

SAA of New York City



Workshop Handout

Garment District
Sunday May 31st, 3:00 pm



By David S.

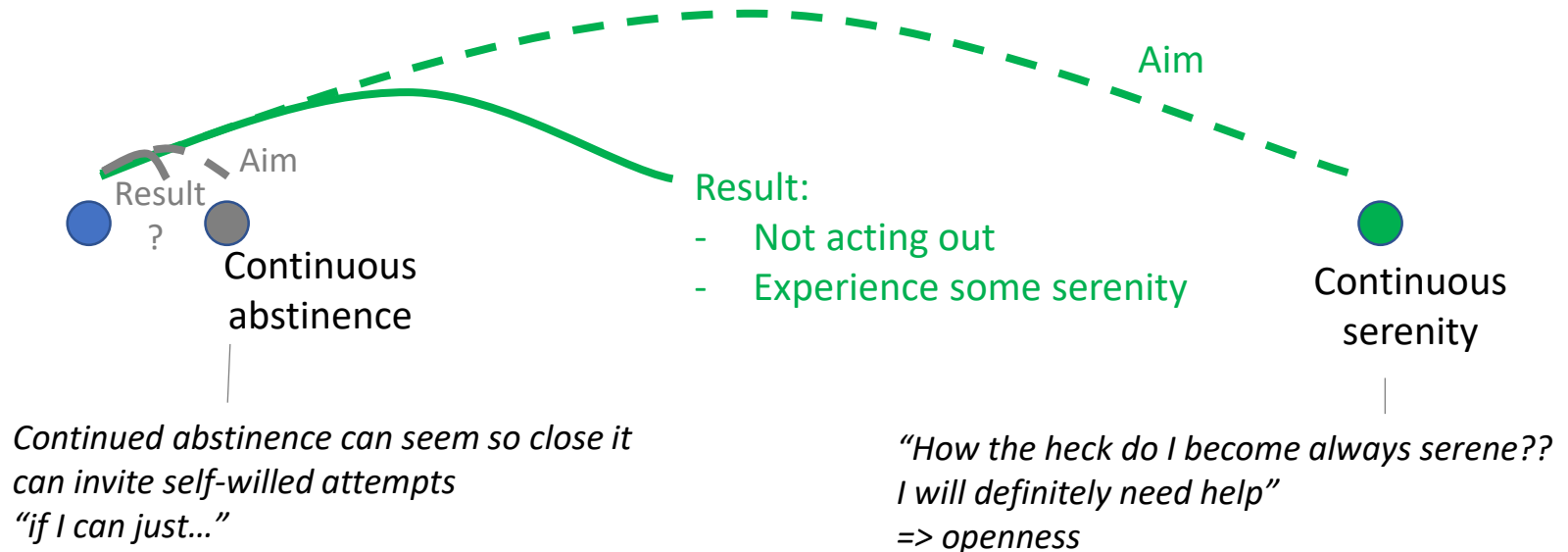
***Pursuit of Serenity to Help us
with our Addiction***

NOTE: SAA in NYC does not endorse, finance or oppose any of the above non-SAA material. The views reflected on this document are the ones of the SAA member who presented the workshop. The SAA member who presented the workshop does not speak for SAA.



Hypothesis: When I work toward serenity, I get abstinence for free

- **Abstinence** = not acting out. **Serenity** = not having the desire to act out.
- When I worked for **continuous abstinence** (before the program), I gained only brief moments, driven mostly by my own will
- When I work for **continuous serenity**, even making it halfway is awesome
- *What are your ideals? If you did not arrive, but got part of the way there, how might that feel?*





Let's talk about mountain climbing



Level one climber (early sobriety / little practice)



Let's talk about mountain climbing



More advanced climber (more practice)



The best mountain climbers practically fall upward

- When we act on love and service, we climb in the direction of serenity
 - We build muscle and skill as we go
 - The journey itself becomes so fun, reaching the destination is not as important
 - There are moments of pure serenity along the way
- **Climbers with most practice are falling upward.** They have momentum. All we need for momentum is to take the next action. We act on our ideals to start the next cycle
- *Are there people in 12 step programs who make sobriety seem easy? What do they do?*
- *Have you experienced the momentum of a virtuous cycle? What was that like?*
- *Does your experience agree that only the next right action is needed to start a new cycle?*



BUT when I act on a craving, on anger, or dread, or when I complain...

