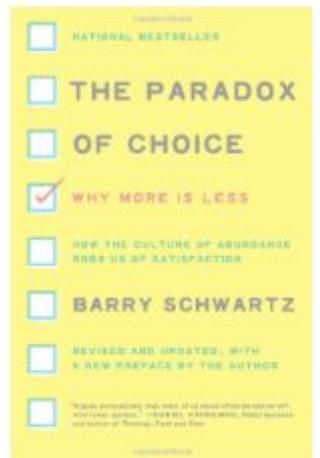
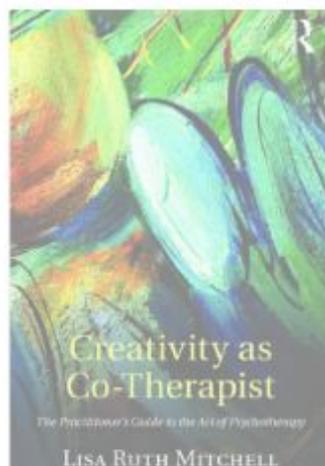
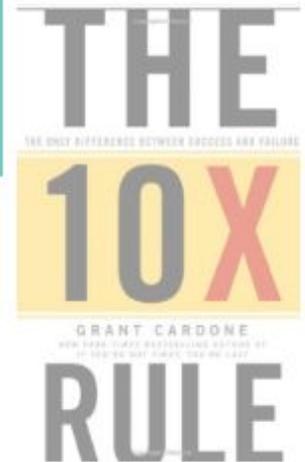
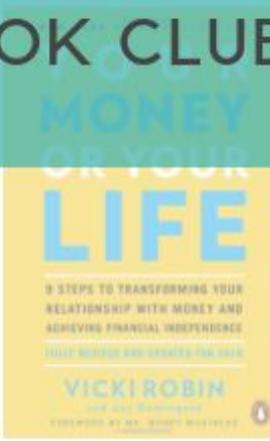
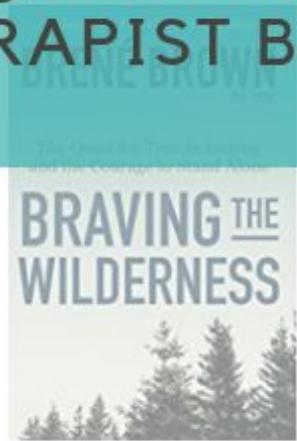
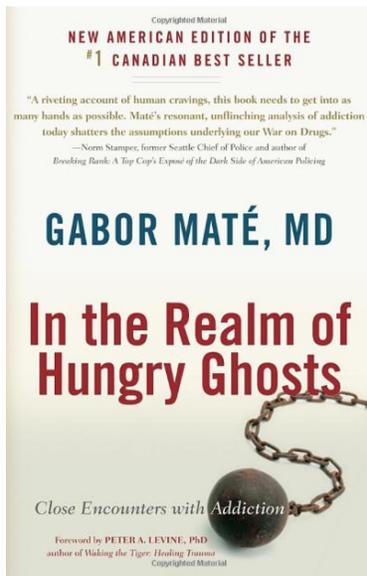


Refreshed

THERAPIST BOOK CLUB



June 2019



In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts

Gabor Maté

BOOK GUIDE, PART 1

Suggested Reading Schedule

Week 1: Intro-Part 2 (pp. xiv-132)

Week 2: Parts 3-5 (pp. 133-260)

Week 3: Parts 6-Chapter 32 (pp. 261-399).

Week 4: Chapter 33-Appendices (pp. 400-449)

Main theme: "Addiction is not confined to society's outcasts;" we can "develop a society that does a better job of preventing and healing addiction" (p. xviii)

Overview: Patients' stories, research, and research-based ideas on addiction and "the development of the human brain and personality" (p. 3).

Tip: Reflect on your helper/healer self; her/his reactions. "The possibility of renewal exists so long as life exists. How to support that possibility in others and in ourselves is the ultimate question" (p. 3).

Big Ideas

- "No society can understand itself without looking at its shadow side." (p. 2).
- **Consider the following questions:** (pp. 2-3)
 - "What are the causes of addictions?"
 - "What is the nature of the addiction-prone personality?"
 - "What happens physiologically in the brains of addicted people?"
 - "How much choice does the addict actually have?"

- "Why is the war on drugs a failure, and what might be a humane, evidence-based approach to the treatment of severe drug addiction?"
- "What are some of the paths for redeeming addicted minds *not* dependent on powerful substances--that is, how do we approach the healing of the man behaviour addictions fostered by our culture?"
- "Some people are attracted to painful places because they hope to resolve their own pain there. Others offer themselves because their compassionate hearts knows that here is where love is most needed. Yet others come out of professional interest: this work is ever challenging." (p. 22)
- "People jeopardize their lives for the sake of making the moment liveable." (p.29)
- "Beyond the addict's immediate orgasmic release of the moment, drugs have the power to make the painful tolerable and the humdrum worth living for." (p. 33)
- "Far more than a quest for pleasure, chronic substance use is the addict's attempt to escape distress." (p. 35)
- "Addictions always originate in pain, whether felt openly or hidden in the unconscious." (p. 46)
- "We readily feel for a suffering child but cannot see the child in the adult who, his soul fragmented and isolated, hustles for survival a few blocks away from where we shop or work." (p. 37)
- "When clients allow us to reach them, when they permit even a slight opening in the hard, prickly shells they've built to protect themselves. For that to happen, **they must first sense our commitment to accepting them for who they are.**" p. .92)
- "Addictions, even as they resemble normal human yearnings, are more about desire than attainment. In the addicted mode, the emotional charge is in the pursuit and the *acquisition* of the desired object, not in the possession and enjoyment of it." (p. 112-113)
- "The key features of substance addiction are the use of drugs or alcohol despite negative consequences and relapse. . . . The issue is not the quantity or even the frequency, but the impact." (p. 136)
- **Addiction involves: (pp. 136-137)**

