

### C a t c h i n g   y o u r   I n n e r   C o n

Deep within the recesses of your mind is the Con! Your Inner Con is that scheming, conniving part of your mind that tempts you to go back to your addiction! Your Inner Con specializes in seduction. This inflated fragment of the ego is a subpart of your total personality. It attempts to manipulate you by focusing on fear and anxiety. It is exacting, greedy and never satisfied, always wanting more, more, more of whatever got you in trouble in the first place.

Your Inner Con is absorbed in totally protecting and preserving itself. It feeds your fixation and agonizes about not being complete without using. It seduces, swindles and victimizes you to go against yourself and your better nature. It divides your psyche and creates mistrust in yourself. Its purpose is to keep hounding you until you weaken and give in. It will say anything to get you to use.

Your Inner Con is a master of lies to persuade you to use your substance or activity of choice. It is a fear-based part of you, but it is not who you are. That treacherous Con is an ego part, which acts out of negativity and fear.

### **Warning! Your inner con is a ruler of cutoffs**

Cutoffs are big Con lies that cut-off your common sense. They are things you tell yourself, saying it's okay to use. They are those seductive whoppers that you tell yourself on the rocky road to relapse.

Cutoffs are any words that help you distort reality. They are falsehoods you tell yourself to readjust what you consider to be right and wrong. They include those thoughts, words and behaviors that trick you into becoming dysfunctional again. Cutoff words are insidious rationalizations that cause you to throw your common sense out the window.

Cutoffs help you minimize in your own mind the damage you have done. They are the whoppers you tell yourself in order to ignore the severe emotional, interpersonal, and physical consequences of continuing to use. They rationalize your actions of being okay with continuing your addictive behavior.

The Ruler of Cutoffs urges you to engage in dysfunctional behavior. Your Cutoff part says, 'I can handle it. It won't hurt me.' 'Oh, go ahead, you know you want it. One time won't matter.' 'I'll just take one!'

Cutoffs are rampant when you are searching for permission to go back to your former drinking and drugging behavior. Your Inner Con is a seductive dictator who uses Cutoffs to lead you back to addictions.

### **There are layers of denial before you are ready to know the truth about your addiction**

Some of the most challenging things in life start with the letter D. Disappointment, difficulties, danger, divorce, dismissal, destruction, disaster, depression, drugs and drinking and defenses, as in defensive thinking.

Perhaps the biggest D word of all is Denial. Cutoffs are always denial. When you are in denial, you reject the truth about what is really happening to you. Addicts move back and forth between these different layers of denial. Pulling the wool over your eyes just gives you scratchy eyes.

You know you are caught up in addictions when one or more areas of your life are disrupted by your habit. You are hooked if there is dependence on an activity or a substance that affects your relationship with your family, friends and job or creates financial or legal problems. When using becomes the constant focus in your life, permeates your thoughts and behavior, and defines who you are, you are addicted.

You can become so absorbed with your addiction that you don't realize that you've disconnected from loved ones. It's frightening to know the truth of how much your addiction has run your life. It's alarming to realize how much your habit hurts the ones you love. Resistance manifests as not knowing what is best for you.

**But hey, you are human. Humans are masters of denial!**

You have shortcomings and character defects just like everyone else. If you can't see the truth about your addictive ways of thinking, ask a trusted friend to give you a reality check. If people who care about you are telling you things about yourself that you just can't understand, then you are probably in denial. The Con works hard to keep you in denial.

When you are ready to stretch and grow, deeper understanding comes in. Honesty is the best gift you can give yourself. When you are ready to know the truth about your situation, you can set yourself free. You can learn to cut off those Cutoffs and move past the denial.

Denial of the facts: there is no problem!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This denial part will not see any problem associated with addictive behavior. This part refuses to face facts</li> <li>• It says, 'I do not have a problem. I am not addicted to... I can't know about this myself. Don't tell me about . . . It is not so. I don't want to hear about this. No problemo!'</li> </ul>
Denial of the significance of the facts: there's a problem, but it's not important!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This form of denial minimalizes the addiction</li> <li>• It says, 'Yes, so I use, but it's no big deal. This habit doesn't affect me. I don't use that much. So what? The situation is not bad enough to warrant my making any changes. I use just a little bit. I don't do it that often.'</li> </ul>
Denial of the duration of the problem: this is just a short term problem!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This type of denial insists that the addiction is temporary</li> <li>• It tries to buy time to continue the bad habits by insisting, 'Yes I've got a problem but it won't last much longer. Next week I'll stop using . . . This is only a temporary stage. It isn't going to last. I'll wait it out. I'll stop tomorrow. Next week it will be different. I'll get better soon on my own. It will go away.'</li> </ul>
Denial of emotions of the importance of the facts: I'm numbed out and can't change!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is the part that feels emotionally paralyzed and focuses on helplessness</li> <li>• This type of denial digs a hole and jumps right in, instead of going directly to problem solving</li> <li>• This part convinces you to believe that you don't have the inner resources to promote change. It whines, 'Yes, I know it is important, but I'm immobilized. It's too much. I can't deal with this. It is hopeless. It's no use trying to be different. I can't change who I am. I am helpless in changing how I feel.'</li> </ul>
Denial regarding public exposure: I can't go back to self-help meetings!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This denial part is so ashamed, embarrassed and fearful of being found out</li> <li>• It hangs its head and hides, saying, 'I can't let anyone know.'</li> </ul>

