

Chapter 8

What Happens to Us When We Get High?

(what is euphoria?)

Although normal folks rarely refer to it this way, all of us feel “high” at times. On life. On love. On winning. On bargains. The odd thing is, despite the obvious and not so subtle differences between these events and addictions, all highs feel remarkably similar. Why bring this up? Because it turns out that our not being able to personally discern between these highs is one of the more important flaws in our nature, especially with regard to what makes us susceptible to addiction. People. Drugs. Food. Whatever. If it can get us high, we can get addicted to it. In this chapter of Plain Talk about Talk Therapy, we’re going to explore getting high. Or as therapists call it, feeling “euphoric.” Hopefully you’ll come away with a good sense of what makes euphoria the main symptom of addiction. Ready?

The “High on Life” Warm Up Exercise

“My name is Steven and I am a recovering alcoholic and addict.” When I first spoke those words close to twenty five years ago, the last thing I would have wanted to admit to anyone was that getting high was bad. According to my brain back then, getting high was good. And getting caught was bad. Five plus years later, fate had me working as the family therapist in an adolescent rehab, lecturing on why getting caught was good, and getting high was bad. Now it’s



Mind Body Clock Differences

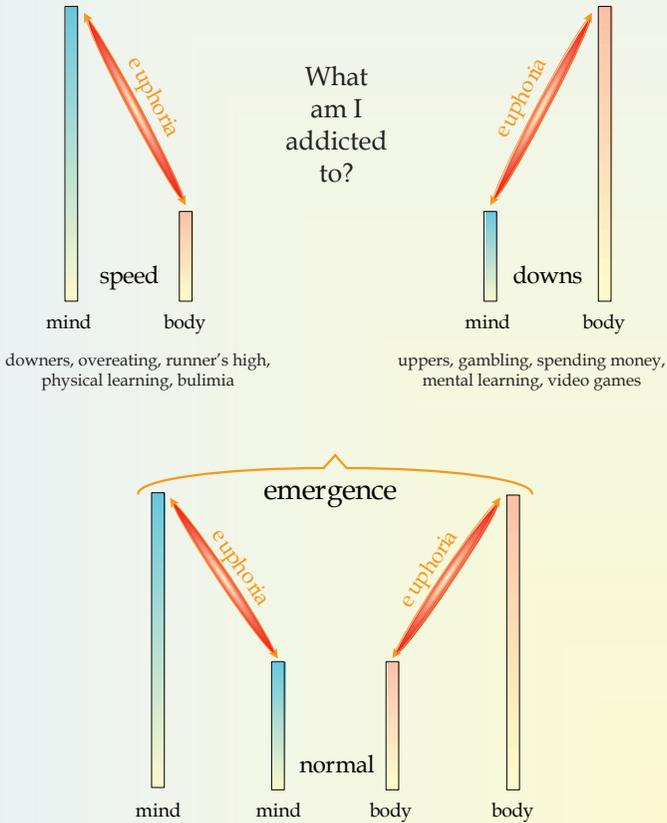
(How Emergence Personality Theory explains getting high)

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How Mind / Body Differences Create Euphoria

The greater the difference between mind and body awareness, the greater the euphoria. Moreover, whichever has the the higher awareness determines the nature of the high; mind high (upper); body high (downer), or both (emergence).



two decades later and I am about to tell you how getting high on life can be as addicting to some folks as getting high on drugs. Who would have thought. All this said, I need to preface what we are about to talk about with a few disclaimers. As well as with a few pointers.

One. In order for any of this to make sense, you must be able to access at least one euphoric moment. Good. Bad. It doesn't matter. You need to be able to access at least one time when you were "high" in order to personally grasp what I'm about to say.

What if you can't seem to bring anything to mind? Start with this. These moments are in you. Believe me. Even if only that you fell in love once. You see, euphoria, the technical word for getting high, is the *falling* part of *falling in love*. The walking on air, floating in the clouds, high on life feeling. Thus, *falling in love* more than qualifies as a personal example of euphoria.

Remember too that we can fall in love with anything or anyone; person, place, or thing. Thus your euphoric event need not be a romantic falling in love.

What other kinds of falling in love events qualify? The moment in which you first saw your child just after childbirth. Or any single vividly memorable event in which a child stole your heart. The moment you knew the brown spotted puppy was the one you were taking home. Or the first time you and this puppy fell asleep next to each other. The day you first laid eyes on that little yellow convertible you always dreamed of owning. Or the awe and wonder you felt the first time you stood on the edge of the Grand Canyon.