- 1. Compulsive engagement with the behavior, a preoccupation with it;
 - 2. Impaired control over the behavior;
 - 3. Persistence or relapse despite evidence of harm;
 - 4. Dissatisfaction, irritability, or intense craving when the object--be it a drug, activity, or other goal--is not immediately available.
- "Medical evidence has repeatedly shown that opioids prescribed for cancer pain, even for long periods of time, do not lead to addiction except in a minority of susceptible people." (p. 141)
- **"Emotional isolation, powerlessness, and stress are exactly the conditions that promote the neurobiology of addiction in human beings . . . "** (p. 145)
- "Drugs, in short, do not make anyone into an addict, any more than food makes a person into a compulsive eater. There has to be a pre-existing vulnerability. There also has to be significant stress . . ." (p. 147)
- "On the cellular level addiction is all about neurotransmitters and their receptors. In different ways, all commonly abused drugs temporarily enhance the brain's dopamine functioning. Alcohol, marijuana, the opiates heroin and morphine, and stimulants such as nicotine, caffeine, cocaine, and crystal meth all have this effect.' (p. 152)
- *"When the brain is diseased, the functions that become pathological are the person's emotional life, thought processes, and behaviour. And this creates addiction's central dilemma: if recovery is to occur, the brain, the impaired organ of decision making, needs to initiate its own healing process. An altered and dysfunctional brain must decide that it wants to overcome its own dysfunction: to revert to normal-or, perhaps, become normal for the very first time."* (p. 155)
- "Endorphins are the chemical catalysts for our experience of key emotions that make human life, or any other mammalian life, possible. Most crucially, to enable the emotional bonding between mother and infant." (p. 159)
- "Opiates do not 'take away pain'. Instead, they reduce our consciousness of it as an unpleasant stimulus." (p. 163)
- "Reinforcement is important in all addictions, drug-related or not." (p. 169)

- "Many addicts confess that they're as afraid of giving up the activities around drug use as they are of giving up the drugs themselves." (p. 170)
- "When certain brain areas are damaged, there are predictable patterns of impaired rational decision making and diminished impulse regulation. Brain-imaging studies and psychological testing indicate *the same areas are also impaired in drug addiction.*" (p.175)

Memorable Quotes

- ★ "This is the domain of addiction, where we constantly seek something outside ourselves to curb an insatiable yearning for relief or fulfillment" (p. 1).
- ★ "But how to soothe souls inflamed by the intense torment imposed first by childhood experiences almost too sordid to believe and then, with mechanical repetition, by the sufferers themselves?" (p. 17)
- ★ "The reason I do drugs is so I don't feel the . . . feelings I feel when I don't do drugs." Nick (p. 14)
- ★ "Addiction medicine with this population is palliative work." (p. 16)
- ★ **"What they care about is my presence or absence as a human being. They gauge with unerring eyes whether I am grounded enough on any given day to coexist with them, to listen to them as persons with feelings, hopes, and aspirations that are as valid as mine."** (p. 25)
- ★ "Nothing records the effects of a sad life so graphically as the human body." --Naguib Mahfouz (p. 26)
- ★ "When we flee our vulnerability, we lose our full capacity for feeling emotion. We may even become emotional amnesiacs, not remembering ever having felt truly elated or truly sad. A nagging void opens, and we experience it as alienations, as profound ennui, as the sense of deficient emptiness." (p. 41)
- ★ "I have come to see addiction not as a discrete, solid entity--a case of 'Either you got it or you don't got it'-- but as a subtle and extensive continuum. It's central, defining qualities are active in all addicts, from the honored workaholic at the apex of society to the impoverished and criminalized crack fiend who haunts skid row." (p. 110)
- ★ "When we're preoccupied with serving our own false needs, we can't endure seeing the genuine needs of other people--least of all those of our children." (p. 120)

- ★ "Not for a moment do I wish to promote the belief that the disease model by itself explains addiction or even that it's the key to understanding what addiction is all about."
(p. 138)
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More resources, from Gabor Maté:

Dr. Gabor Maté's Website: <http://drgabormate.com>

Books by Dr. Gabor Maté:

[*When The Body Says No*](#)

[*Scattered: How Attention Deficit Disorder Originates, and What You Can Do About It*](#)

[*Hold On To Your Kids: Why Parents Need to Matter More Than Peers*](#)