

# UNDERSTANDING HABITS

**MAKING SENSE OF ADAPTIVE, MALADAPTIVE, & ADDICTION HABITS**

# MY THESIS

*Addiction is a Habit that has become so powerful the person can't stop despite desperately wanting to, and despite severe and escalating consequences.*

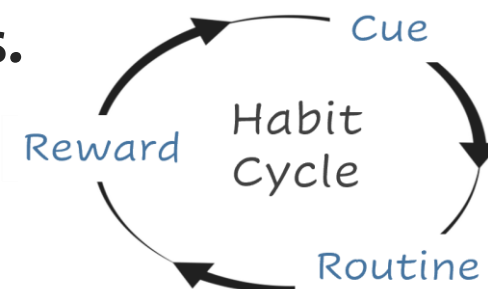
# WHAT IS A HABIT? - ***SIMPLIFIED*** -

- In the simplest possible terms, a Habit is:
  - **the Repeated and Reflexive Return to a Routine or Ritual**
    - **Repeated** – *something done repeatedly, countless times*
    - **Reflexive** – *repeated so many times it's become automatic*  
- *requires no conscious thought or effort*
    - **Return** – *easily falls back into this pattern based on a Cue or Trigger*
    - **Routine** – *a practiced pattern of thought, attitude or behavior*
    - **Ritual** – *a routine performed with deeper sense of meaning and intentionality*

# WHAT IS A HABIT? - **EXPANDED** -

- the repeated and reflexive return to a specific thought pattern, emotion or behavior, which supports or sabotages our goals, formed and sustained by beliefs, attitudes and narratives.

- follows the **Cue–Routine–Reward** cycle ——— *adaptive* →

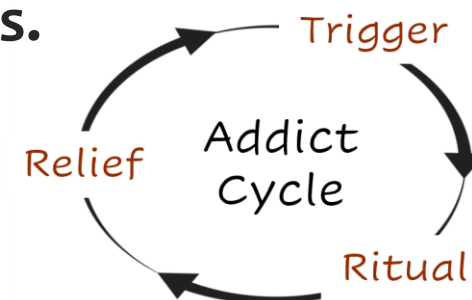


- *driven by context* (environment, social setting, emotions, thoughts)
- *synaptic strengthening & dopamine tone are central features*  
- *neuro-plastic habituation changes brains in structure & function*

# WHAT IS AN ADDICTION HABIT?

- the repeated and reflexive return to a **negative** thought pattern, emotion or behavior, which **directly sabotages** our goals, formed and sustained by **distorted** beliefs, attitudes and narratives.

- shifts to a **Trigger–Ritual–Relief** cycle ——— maladaptive ———>
- driven by the same context, *influenced by guilt and shame*
- neuro-plastic habituation changes brains in structure & function
  - *new features of craving with obsessive thinking and compulsive behavior become primary – withdrawal with loss of agency (choice) becomes the rule*



# HABIT vs. ADDICTION CYCLE



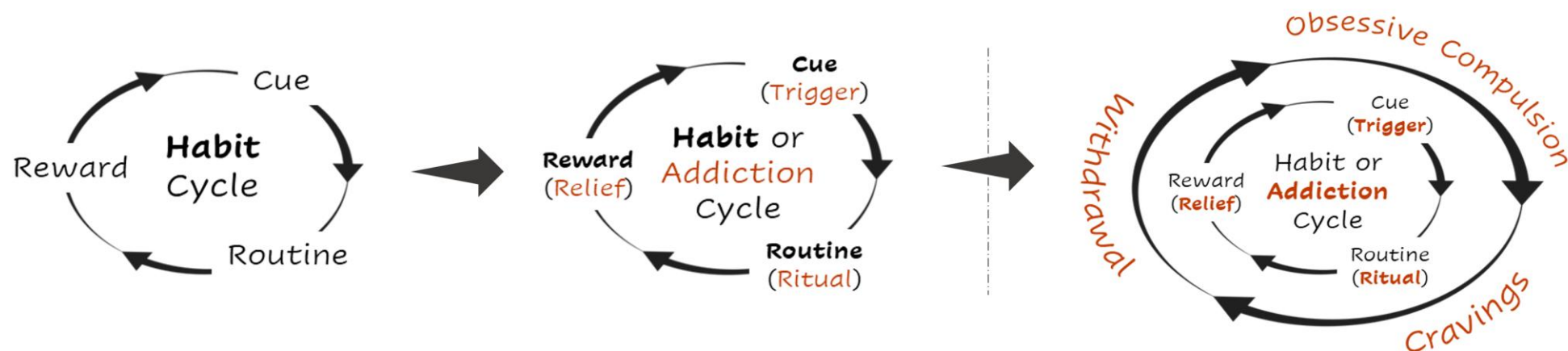
- **adaptive** habit development and processing cycle
- cue initiates routine which leads to desired reward
- context is healthy functioning



