



PYT Weekly Training & Support

Lesson #58 Eliminating Destructive Behaviors

by Jim Katsoulis

Hi, welcome to this week's lesson. What I want to talk about this week is another way to deal with bad behaviors, behaviors that are causing the problems for you. And the first distinction we need to make clear is that, oftentimes, what happens is that people have these bad behaviors. Maybe they eat too much ice cream, or too much junk food, or too much alcohol, or whatever it is; and they tend to focus on the "thing."

So, they'll say that the ice cream is bad; the junk food is bad; the alcohol is bad; that thing is bad. But what we want to start doing, though, is reframing this so that it's not the thing that's bad but the behavior.

There's saying that everything is fine is moderation. If you believe that, then, what we're talking about here is how to control that and how to become more moderate in our behaviors. And it all begins with the focus.

Oftentimes, if we use the ice cream example, some people might go home at night and they eat a pint of ice cream every night. Well, they'll look at the ice cream and say, "That's it! I can't eat ice cream anymore." That's the problem. The problem is the amount of it that's being consumed. It's that behavior; it's that behavioral set that is the problem, not the ice cream.

Now, the value of doing it this way and looking at things this way is that it doesn't have to be all or nothing. So, if some people have problems with ice cream, for example, and, all of a sudden, they say, "That's the problem. I have to stop eating it," then, all of a sudden, their minds start playing tricks on them. They think about the future and the rest of their lives and never eating ice cream again. It freaks them out and they say, "Forget that. I can never do that."

When we look at behaviors, we have a lot more control over because now what we say is, "I'm never going to eat an entire pint of ice cream again," and that's something that may feel a lot more congruent. You could still ice cream, you could still it responsibly in a way that's still going to get you the body you want; but you're not going to overeat; you're not going to stuff yourself with it.

And when you focus on that behavior, it becomes much easier to change a lot of times than completely wiping out a food that you enjoy.

So, let's talk about some ways to change this up; and, again, the first part is the focus on the behavior. This might be very freeing for you. As opposed to saying, "I have to stop eating certain foods," it becomes "I have to stop that behavior."

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So, if we go with the ice cream example ... say, someone has a problem and too many times a week, he comes home, goes to the freezer, gets a pint or a container of ice cream, sits down with it, and eats the whole thing.

What we're looking to do is to change that behavior. And so, that's how you want to start it. And the first question becomes – What is the ideal behavior for you?

And we want to take two things into account. We still want the pleasure of the ice cream. You can still eat ice cream – the flavor of it, the enjoyment of eating it – but we also want to add in, how can we get the body that we want, too? We want to balance those two things out. So, how could you eat ice cream and get the body you want?

And so, some of the things that people come up with are: “I'd put less, and I'd put it into a bowl, and I'd eat it out of that instead, and that would make it a little bit easier.” “I would eat ice cream, but I would eat it more moderately; and then, I would get all the benefits. It would be a little bit hard, sometimes, because I'm used to eating all the ice cream; but it would be worth that struggle because I know that I'm still getting to eat it and I'm still getting the body I want.”

So, that's how we want to start out. What's the behavior that's ideal for you? It's that idealistic idea.

The next step is, when we do that, we want to run through our minds – what would it be like to act in that new way? So, it's just kind of programming it through in your mind.

So, you take a few moments to close your eyes and imagine that it's the same time, same location, and same situation you used to eat the whole container; and, now, you're a different person. So, how would you do it?

You'd go up to the fridge; you'd get the bowl; however much you'd put in there, put in there; put it in the freezer; and go back and eat it wherever you're going to eat it. Imagine yourself eating it. Eat it slower. Eat it more intentionally. Eat it more mindfully. These are the things that are going to transform you.

Let me give you a specific example and you may have heard me use this before. I went through this with beer. When I was younger and before I learned a lot of these things, I was drinking a real lot. Then, I stopped drinking pretty much, and I would go out randomly and very sporadically.

When I would go out there in those times, I'd end up drinking more than I expected to even though I'd be going out saying to myself intentionally, “I do not want to drink a lot!” And I'd go out and I'd end up drinking a lot.

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One of the things I found out, as much as I told myself not to drink a lot, is I started to realize that it was the way in which I was drinking that made the difference. So, I did this process.

I imagined myself going out and instead of just telling myself, “I’m not gonna drink a lot tonight,” this time, I imagined myself going out and I imagined myself drinking, but drinking differently; and that was the big difference for me.