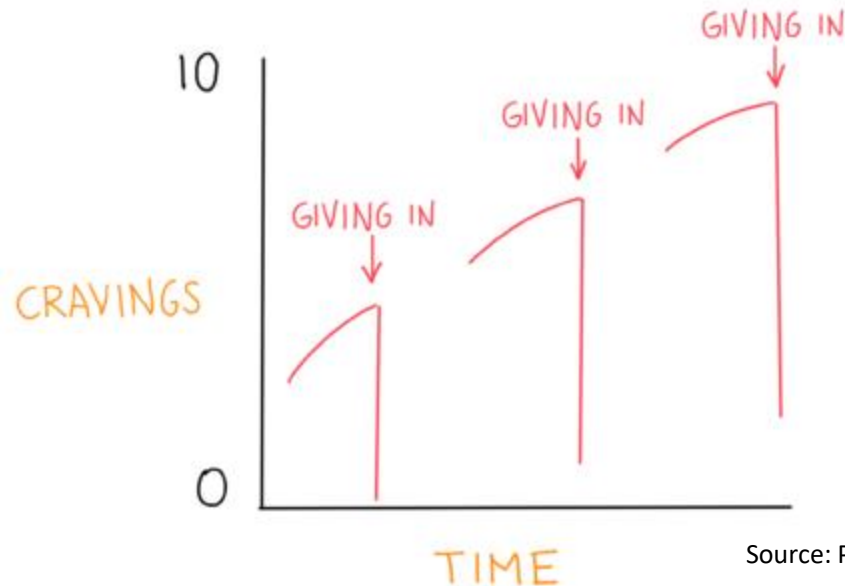
- All the above begin a vicious cycle in which I move toward my inner circle
 - Pedaling down a hill, until pedaling is being done for me I try to break but I cannot, until I bottom out and start climbing again
- *Do I recognize the increased automaticity of my behavior when I act on a craving?*



Pedals optional



Acting on cravings



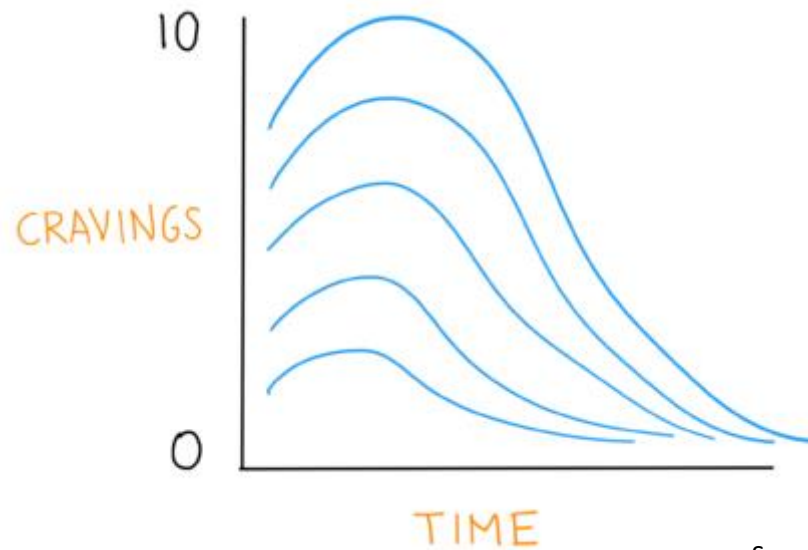
Vicious cycle until I bottom out

Source: Purityispossible.com

- What happens when I **give into** a craving. Why does it feel so good (instant gratification), and why does it not work (guaranteed stronger craving)?
 - Acting on cravings/defects, I am training myself to have stronger cravings, and ultimately act out
- *This was me just before I came in, when my cravings where strongest*
 - It was less about how my brain was working inherently, and more about *how I had trained my brain to work during my time on the planet*