All these and similar *falling in love* events qualify as personal examples of getting high or euphoria.

Now take a moment to write down at least three sentences about your particular *falling in love* experience. Pay particular attention to the person, place, or thing you feel most compelled to keep looking at. Also, ask yourself which colors, sounds, faces, or details jump out at you the most? As well as which things within this scene can you not quite bring into focus. In other words, who or what in this scene remains just outside your view, this despite your knowing this person, place, or thing was present?

Done? Okay. Let's move on to number two.

Two. In order to identify with the feelings of addiction, you must be able to bring to mind at least one event wherein you yearned, pined, and longed to be with this person, place, or thing again. The day you anxiously called to see if she liked you after the first date. The night you rushed home from work so you could take your new puppy to the park. The first Sunday morning you waxed then drove your new sports car through the twists and turns of the nearby mountain roads. The hours you spent planning your return trip to the beautiful mountain lake cabin.

Now take a moment to write down at least three sentences about your particular *longing to relive that falling in love* experience. Again, pay particular attention to whomever or whatever you feel most drawn to look at in this scene. Which colors seem particularly bright to you? Which sounds seem vividly clear. Which minor details paint themselves into this story? And what is it you cannot quite bring into focus in this scene? Perhaps the things which happened just before and after this event. As well as the things which remain hidden just outside your mind.

Done? Okay. Let's move on to number three.

Three. I now need to ask you to remember one more kind of event. A euphoric event which ended in you feeling deflated right afterwards. For instance, the drive home after you and your new love had your first fight. The first time you took your puppy to the vet and he told you something was wrong. The first ding or dent you found in the door of your new yellow sport car. The first night back from Greece when you saw the undone laundry piled high.

Now take a moment to write down at least three sentences about this *normal life is so much less than falling in love* experience. This time, pay particular attention to how hard it is to feel drawn to anything in this scene. Can you see or hear anything? For instance, do the colors which seemed bright now seem dull? Do the sounds you could hear now seem far away? And what is it you cannot quite bring into focus? The things you know were right but which you would rather not see. The things which you feel urges to avoid looking at.

Okay. Now let's move on to part two. The part wherein I introduce the concept which underlies euphoria. The fractal for *body / mind time difference*.

The Body / Mind Time Difference Fractal

Before we start, did you notice how none of the euphoric events we just spoke about would normally be called, "addictions?" Please keep this in mind as we go through the next section.

So what is a *body / mind time difference*?

A body / mind time difference is what we feel in any experience wherein we sense the speed at which our mind is running differs markedly from the speed at which our body is running. Slower mind and faster body. Or faster mind and slower body. Either way, it does not matter. Whenever you sense a significant difference between the speed at which your body and mind are experiencing life, you are in a body / mind time difference.

What makes these experiences significant?

The onset of body / mind time differences is the source of euphoria. And by source, I mean this is the cause of euphoria. Moreover, this holds true regardless of what caused this body / mind time difference. Sex. Drugs. Rock and roll. It

doesn't matter. If it causes a significant body / mind time difference, you will feel euphoric.

Now before you run for the hills shouting, "he's lost his mind again, Edith," please give me a moment to explain.

As we said in the last chapter, we usually call anything which speeds up the rate at which we perceive life, an "upper." Conversely, we generally call anything which makes us feel like life has slowed down, a "downer." And in both cases, some person, place, or thing has altered our perceived visual refresh rate. Either up. Or down. Which then affects the speed at which we perceive life. As in, either life seems more exciting and action packed or life seems more relaxing and easily managed. Either way though, these kinds of perceived time changes noticeably alter our perceived quality of life.

Okay. This is what we discussed in the previous chapter. The thing we did not talk about though was how these perceived time changes *do not normally occur to both our body and our mind simultaneously*. And yes, this body / mind sync can and does happen to us on rare occasions. But normally, it does not. So let's leave these simultaneous mind / body changes for last.

So what is the essence of an *upper*? The clock which controls how fast your mind is going starts running much faster than the clock which controls your body. Much faster. In other words, your mind literally races and runs ahead of your body. Almost like your mind is a young child excitedly running into a toy store ahead of you, while your body is the parent still standing in the parking lot saying, "slow down and wait for me."

And a *downer*? Here the essential quality is that these experiences resemble the body working toward or at its peak. Running. Jumping. Climbing. Heart pounding. Breath flowing in strong inflations. All the while, the mind is waiting to see how all this exertion will turn out. Body on fast forward. Mind on head-in-the-air pause.