- **maladaptive** cycle becomes repetitive addictive behavior
- trigger leads to harmful ritual which leads to necessary relief
- context is unhealthy dependency

# PROGRESSION TO ADDICTION

From Adaptive Routine to Maladaptive Ritual | Crossing the line to addiction

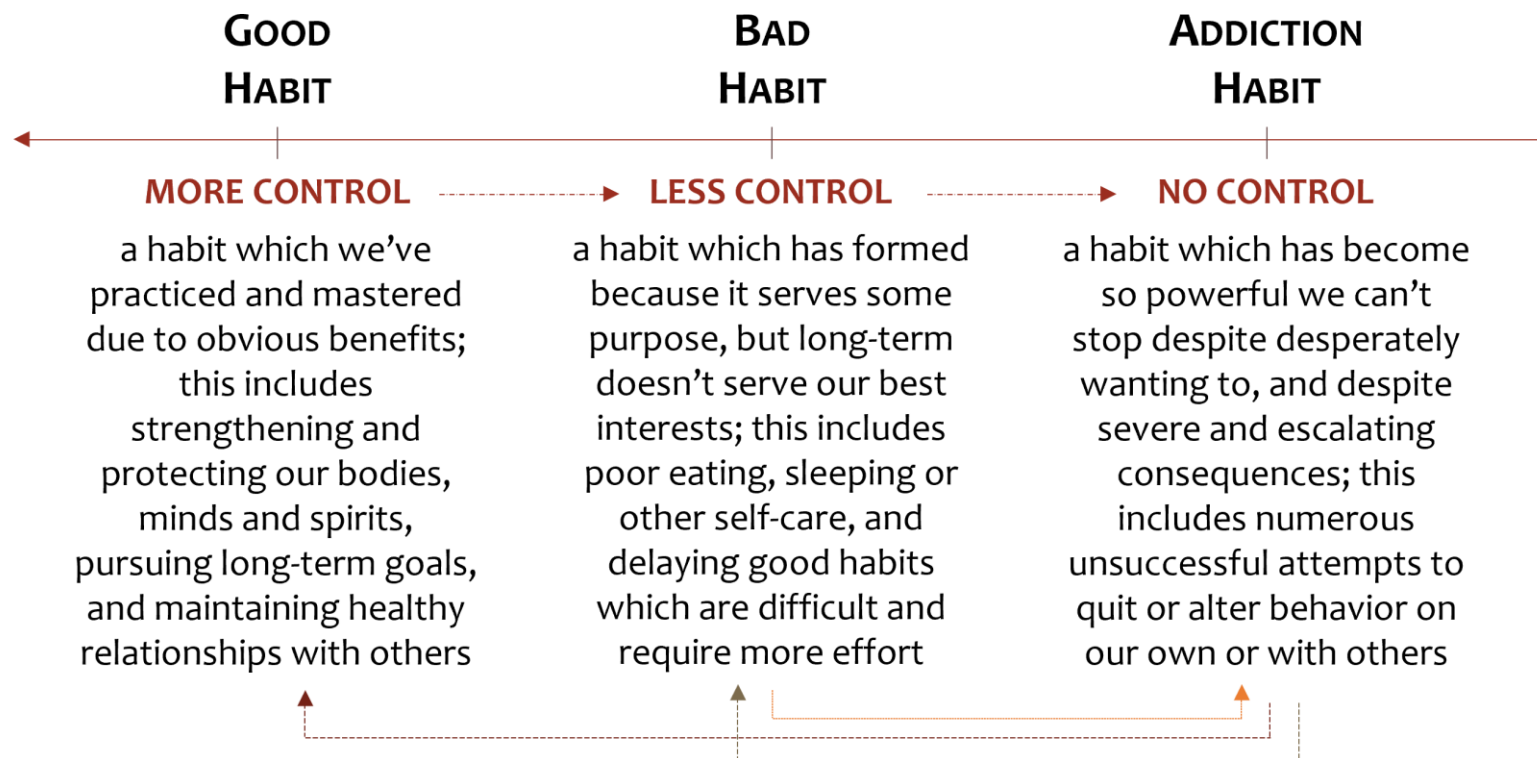


- *Adaptive Habit* becomes *Maladaptive* in response to life stressors
- *Cue-Routine-Reward* cycle becomes maladapted *Trigger-Ritual-Relief* cycle creating unhealthy dependency
- Unhealthy dependency leads to *tolerance* through *desensitization*, driving *escalation*
- new features of *cravings*, obsessive thinking, compulsive drive and *withdrawal* lead to loss of agency (*powerlessness*)

# The Habit Control Spectrum

**Habits are the repeated and reflexive return to a routine or ritual.**

Some are beneficial and build strength, some are harmful and create damage, and some are damaging to the point of destroying parts of our lives we care about deeply, *the distinction being our measure of agency (control).*



How is  
Addiction  
a Habit?  
Make it  
Make  
Sense!