

# RE/FRAMING ADDICT/ION

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## YOUR ADRENAL GLANDS NEED SUPPORT TOO!

Here are a few practical ways to adjust your lifestyle to support the balance of your adrenal glands and thus, your cortisol levels. Following these practices will help you greatly in reducing addictive behaviours.

- **20 minutes per day of intentional breathing exercises**
- **Limit sugar, caffeine, chocolate, and highglycemic carbs (bread, baked goods, pasta, etc.)**
- **Do your best to eat your meals at consistent times throughout each day**
- **Take a 20 minute break between 3pm and 5pm each day. Your cortisol levels are low during this time, so a nap, breathing exercise, meditation, walk, bath, savasana are HIGHLY recommended.**
- **LAUGH!!!! Find a funny video, talk to a hilarious friend about something silly, whatever it takes.**
- **40 minutes of exercise, doing something you ENJOY. Yoga, hiking, biking, jogging, solo-dance-partying. Whatever gets you moving and increases stressbusting endorphins\*\* in a healthy way.**

\*\*Endorphins are neurotransmitters that inhibit the stress response. Naturally produced endorphins can decrease the stress response and lower cortisol. They produce sensations of euphoria, enhance pleasure and suppress emotional and physical pain. When endorphins are low, we will often crave fatty foods, chocolate and salty foods, such as potato chips, foods we refer to as comfort foods as they temporarily increase endorphins but can also have a negative impact on our overall health and can cause a crash in cortisol levels that activities such as laughter and exercise can efficiently sustain.

## THE REWARD PATHWAY - NEUROLOGICAL FREEWAY TO PLEASURE

The central job of the brain's reward pathway is to make us feel good when we engage in behaviours that are necessary to our survival. These behaviours include eating, drinking, touch sensation, having sex and giving and receiving nurturing. The reward pathway reinforces the repetition of these behaviours, through a complex series of transmissions with several parts of the brain and neurotransmitters, as mentioned earlier, dopamine being primary. The problem is, we've replaced many of these "natural" activities with "unnatural" activities that light-up the brain's reward pathway and produce dopamine in the same manner, including but not limited to, gambling, snorting cocaine, shopping, logging into Facebook and watching internet porn. You can see that eating, drinking water and having sex contribute to human survival in ways that gambling, snorting cocaine and internet porn do not.

This pathway is influenced by the endocrine system (stress response > adrenal glands > cortisol) and the autonomic nervous system (aka responsible for our "fight or flight" response) via the hypothalamus (remember that guy?) and the pituitary gland (you know the one). The hypothalamus integrates the nervous system with the glandular system. It sends hormones into the blood to cause the pituitary to increase or decrease the volume of hormones it produces to activate the other glands.

IN SHORT, the hypothalamus is the control centre that connects the reward pathway to the glandular system, affecting how all of the other organs function. When we replace "natural" behaviours with seemingly "unnatural" behaviours, we begin to alter the chemical transmissions of the brain and reinforce behaviours that contribute to our demise, not to our ability to thrive and survive.