What kinds of experiences can we call, uppers? Anything which can cause your mind to race. Thus aside from the obvious; amphetamines, cocaine, caffeine and such, shopping sprees on sale days and hyper action type video games both qualify as uppers. Minds race. Bodies get forgotten.

Can't see this? Picture seeing an 80% off tag on the perfect blouse for you. Your mind goes into hyper drive. Wow! Unfortunately, your body does not react quite as fast as your mind does and so, the woman standing next to you grabs the last one. Arrrgh! Gimme that girlie. I saw it first.

Or picture yourself playing the latest greatest ugly alien action video game. The giant aliens approach-eth. And being an expert in alien action games, you know all too well what you need to do. No problem. Unfortunately, you can't seem to make your trigger finger pull the trigger fast enough. You know. Your mind is

lightning quick, but your swimming in molasses body lags behind.

Ouch. They got you again.

Are you beginning to sense what gets us addicted to shopping and to video games? Body frozen. Mind racing. This is all it takes.

How about downers now. What kinds of activities can we call, downers?

Here again, aside from the obvious; pain killers, opiates, valium and so on, anything which can cause your mind to slow down can be called a *downer*. Thus both five mile jogs and Thanksgiving meals fit into this category. As can any exercise which you can overdo, Tai Chi to mountain climbing. Home improvement to after school basketball.

What happens to us in these particular kinds of experiences? We feel as if someone has pumped up the beat to which our muscles move. And turned down to speed control on our brains. Thus the beautifully slow observations we make as we jog past the floating swans. Or the big breath out, sink into the couch feeling we feel after wolfing down Thanksgiving dinner. Hands can't move fast enough? Who cares. Something's on sale today? Couldn't care less; they have those things on sale every two months anyway. No biggie.

So how about overeating and compulsive exercise? Are you beginning to recognize what lies beneath our getting hooked on these two things? It's simple. Body clock goes way up. Mind clock goes down. In other words, the mind slows down almost to a stop while our body is still floating blissfully along.

The thing to remember here is that it is the difference that causes the euphoria, not just the speed. Thus, even when your body and mind both slow down, if you feel a significant difference between the speed at which your mind is running and the speed at which your body is running, as it comes on, you will feel euphoria.

So what makes these time differences cause euphoria? It's simple really. We feel increasingly connected to one half of ourselves but disconnected from the other half. And this perceptual difference is the key.

How about the experiences wherein our body and mind both speed up equally then?

The thing to know here is that when we experience *simultaneous* body / mind perceived time accelerations, we cannot get addicted to what we are doing. Why not? Because these experiences invoke in us the polar opposite feeling to getting addicted. They make us feel more connected to both our body and our mind. In other words, there is no negative reaction here because there is no disconnect.

Ironically, this feeling of being more connected overall is much of what we are seeking when we do things which alter our perception of time. However, unlike the way in which addiction offers us this but then steals our personal freedom, simultaneous body / mind accelerations make us feel free even with the burdens

of all of life. Which is why these experiences are what underlie all true spiritual experiences. Or as I prefer to call them, *psychophysical* experiences.

What kinds of events would fit into this category? For one thing, the exhilarating feeling of making a breakthrough in therapy. You leave the session high on life but with no bad side effects. Or the excitement you feel when you finally realize what the teacher has been trying to show you for weeks. Not just the words she has been saying mind you but the beauty in these words.

“Oh. That’s what made Newton fall in love with calculus.” (What was it? Newton asked himself what it would be like to be going at an *almost* infinite speed. Which allowed him to approximate huge distances. Amazing if you consider what a leap this was.)

Or, “Oh. That’s what Socrates meant when he said he was *maeutic*.” (*Maeutic* is Greek for a midwife. Socrates considered himself a midwife for ideas. What a beautiful picture. Don’t you think?)

The thing to remember here is why these psychophysical experiences feel so similar to addiction. As well as what makes them different. In other words, the key to seeing what makes these things tick is seeing what makes the addictive euphoria caused by mind / body differences and the spiritual euphoria of simultaneous mind / body accelerations feel so similar and at the same time, so different? Let’s start with what feels the same about them.

What feels the same? For one thing, the euphoria. Both these kinds of experiences get us high.

There’s also the way we feel drawn to keep doing these experiences. The powerful thoughts and feelings which tell us we should try this again. And do this more often.

Finally, there’s also the moments wherein we are hypervisual during these events. Which in fact is what causes them to be so memorable. And accessible to our brains.

What feels different then?

