
Passion vs. Addiction

There is a difference between having a healthy passion and an insatiable addiction.

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Are you Passionate or Addicted?

Do you have a passion? Some people are passionate about football or basketball. Others are passionate for classical music or for rock and roll. Yet others are passionate about a cause, Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), for example.

Yet in all of us, there is a self-deceiving ember that masks the true drive behind our actions. While the outward appearance for a cause or a behavior may appear as a passion, the naked truth is we may be addicted to something bigger than we are willing to admit.

Sex, for example, is truly passionate, or is it? What appears to be a passion can in reality be a counterfeit. The difference between passion and addiction requires each of us to be transparently honest with ourselves. The self-deception can and will be harmful in the future.

Dr. Gabor Mate, in his book, *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts*, differentiates between the two concepts.

"One is a divine spark and the other is a flame that incinerates. Passion is generous because it's not ego-driven; addiction is self-centered. Passion gives and enriches; addiction is a thief. Passion is a source of truth and enlightenment; addictive behaviors lead you into darkness."

What about anger? Is it a passionate plea for change or a behavior out of control? Is your anger about *what* is right or about *who* is right?

"You are more alive when you are passionate, and you triumph whether or not you attain your goal. But an addiction requires a specific outcome that feeds the ego; without that outcome, the ego feels empty and deprived. A consuming passion that you are helpless to resist, no matter what the consequences, is an addiction."

"Addiction is passion's dark simulacrum (an unreal or vague semblance) and, to the naïve observer, its perfect mimic. It resembles passion in its urgency and in the promise of fulfillment, but its gifts are illusory. It's a black hole. The more you offer it, the more it demands. Unlike passion, its alchemy does not create new elements from old. It only degrades what it touches and turns it into something less, something cheaper."

This is pornography. If you need artificial means for stimulation and maintenance, you are not passionate, you are addicted. Passion edifies and empowers. The strength and motivation comes from within. Addiction empties and must be hooked up to life support mechanisms for sustenance. Pornography is an outside-in influence and therefore addictive. Its foundation is lust not love.

"Addiction...sucks energy from you, creating a vacuum of inertia. A passion energizes you and enriches your relationships. It empowers you and gives strength to others. Passion creates; addiction consumes—first the self and then the others within its orbit."

How about parenting? Are you passionate when you parent your children or are you addicted to being right and telling them what to do? When you parent with lavish gift giving and no boundaries, believing the idea that you are their best friend, you are not parenting, you are addicted to being liked. You must be seen as a nice person and your ego and actions are tied to outside influences.

Your happiness is a function of your passions and addictions. A passionate life operates on trust and respect with a deep satisfaction. Addictive behavior is insatiable and requires more of the outside stimuli for sustenance. An addictive behavior means you have given control of your happiness over to artificial stimuli for temporary pleasure or happiness.

Giving up the artificial for the genuine isn't easy, but it is rewarding.