	<p>I can't go back to meetings. My shame is too great. I can't admit this relapse to anyone else. I'm so embarrassed and just can't go public with this.'</p>
<p>Denial due to omnipotent beliefs: I am god and am in control of everything!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pride is the culprit at work here</li> <li>• This grandiose part says, 'I can work it out myself. I'll try harder and the problem will go away. I can change on my own. I don't need any help with this. I can stop using whenever I want to. Don't tell me what to do! Let me do this all by myself.'</li> </ul>
<p>Denial that fosters false hope for future use: my drug of choice is still an option!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This denial part hangs on to the secret hope that you can use someday</li> <li>• It never truly gives up the addictive thinking</li> <li>• It sees sobriety as a temporary condition</li> <li>• It is caught in the false hope that you can go back to the addictive behavior</li> <li>• This denial rationalizes, 'It will work for me in the future. I'm different now. I can use now that I've been away from it. I can handle it now. I'll just take one drink or hit. I refuse to give up my fantasies of using someday.'</li> </ul>
<p>Denial of family secrets: keep bad things secret no matter what!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This part is loyal to the family where people are hurting each other</li> <li>• It agrees to hiding things, saying, 'I must act as if nothing bad has happened. I must push the bad things under the rug like we have always done. I can't share these regrets, fears or worries with my family members. I have to keep a stiff upper lip and shove the bad feelings down. I must stay in dysfunctional relationships that would be better off dissolved.'</li> </ul>
<p>Denial of lifestyle hazards: I can hang out at bars and parties and stay clean!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People, places and things that encourage using can set you up for relapse</li> <li>• Environmental influences can affect how we act. We come under stimulus control of triggers that set the stage for returning to bad habits</li> <li>• This is the denial part of you that looks for happiness in all the wrong places</li> <li>• The social set-ups for using are peer pressure and seeing addictive behavior as normal and desirable. 'But everybody does . . . ' is the cutoff that justifies using. Cues in the environment associated with addictive behavior shout at you 'Go for it.' The danger zones are bars, parties, celebrations, holidays and vacations where alcohol and drugs are prevalent</li> <li>• Cue-induced craving happen when you drive by your favorite bar, smell cigarette smoke or go to a party where people are using and you want to use. A common visual cue such as talking on the phone can trigger the association with reaching for a cigarette. Or watching a ball game with your buddies throws you back into your craving for a beer. Cues that are associated with using reactivate those memory centers in the brain and set up a strong desire to use. What you see or what you smell can become what you want!</li> </ul>

<p>Denial that your friends can tempt you into using!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People who encourage you to join them in using are not true friends when you are working for sobriety. Friendships that are organized around getting high are not real friendships. The focus is on getting the desired substance or activity not on intimacy and connection with others. These so-called friends are rarely there for you when you try to leave the using scene. A true friend is someone who is there when you are down and wants the best for you</li> <li>• Drop those friends that enable you to use again. And you are not being a friend to yourself if you enable yourself in habits that are not in your best interests</li> <li>• Catch the thoughts that tempt you to go to familiar places where you habitually used. Arrest those thoughts that say 'Go ahead, Dude, come on out to the bar. You can handle it.' Avoid addictive triggers of those people and places that create in you the desire to use. Stay away from places where addictive use is the norm, where you start thinking it's okay to use. Avoid that 'near occasion of sin' that does you in!</li> </ul>
<p>Denial of responsibility: oh sure I use, but it's not my fault!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sometimes it hurts so bad that it's hard to see your part of the problem. Somebody has to be bad, and it sure can't be you. So you look outside yourself to find someone else to blame. You don't want to own the bad feelings so throw them on someone else. This thin-skinned part takes things personally. It can't stand being criticized. Then it looks around to see if it can throw the bad feelings onto others. But there are costs. By blaming others, you lose your opportunity to grow</li> <li>• Reproaching others when you feel bad may bring about a flash of feeling better. But increased self-esteem at the expense of ignoring how you create your own misery is transient. Believing it is not your fault is an insidious Con trick to let yourself off the hook</li> <li>• Blaming others is lying to oneself to make your dysfunctional behavior seem acceptable. Anytime you blame anyone outside yourself for what's wrong with you is denial, big time! Anytime you say, 'He/she/they are wrong and they have to fix it,' you're not owning your part of the problem. This is your Master Justifier trying to Con you. Rationalizing one's behavior maintains the denial of it's okay to use.</li> </ul>
<p>Denial of shame based feelings: I can't let myself know how bad I feel inside!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shame is a fear-based internal state accompanied by feelings of being unworthy and unlovable. These deep-seated feelings conjure up brief, intense painful feelings of mortification due to being seen as inadequate. Feelings of shame keep us caught in fear of being found out by others. The perceived deficit is so humiliating that the person goes to any lengths to hide the flawed self</li> <li>• The causes of shame that have been put upon us by others include betrayal and broken trust. Harsh, critical parental behavior produces shame-prone children. Parent's high expectations of behavior and disapproval for failure create shame. Parental withdrawal, rejection or favoritism of a sibling cause deep fears of abandonment. Parental</li> </ul>