I imagined myself taking smaller sips. Now, this may sound silly but what I realized learning to drink when I was younger is that I was drinking with huge gulps. So, because I never taught myself this when I was going out, I was drinking with huge gulps, and before I know it, the beer is gone and there’s another one. I was drinking with huge gulps, and the gulps were the problem for me. It wasn’t the intention. It wasn’t the idea of what I was going to do. It was the way I was drinking.

So, the next time I went out after I realized this, I started taking smaller sips, and that changed everything. I cut my consumption to more than half; and I did it naturally and automatically.

So, what I’m saying to you is this. When you identify a problem behavior, you want to notice when it happens, where it happens, and who is around. You want to notice the situation and all the details of what’s going on. And what you’re looking to change while you’re programming it into yourself is how you act and how you feel.

So, if we stick with the ice cream example for a second, if you’re going to eat less ice cream, we also want to maximize it. The way you would eat a whole pint of ice cream as opposed to the way that you would eat a small dish of ice cream is going to be different. If you eat a whole pint, you’re probably shoveling it in. They are probably way bigger bites. If you’re eating a smaller bowl, you’re probably going to take smaller bites, and it’s going to change the experience of actually eating it.

So, this is what you want to focus on because this is how you manipulate and change your behaviors in a natural way. Notice that we’re not saying ‘no more ice cream.’ Again, I’m using ice cream, but you can really use any of these. What are some common ones?

When people go out to restaurants, they overeat. It’s not “going out to restaurants” that’s the problem; it’s what’s going on once you walk into a restaurant. It’s that behavior.

So, what you want to focus on is how you feel and how you think once you go into a restaurant and change it up.

One other thing I’m going to mention here is this. This is a great place to use modeling. You have your own beliefs about who you are and how you act. So, say,

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you go into a restaurant and you have all these beliefs and all this history of how you act when you walk in a restaurant, how you order and how you eat.

What you want to start to do is realize and accept that there are a lot of people who go out and are in complete control when they go out to restaurants. There are a lot of people out there who get ice cream and are in complete and total control over it.

And we want to reference these people, and model them, and think about what it feels like to be them. That's way I did with the beer, actually.

I know that there are people who go out; and they don't drink at all or they have one or two beers; and that's it! And they have a great time. And I started that because it strengthened the belief that it was possible. I was looking to strengthen that belief initially because we've got our own history telling us, "Oh, you always overeat," or "Oh, you always do this and you always do that."

So, we want to balance that out with, "I understand that but there's also a lot of people who are able to go out and act in exactly the way that I'd like to; and that's how I want to be." And just because you say it, it doesn't mean it's going to happen the first time; but you want to keep your focus on that. And, again, it's that consistent move in that direction.

It took me a couple of times to get the beer thing done. So, I would go out and I was focused on not drinking a lot of beer – don't drink a lot of beer, don't drink a lot of beer. But it wasn't until I changed the way that I felt and the way that I acted – the microbehaviors. Literally, the sip was really the turning point for me.

So, you want to go through this process where you see yourself acting in a new way and going into the micromovements and the microbehaviors that are part of the bigger behavior. Especially with eating, you want to notice how you eat something and how quickly you eat it. If you taste it, how do you put it in your mouth?

All these little things because you'll never know what's going to change things up; but, again, the focus here is on the behavior and not on the actual thing. And if you focus on this, I think that this can be really enlightening because it will give you a whole different way to look at your behaviors as opposed to just a black and white "I have to stop that." No, you can do it but you can do it differently. And, at the same time, you could swear off old behaviors.

I didn't want to say, "I'll never drink a beer again." I don't want to do that. But it was very comfortable for me to say, "I never want to get drunk again. I never want to get just wasted drunk." I don't want that at all. There's no part of me that wants that.

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And I think most people can say, “I don't want to gorge and get stuffed so that I can't even breathe and I'd feel horrible with myself.” That's what I feel about overeating. I hate overeating.

Now, it happens, sometimes, on a sneak; but, overall, it doesn't happen and I'm glad about that because I don't like the feeling. It just disgusts me and makes me feel terrible – a hangover, basically.

So, again, you can focus on behavior and you can say, “I never want that again.” And, sometimes, that's easier than saying, “I never want that food again.”

So, think about this. Focus on yourself in this way and let it help you. And use it and program yourself using this way of looking at it.

Do that! And I'll talk to you next week.

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