Addictive euphoria is, for the most part, non visual. Thus, despite the fact that all addictions include moments wherein we become hypervisual, at some point, the screen of our mind suddenly empties. We literally go blank. This differs markedly from psychophysical experiences wherein the hypervisual nature of the event is ongoing. No sudden loss. Even years later.

What I’m saying is, in the onset of any activity wherein we experience a significant mind / body *difference*, at some point, we become hypervisual. Very pleasant, indeed. However, with addiction, this hypervisual state abruptly ends at some point, in a way very similar to how we lose our ability to see what is on the screen of a television set when the power goes off suddenly. Whereas, with simultaneous mind / body accelerations, we never lose the picture. Instead, we

float off into a visual wonderland and feel drawn to keep floating. In what? In the beautiful view of life we just discovered. The inner equivalent to seeing the Grand Canyon, or the face of a new born baby.

In essence, this difference amounts to a personally connected / disconnected difference. With addiction, we feel personally disconnected from others who are not like us. And with spiritual experiences, we feel personally connected to others regardless of whether they are like us or not.

Therapeutic Body / Mind Time Difference Interventions

Enough theory already. How does knowing about the mind / body time difference fractal help us in talk therapy?

To begin with, if you are the therapist, there is a simple four step sequence which works remarkably well.

One. Get your client to see how the addiction alters his overall sense of time.

Two. Get your client to notice how this time changes his body and mind differently. Either mind faster than body, or body faster than mind.

Three. Get your client to see how this addiction alters his body's clock separately from the mind's clock. And that whenever addiction creates a significant internal mind body time difference, this increasingly out of sync feeling between mind and body is the "high." Thus, while things like social ease and or relief from life pain are parts of what addicts desire, euphoria is what causes the addiction in the first place. Moreover, this holds true even when there are other significant psychological and physical factors present.

Finally, **four.** You help your client to find his or her own words for what this experience feels like. Remember, the order of these experiences is what is important. Visual / visceral experiences come first. Words for these visual / visceral experiences come second.

Keep in mind the goal here is to get the person to see how indulging in this addiction creates somewhat predictable euphoric moments. And how this euphoria happens only when there is a significant perceptual difference between the mind and body clocks; meaning, a difference between how quickly and or slowly the body's sense of time is compared to the mind's sense time.

What about some actual examples? To begin with, you could have the person visualize any past experience wherein he or she felt urges to get high. In detail. Slowly. And personally. Then, while picturing this event, have the person pay close, non judgmental attention to what she feels in her mind and body, looking for signs which show a perceptual slowing down or speeding up of time.

Next you would do this same thing only expand this checking to "right before, during, and right after" the event. Does her mind's clock speed up before

using? Does her body's clock slow down after using? And how are both clocks while using.

Again, the important thing to remember here is that your client needs to have viscerally noticed both her body's and her mind's clocks. Especially how in or out of sync they are. Once she has done this then she can use these observations as her baseline against which she can compare her get high experiences to her ordinary life experiences.

Here again, you'd have her do the same kind of check in with the body and mind, "right before, during, and right after" the event. Does she even have a sense of how quickly or slowly time passes during ordinary life events?

Finally, have your client do a contrast and compare between these two experiences. Again, she'd be looking for any indications of wherein time feels slower or faster. Or non existent. Remember, in order for this exercise to help, your client must have visually witnessed at least a few moments of what these two different kinds of life experiences *looked like*. Logic and or memory alone will not suffice. In other words, in order for this to work, your client must have *pictured* these two events. Which makes picturing these two events on the screen of her mind the basic requirement for healing.

Now let's say you did all this. Your client can sense time in her body separately from time in her mind. She can also sense how indulging in her addiction alters this balance, creating euphoria. In addition, she can sense how different this feel from what she experiences during normal events. Her normal mind to body ratio. And she can easily visually access all this on her own with only mild help from you. What's next?

You would verbally explore with her how her mind / body ratio changes in other kinds of normal life events compared to what she feels when she is doing her addiction. Urge wise. Excitement wise. Guilt wise. All of it. Why do this? To solidify an already emerged sense of how mind / body clock differences affect one's sense of well being in life.

Know that if you do this well enough, you can have an addict physically and spiritually relive these time differences right there in the session. Which will help you both to see the exact moments to which he or she is addicted. Not just the substance or activity, mind you. The essential underlying experiential ingredient underlying the person's addiction.