Acting on ideals



Practicing climbing

Source: Purityispossible.com

- What happens when I am in the middle circle, I act on my ideals / character assets / outer circle, e.g. call a fellow
 - => I train myself to not have cravings
 - => when I do not have cravings, I do not have a desire to act out => I am serene and sober



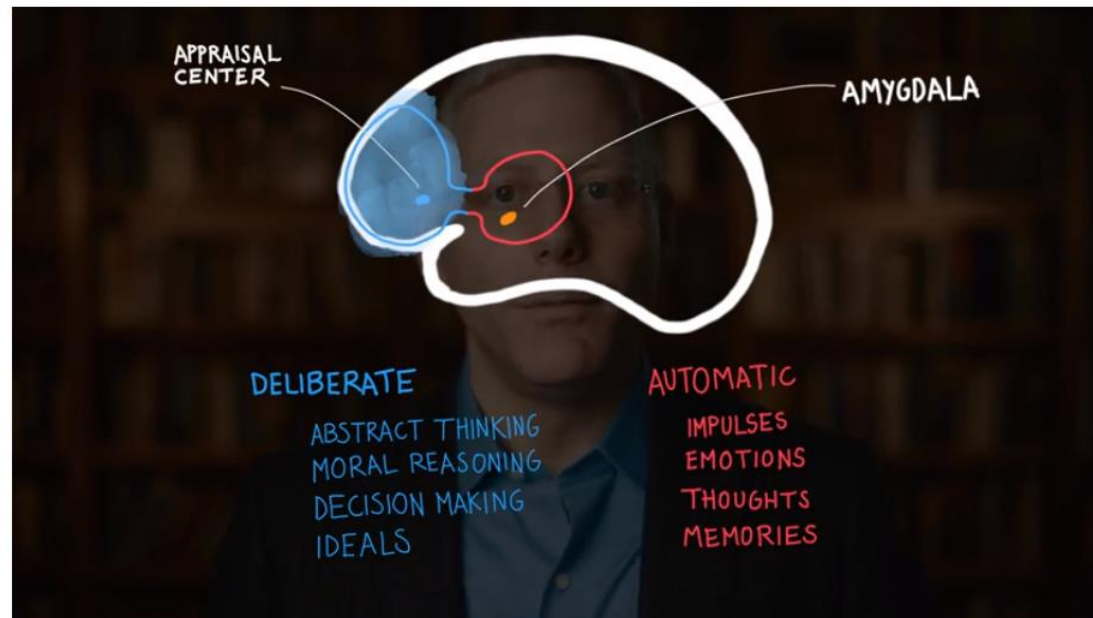
We can act on ideals ANY time, even when we are feeling cravings / are in middle circle

- Serenity is the destination I move toward. Outer circle activities are on the path to serenity
- When I slip into middle circle, I have a choice
 - Move toward inner circle (tumbling down, automatic, vicious cycle)
 - Move toward outer circle (climbing, ideal driven, virtuous cycle)
- What matters is the next action



REFRAME: When I find myself in the middle circle, this is exactly the practice I need to become / remain serene and sober

- This is an extremely powerful tool called reframing
- It is like magic, I do not need to change any circumstances, I change their interpretation by choice
- Reframing activates the appraisal center, which means I am in opportunity mode => this is the help I need
 - This allows me to see clearly, focus, be creative, and enjoy life





When I find myself in the middle circle, this is exactly the practice I need to become / remain serene and sober

- When I **dread** cravings, or **fear** the cravings I have, I am in threat mode
 - “Okay”; I do not yet have to act on this
 - In threat mode, the lower cortex is activated; I am likely to act on my defects, and move automatically toward the inner circle
 - REFRAME: when I am having cravings, or am in the middle circle, this is exactly the opportunity I need to practice moving to the outer circle and gain serenity & sobriety
 - Of course, if I am already in the outer circle, I am already moving toward serenity/my ideals, so I do not need to deliberately enter the middle circle
 - REFRAME (set bar to the ground): this craving is an opportunity to practice reframe
- Other key activators of the lower cortex: complaining, regret
 - => I have made a commitment to never complain

