

## **Unraveling Sex, Love, and Fantasy: Crawling through the Wilderness – Part I, Part II and Part III**

**Mark Gorkin\***

*“The Stress Doc”, USA*

**\*Corresponding Author:** Mark Gorkin, “The Stress Doc”, USA.

**Received:** May 16, 2018; **Published:** July 19, 2018

### **Unraveling Sex, Love, and Fantasy: Crawling through the Wilderness – Part I**

How many pine for romance?

Forever climb Mt. Ecstasy?

For hearts that sing, minds that dance

Close your eyes; go on, take one more chance

On that fine line: love or fantasy!

Is it his moans, her moans...maybe hormones

Frenzy feeding a starved psyche?

The intrigue of all the unknowns

An urge to rattle those old bones

Hey, it's just my high-drive potency.

[The chorus, immediately below,  
to be sung to the children's classic:

“Knick Knack Paddiwack

Give the dog a bone

This old man came rolling home.”

I crave you...You save me

Both still trapped in dependency.

Will we ever learn to be alone?

Until then no place called home!

What do you mean denial

Of black-hole tragedy?

See these flashing eyes that smile

Hmm...you can see through my guile

To the shame shrouded in secrecy.

You can't just talk about addiction  
Especially the sex variety, so  
My Jekyll-Hyde transformation...  
Go ahead, search far and wide  
You'll never know the dark side  
The shadow side of the real me.

I play you...You prey on me  
Acted out so predictably.  
No one grows, we only groan  
Until then no place called home!

Unless I crash down to the bottom...now  
Anguished cries: "To be or not to be?"  
For real...the core's not truly rotten?  
One's soul can never be forgotten?  
Just twelve humble steps from recovery?

Fighting the gravity of biochemistry  
Years crawl along the icy slope:  
The stinging memory of one so hungry  
For a healing hug; a forgiving identity.  
Yet again, the too familiar trope:

I cut you...You "yes, but" me  
Both feeding off our misery.  
Can two ever cleanly pick a bone?  
Until then no place called home!

The stomach knot anxiety  
Ever grasping for that end of rope  
To resist the pit of virtuality  
Flesh and blood web of surreality  
PULL THE DAMN PLUG...  
A buddy's lifeline the only hope.

Jagged edge mountain climbing  
A roaring river of uncertainty  
Just not clear where I'm heading  
But sure is heart muscle building  
Less the destination...more the soul journey.

I judge you...You grudge me  
Who has a clue what love can be?  
Why won't one of us just roam?  
Until then no place called home!

Then, one day...Shout it out on Instagram...  
"Safe-within-my-own-skin" serenity!  
(Hey, the goal is progress, not perfection; nor, faux purity)  
The lion lays down with the lamb  
A Jewish Atheist gets the program?!  
Behold, behold the possibility.

Once I embrace my sickness  
A toxic mix: sex and fantasy!  
Then light warms the once cold stone fortress  
A brother's voice from the darkened wilderness:  
The truth first sucks, then shall set you free!

I crave you...You save me  
Both still trapped in dependency.  
Will we ever learn to be alone?  
Until then no place called home!

I play you...You prey on me  
Acted out so predictably.  
No one grows, we only groan  
Until then no place called home!

I cut you...You "yes, but" me  
Both feeding off our misery.  
Can two ever cleanly pick a bone?  
Until then no place called home!

I judge you...You grudge me  
Who has a clue what love can be?  
Why won't one of us just roam?  
Until then no place called home!

**Unraveling Sex, Love, and Fantasy: Uncovering the Grief Pathway – Part II**

Why does it seem eternity  
For the obvious to hit, squarely?  
Free hands of all the trickery

Disrobe the old family judiciary  
Unplug vibrating gadgetry  
And drown the siren song of dopa-demon  
Predator of bored and restless se(a)men  
Adrift in a haze of mindless dreamin  
About Addict Ahab's prideful schemin.

To brake rapid cycle impulsivity  
Crawl uphill till wise and weary, then  
Sit beneath a shady tree  
Breathe in the forest quietly  
Whisper aloud all the secrecy  
Call in to the wild frequency  
Now be bold...design a voice of divinity:

To wit, Darwin's nature, a certainty  
So, too, "Starry Night" of dream time  
Poetic power, rhythm and rhyme  
E.g., Blake's burning Tyger symmetry  
The joy of inner child spontaneity  
Chaplin's dance of silly and sublime.  
Ah, to touch Celestial Self identity  
Yet, all faith and fate stop on a dime...  
With the eternal joker: the dice of cosmic mystery.

You want to know my god? Nature's realm is prime  
Also, the inner labyrinth of creativity  
A primal hunt through jungle territory  
The revelation... a deep geometry in time.  
Of course, buddies in recovery  
For sure spiritual synergy  
But, ultimately, it's the paradoxicality:  
Mind expanding yet ego humbling inscrutability!

