



ADDICTIVE BEHAVIOR

DOUG FEIL, MA, LPC

Executive director, clinical staff member, Southwest Counseling Associates

Something addicted people don't understand is how ritualized their addictive behaviors are. This applies to all addictive behaviors. The process from temptation to the addictive behavior through its action and the fallout afterwards are often predictable, repetitive, rationalized in similar ways and include minimization of any consequences.

One useful strategy to increase self-awareness is to outline by separate steps the journey through the repetitive behavior. Include actions, thoughts, and feelings. An example of an addiction to pornography might be: I feel alone → think looking at porn will be exciting → wait until no one is nearby → pick the device on which I can hide my "tracks" → start to "just look" → visit my typical websites → get aroused → etc.

Put in as much specific detail on each step. Be sure to do this outline into the next day. People are frequently surprised at how predictable and dysfunctional their ritual is. Hope for change comes in part by knowing the arrow between each step represents an opportunity to do something different and healthier, and actually help break out of this addictive pattern.