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|  | <p>humiliation and punishment for failure, or distress, or crying, creates the need to hide vulnerability. The child feels that he must be really bad or his parents would love him. In addition, physical and sexual abuses imprint major feelings of being devalued and unworthy in the victim</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• You can induce shame in your self by engaging in morally inappropriate behavior. Worrying what others think, fears of public failure and social disapproval lead to fears of rejection and abandonment. Having a life out of control due to addictions can foster great shame, which then makes you want more of your addictive substance or behavior.</li></ul> |
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### **Guilt: a voice from your conscience**

Guilt is a feeling that we did something wrong. Guilt says, 'I did something bad. I was wrong. I must pay.' Violations of society's values around sexual and aggressive behavior, being different, and looked down upon by others, are common causes of guilt. Guilt comes from your conscience that says, 'Clean up your act.'

Guilt is about actions, shame is about the self. Guilt says, 'I did a bad thing.' Shame says, 'I am bad.' The shame core builds up with many events of guilt. Guilt added to shame lead to the global belief of 'I am unworthy. I am unlovable,' which must be avoided at all costs.

### **Shame is the shaper of symptoms**

Addictions always have a deep core of shame. Shame can hide underground and stay there. Repressed shame leads to substituting more acceptable emotions such as anger, depression and anxiety to reduce the internal tension. Other defenses of shame include macho behavior, intellectualization and shutting down feelings. Common defenses against shame include controlling, blaming, criticizing or feeling superior to others.

Repressed shame and guilt cause a lack of trust in others and a deep breach or separation from your true self. Patterns of dysfunctional behavior in a person's life usually indicate a strong internal shame core. Lack of intimacy and connection to others indicates a lack of trust. Engaging in excessive use of alcohol and drugs may be an indicator of hidden shame. Engaging in unhealthy behaviors that society frowns upon creates even more shame. Shame feelings are a threat to the integrity of the self.

### **Stop beating yourself up emotionally**

Now that you are in charge, do you carry out others' old role of heaping on the criticism? You can break into that negative self-fulfilling prophecy. So, what do you say to beat yourself up?

- 'I'm bad. I'm so dumb
- I'm a screw up so I'll act like one . . .
- I'm stupid. I'm just a rotten person
- I can't stand these bad feeling so I'll just have a few beers'

Shame needs to be addressed if you are to have a healthy, happy life. Grownups can choose who they become, and you are a grownup now. Fire your Inner Critic who beats you up. Reject that old negative prophesy of 'You are dumb, stupid, a slut, a drunk, etc.' Hire a Kinder Critic that

gives you better reviews. Get one that sees the brighter side of who you are and gives you credit for your hard work. Goodbye Inner Critic, hello Higher Power.

Then make amends for beating yourself up. Be on the lookout for shame so you can challenge it at every turn. See your glass as half-full rather than half-empty. Cancel or terminate those destructive expectations that have been set up in your mind. They are lies that drag you down.

### **Perhaps the biggest denial of all is denial of your very own Self!**

Perhaps you know all about the different forms of denial, but still don't get it. The cruelest denial of all is thinking, 'Yeah, yeah, yeah, I get it, but I can still use!' This is the biggest Con talk of all. You know everything you need to know but you still think you can get away with drinking or drugging. This way of thinking is a form of treacherous pride that refuses to know the true understanding of you and your addiction. It agrees to believe this lie of 'I know, but I can still use....' to keep you from becoming who you truly are. This is truly betrayal. Betrayal of yourself by your Inner Con.

### **The duplicity of the con**

Understand the subtlety of this matter here. Alcohol and drug use are merely metaphors of how you throw yourself away. See how disastrous errors of thinking will ruin your life. In this mindset, cravings will come up, and then off you go to worldly things that alter your mood and your reality.

Attack this cruel Con talk vigorously. Don't participate in its betrayal. Don't ignore Con talk. Meet it head on. Step up and see everything associated with your addiction as forms of the lie in your life. View the boredom, guilt, shame, desperation, desire, relief, and the highs for what they are. They are merely barriers in your mind that you have set up to keep you from finding your Truth.

### **Remember to remember**

Remember the important things. You are not your Inner Con. Valuing yourself and having pride in the choices you make is better than choosing addictions. Remember how satisfying a life free from addiction is.

Remember who you are. You are love. Whatever the fear, whatever the discomfort, whatever the craving, find the love solution. Remember to remember. Relapse is a choice, not a need. We have a range of other options to choose from – identify and use them.