissociation/Minimization
_____ Repression

_____ **Total Score** **Date** _____

_____ Impatience _____ Dyslexic Thinking _____ Hypersensitivity
_____ Shame _____ Catastrophizing _____ Contempt
_____ Omnipotence _____ Projection _____ Dissociation/Minimization
_____ Repression

_____ **Total Score** **Date** _____

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