

STRESS AS AN ADRENALINE ADDICTION

A Coach's Overview

By

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The operating premise of the adrenaline addiction concept is that some people, usually under the label stress, use their own adrenaline as a drug. This "addiction to intensity" has a purpose. It is to repress the conscious emergence of particularly painful underlying feelings of loss, abandonment, and disconnection, at essential levels.

In compensation, many individuals will accept any form of intensity rather than confront their inner emptiness. If one particular source of intensity is relieved, a replacement will emerge. Yet the continued presence of this level of stress within the body is harmful both physiologically and psychologically. Therefore, some kind of relief is indicated. This usually requires working with a Coach.

For the untrained Coach, a normal approach would include application of various stress reduction techniques. While this may help relieve the immediate complaints, the long-term effect may be essentially palliative in nature. For more permanent stress relief, the introduction of the concept of adrenaline addiction may prove beneficial.

The primary approach begins as the Coach shifts the person's focus away from external sources of stress. Instead, the individual is helped to develop an internal awareness of the presence, and use, of adrenaline as a drug of choice. Written self-reports (the adrenaline diary) reviewed by the Coach is helpful in this phase of the process.

Once aware of their adrenaline abuse, the person is encouraged to find conscious ways to create adrenaline at will. With guidance, they begin to create volitional adrenaline, rather than habitually selecting something in their environment to react to.

Withdrawal from adrenaline, as a drug state, is then begun. The Coach assists the person to discontinue some of the more manageable triggers. The difficulty of this task is compounded by the tendency to replace one adrenaline-producing trigger with another.

As this process continues, an underlying depression is normally uncovered, sometimes accompanied by the emergence of childhood memories. In severe cases, consultation with a physician and even anti-depressant medication may be indicated. It is suggested that, whenever manageable, the use of these drugs should be limited. There are indications that effective resolution of the underlying phenomena may be slowed by an over-reliance on medication.

Since this is a long-term procedure, facilitation of this unfolding process is greatly aided by the use of some kind of continuing peer support. This can be as simple as the creation of a small adrenaline support group, to the founding of an independent Adrenaline Addicts Anonymous self-help meeting. (The Adrenaline Addicts Anonymous Web Site may be found at <http://www.adrenalineaddicts.org>.)

If the person can tolerate this phase of internal redevelopment, and manages to avoid adopting too many new adrenaline-producing behaviors, a profound shift eventually occurs. The individual not only becomes more fully conscious of their use of any overabundance of adrenaline, but spontaneously begins to avoid its presence. The result, even when impermanent, is a transformation that is nearly transcendental in nature.

There are cautions. As the process unfolds, there may be a period of withdrawal from normal activities and relationships. Very often during this phase the person seeks and experiences some form of spiritual evolution. In time, of course, most individuals return to a more standard lifestyle, even though permanently modified by this experience.

The first task of the ethical Coach is to educate all involved regarding the fundamental changes they may experience. Only then should they agree to help anyone set foot on the pathway of adrenaline addiction recovery.