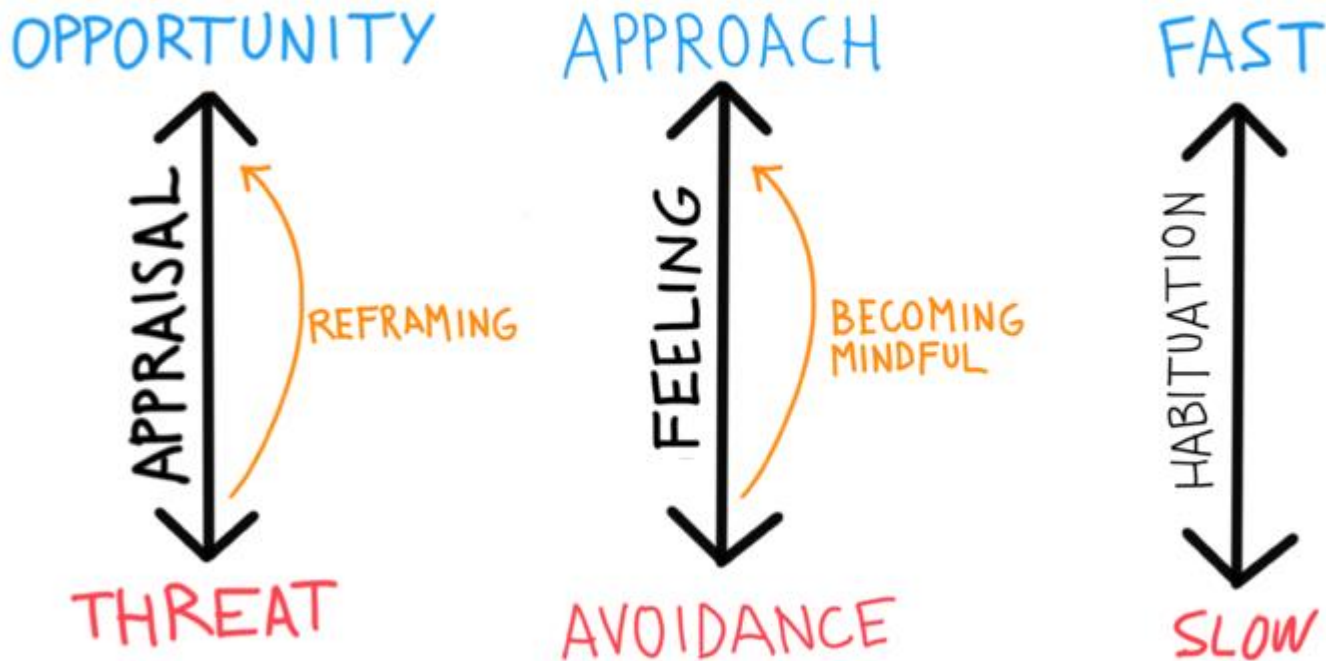


When I find myself in the middle circle, this is exactly the practice I need to become / remain serene and sober

- I don't act out because I have a craving; I act out because I have a craving I am unwilling to experience
 - Example: when I scratch an itch, it's because I am unwilling to feel the itch
 - Example: when I slam the phone, it's because I am unwilling to be angry. I want the anger to go away
 - Example: when I act out, I am unwilling to feel a craving. I want the craving to go away
- => We now know how to make the craving go away. By acting on our ideals. I can reframe, then act toward my outer circle / serenity



Summary: If/when we experience discomfort of the UNSatisfied craving, this is a sign we are acting on our ideals, and we have already begun to move to serenity





Summary: If/when we experience discomfort of the UNsatisfied craving, this is a sign we are acting on our ideals, and we have already begun to move to serenity

What are some situations where you are most likely to give into cravings?

=> if you find yourself in one of them, remember they are exactly the practice you need for sobriety (REFRAME)

Have you experienced that distractions eventually fail? Acting out will be available for our lifetime. We cannot distract ourselves forever. If you are not sure, it may be worth trying.

=> Practice accepting the discomfort of the unsatisfied craving (MINDFULNESS)



Practicing climbing together



Time for shares