What else might you try? You could try using a visual clock (e.g. a "Time Timer") to help the addict to visually notice the speed at which his body and mind are running at. Normal speed. Sped up. Slowed way down. Then get him to notice how thinking of certain things like the addiction speed up or slow down his body and or mind.

Now for those who have never seen a visual clock, picture a foot square ana-

log clock wherein you can set it to count down from an hour to a few minutes. However, instead of hands or numbers counting down, it has a variable red area on the face which decreases in size as the time decreases.

This decreasing red area then is what makes this clock so useful. It visually represents how much time is left, which then gives the person's mind a visual analog for how time passes. More time. More red area. Less time left. Less red area. And so on.

How then would you use this clock to help the person's mind / body time awareness? Basically, you would experiment with different activities wherein you tried to improve your client's sense of how time passes. Both physically and mentally. Thus, if you had your client hold her body perfectly still all the while watching this clock count down, she might have an emergence with regard to how time feels in her body. Or if you had your client count out loud from one thousand down while at the same time listening to these numbers and watching this clock count down too, she might acquire a visual reference for how focusing her mind on counting feels for this amount of time.

In both cases, of course, the goal would be to help the person to have a reference experience for a sense of body time and mind time. As well as seeing how addiction alters the body / mind clock.

By the way, has it dawned on you yet why medicating kids who have ADD with uppers makes them behave better? Symptoms wise? In essence, we are bringing their perceived body time more in sync with their perceived mind time. Body clock to mind clock. And when this out of sync gap is closed, they can then stay in their bodies long enough to hear what their teachers are saying. Or what their parents are asking them to do. Or what their own thoughts mean to them.

Know we'll talk a whole lot more in coming chapters about how these kinds of body / mind time differences affect human behavior. Including how they create the experiences of mania and depression. As well as the experience of pain itself.

We'll also talk about how we all have a default body mind clock difference. Either we have a body clock which runs faster than our mind, or we have a mind clock which runs faster than our body.

Why does this matter? Because this mind body clock difference affects everything we do, from what addictions we are vulnerable to, to whom we might fall in love with. The falling in love feeling, remember?

This Chapter's Session Notes

Before I close this chapter, I have a confession. When I discovered this chapter's fractal, I felt physically and spiritually high for weeks afterwards. As I

do with all discoveries. This one in particular though felt especially meaningful, perhaps because I am a recovering addict. As well as that I so love discovering fractals which may potentially make a big difference in the lives of suffering human beings.

What amazes me here is, if you combine this fractal with the one I showed you in the last chapter, the fractal for how we perceive time, these two fractals pretty much completely describe the cracks in our walls through which addiction roots into our personalities. Thus, what at first may seem infinitely complex; addiction, turns out to be nothing more than two simple fractals. Pretty amazing, really.

Of course, like a real tree when it roots into the foundation our house, it's no easy task to cut addiction out of our lives. Nor is repairing the damaged foundation easy. In the house or in us. Just the same, once we begin, things get better and some things end up better and stronger than ever. In fact, should we continue to follow through with this self repair, our spiritual awareness can grow exponentially.

Finally, what I'd like to leave you with is just this. Each and every single aspect of human nature has two sides. A down side and an up side. Or a slow side and a quick side. Or the yin energy and the yang energy. Or the hole and what is around the hole.

Whatever your metaphor for illness though, my point here is that all illness is rooted in some kind imbalance. An imbalance wherein the symptoms on one side mirror the potential good on the other. Sort of like a coin with both a heads and tails.

With regard to addiction then, since we have two kinds of symptoms, we could say we have two coins here, each with an up side and a down. The down side of one coin then is the experiences wherein we purposely alter our sense of time in order to escape life. The Perceived Time Fractal. And the other down side would be feeling the half empty euphoria we chase when we do speed and downers. The Euphoria Fractal.

So what's on the "healing an addiction" sides of these coins? The mirror images of the symptoms. Thus on the other side of the "using time to escape life" coin, we see the beauty in perceiving time. Anything from taking credit for things you've earned to the beautiful feelings of timelessness in the Universe. A Universe filled with infinite beauty. And the infinite possibilities for a good life.

On the other side of the euphoria coin then, we have the full rich euphoria of spiritual inspiration. The feelings which drive us to go out and do good in the world. The feelings which energize our very souls. Speaking of which, this June, God willing, I'll be celebrating twenty five years clean and sober. And this is what my anniversary coin looks like to me. A beautiful timeless Universe on

one side. And inspiration on the other.

I guess you might say this coin is what drives me to keep writing all these words. And looking for the next discovery.

Until next chapter then.

I hope you are well,

Steven