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**Menopause, Andropause And Other Hormone Imbalances**  
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## Four Stages of Breaking an Addiction

By Caryl Ehrlich

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Nowhere do the Four Stages of Addiction come into play more powerfully than they do when you resist changing a habit relating to the foods with which you self-medicate. For most of us those foods are the instant, and easily available - Bread, Beverage, Dessert, or Alcohol. For others they are the fatty foods, and plenty of them. You might choose huge portions of steak, hamburger, and French fries, enormous bowls of salad with globs of dressing. Perhaps chunks of cheese appear as a part of your daily food consumption.

Whether it is a basket of bread, a huge salad, or a box of cookies, your body takes so much extra time to slog through the extra food - more food than you're able to burn - that it cannot easily process it. The body wears itself out. You get tired.

Calories are units of energy. After eating your meal you want to feel energized, not tired.

Eating more than you need causes you to feel as if you are in a drugged state. This altered state, zones out the brain, and helps you to escape from feelings.

Stage One - Resistance to change

My Program comes along and says: "Let's not have a beverage at every breakfast. Sometimes, choose to have a beverage every two, or even three days. Soup is a meal. Put your fork down between bites. Weigh yourself twice a day."

This is scary stuff. You may be thinking you're comfortable this old way. Therefore, a new way can't be as comfortable. You erroneously conclude you'll feel uncomfortable. You don't know this will be the outcome; you've never tried the new way before; but you resist change even though you know the old way is not working. One component of addiction is that you continue doing what you're doing even though there are negative consequences.

It is your old Addict Pea Brain resisting change by projecting a negative outcome even though you

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don't have any knowledge or experience that your projection is valid. The addiction twists your thinking to justify your behavior.

### Stage Two - Begrudging attempts

You join a weight loss group or purchase a book and decide, however grudgingly, you'll give it a try. "I don't want to do this, but I'll pick one no-coffee day. I don't want to weigh myself twice a day. I don't want to write down everything I eat. I don't want to eat a bowl of cereal for breakfast. I don't want to eat breakfast, but I will because I want to weigh \_\_\_\_\_ pounds.

### Stage Three - Surprise, I enjoyed it

"I tried hot cereal at breakfast and I enjoyed it. I tasted the most wonderful soup for lunch one day. I didn't think I'd like it, but I did. I had a cup of hot water instead of tea one night and it was actually very nice."

### Stage Four - The new way becomes the comfortable and preferred way

It's important to know, however, that the attachment you seem to feel for certain foods is not predicated on how much you "love" that particular food. Rather, it indicates how very addicted you are to numbing yourself with that food. Thinking about the food, getting the food, eating the food in a certain way, has become an integral part of your self-medicating ritual. The thought of not "acting out" (not getting your drug) causes you great anxiety. You eat the item (bread, beverage, candy, popcorn, etc.) to relieve the discomfort caused by not eating the item. Consider not drinking coffee and getting a headache and then drinking a cup of coffee to relieve the discomfort caused by not drinking the coffee. It's like a puppy chasing its tail.

Knowing there are four stages to breaking an addiction will help you be pro-active in traveling through stages two and three and shifting from resistance to change all the way to knowing the new way is the comfortable, preferred way. This information will break you of the food rituals you use to help quell your anger, anxiety, or other uncomfortable feelings or thoughts. Then you can deal with the feelings more directly, more appropriately.

This article is an excerpt from the book *Conquer Your Food Addiction* authored by Caryl Ehrlich. Visit her at

to know more about weight loss and keep it off without diet,

deprivation, props, or pills. Contact her at [Caryl@ConquerFood.com](mailto:Caryl@ConquerFood.com) or call 212-986-7155.

## **Adolescent Stages Of Addiction**

**By Wendy McLellan MA, LCDP II**

## Four Stages of Breaking an Addiction

Addiction has powerfully negative effects on adolescents, their families and the realization of their hopes and dreams. The sad fact is that every addict started life as a human being with great potential. The addiction, like an overwhelming cancer can consume every aspect of the adolescents life. There are different stages of addiction. Each stage would require a different type of treatment modality. They are the early stage, the middle stage and the late or advanced stage of addiction. In adolescents, the stages of addiction can progress more quickly than as an adult, although this is not always true. It can take a few months or a few years to reach the later stages of addiction.

### EARLY STAGES OF ADDICTION

Begins smoking cigarettes

Experimentation with drugs

Begins smoking pot and drinking

Hangs out with the drugging and drinking crowd

May steal medications from parents

Urgent requests for money, cons and manipulates to get requests met

Preoccupation with finding drugs and orients activities around them

School problems begin, maybe truancies or begging parents to make excuses for them

May not come home when requested, staying out all night

Few consequences from their use

Ability to control use

Tolerance to using

Substance use becomes a way of communicating to others

Attention span decreases

Lower tolerance to frustration

### MIDDLE STAGES OF ADDICTION

Beginning to try and limit their use

Blaming others for thing that are going wrong

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Using different types of drugs to gain control over use

Withdrawing from family and friends

Stealing

Academic decline and truancy

Mood swings

Lying

Increase in time spent in using substances

Changes in personal appearance

Arguments within the family

Legal difficulties

Loss of control

### LATE STAGES OF ADDICTION

Suspension or being expelled from school

Increase in anxiety

Lowered self esteem

Increase in legal issues

Blackouts

Passing out

Signs of withdrawal symptoms

Unable to control substance use

Isolating

Anger outbursts

Denial of using

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Weekend binges or daily use

Paranoia

Begins to steal, deal or prostitute to support their habit

Weight gain or weight loss

Stops trying to hide their use

Addiction is chronic, progressive and sometimes fatal. There are many forms of treatment for adolescent addiction. No one single treatment is effective for all individuals. Treatment must touch on all facets of the adolescent's life. Social, family, school, legal and medical are just some areas that need to be a focus on, in treatment. If the adolescent is using heroin, medication management may be successful, such as buprenorphine or methadone. If an adolescent is using drugs, the best form of treatment always includes the family. Family participation and counseling is vital in providing proper treatment to the adolescent. Without family participation, the chances of the adolescent getting into recovery are low. The earlier in the addiction cycle that the family can intervene and get treatment, the better the chances for a full recovery.

Wendy McLellan is a licensed mental health and substance abuse counselor, with more than sixteen years of experience. She has recently devoted time to the efforts of

in their goal to provide parental internet safety tools and resources to the public.



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