Yes, weep joyfully on writing your obituary  
Fiery words will burn through purgatory  
With nothing left to lose, resurrect that old story  
Now, Phoenix flames rise most unexpectedly...  
Enlightened shadows from the cemetery.

The rule of new life: mastery humbled by history  
Only to be relaunched by the unknown heir of destiny!

Grief: the upside down to earthly grandiosity.  
So, let go; let tears bathe a soiled ancestry  
Add a pinch of mind massage laugh therapy  
Or, perhaps, some psychotropic sympathy  
Fresh brain-body gumbo chemistry  
For less NEEDED neuroplasticity  
And “peace within my own skin” maturity.

Aha! A rewired firewall for inner sanctity...  
No need to trumpet “us vs. them” bellicosity  
Nor victor blames the victim monstrosity.  
Better, block “sky is falling” urgency  
Pull the curtain on all that’s “fake newsy” –  
Whether of the Ozzie, Prez, or Wiz variety  
Through “one brick at a time” boundary  
Morphs a gateway-bridge to shared sensitivity...  
A land where patience rides lightning anxiety  
Sky high mania is harnessed to humility  
Calming red-faced rage indignity  
Slowing go-go-green “it’s all relativity”  
As amber cruise controls the speed of insanity.

Look, a path...victim identity to voice of integrity:  
“Let My Neurons Go” faux majesty  
No more the slave of Romantasy!  
En fin, laissez les bons temps roulez!

And with a most uncommon bent:  
An acronym higher power sent.  
Quieting racing thoughts most consciously  
An addiction inoculation strategy  
Where lyrical prose replaces poetry...  
The Stress Doc’s MODEL GENT!

## Sex, Love, and Fantasy: Quickly Setting Healthy Boundaries

### The Stress Doc's MODEL GENT – Part III

According to Chris Tuell, Ed.D. LPCC-S, LICDC-CS, Clinical Director of Addiction Services, Lindner Center of HOPE, Department of Psychiatry - University of Cincinnati, in *Process Addiction and the Addictive Brain*, Oct 2015, addiction is defined as any related, compulsive behavior which interferes with normal living and causes severe stress on family, friends, loved ones, and one's work environment. More specifically, addiction is a primary, chronic disease of brain reward, motivation, memory, and related circuitry. Dysfunction in these circuits leads to characteristic biological, psychological, social, and spiritual manifestations, Dis-ease is reflected in an individual pathologically pursuing reward and/or relief by substance use and other behaviors, e.g. abuse, gaming, gambling, sex addiction, codependency, etc. He proposes a five-fold CUBIS Treatment approach:

- Chemical Imbalance - Medication
- Unresolved Issue(s) - Psychotherapy
- Belief (which is distorted) - CBT
- Inability to Cope – New Skills
- S-R Relationship – Education

The proposed Prevention-Intervention Mantra/Model incorporates elements of Tuell's CUBIS, all except "Medication" for Chemical Imbalance. (And clearly, if serious chemical imbalance is not being addressed, then the efficacy of other steps – whether CUBIS or MODEL GENT – likely will be compromised). When you need to quickly intervene in obsessive thought or consuming emotion, to short-circuit the looming compulsive or craving action, try the Stress Doc's addiction-inoculation strategic acronym: MODEL GENT:

**MO: Mute the Obsession:** This mantra becomes an instant dimmer switch for distracting from, muffling, toning down, softening, quieting, if not short-circuiting, the early signs of anxious, angry, or addictive obsession. The first step: making conscious the choice-decision point to post the MODEL GENT on your psychic billboard. (This is a rough step, especially when "Who gives a shit!" or the self-denying "It's just a little porn" addictive-depressive voices and vices are drowning out healthier options. Calling a recovery buddy may be needed to help launch the mantra. Chanting together the letter pairings is also a possibility). Still, there will be times when you alone will have to decide quickly to engage MODEL GENT mode. You may need a few deep breaths to begin the disruption process. Then, just committing to recite, to walk through all the mindful steps should help distract from if not slow the fixated rev cycle. The key is found in the words of Horace, the Ancient Roman poet and philosopher: To begin is to be half done. Dare to know...start!

**Strategic Step:** Let breathing and initiating the MODEL GENT sequence provide momentary distraction or disruption from racing – anxious or angry – obsession or rigid fixation...Dare to know!

**DE: Detach from Excitement:** This is perhaps the most daunting step: unplugging your mind, heart, and loins from the object of sexual imagery and fantasy; from the psycho-physiological hit of intrigue. To detach from an object of addiction or fixated fantasy, one may need to change or displace a variety of patterns, including, for example, how, where, and when you communicate with the person (or voice, or text message, or image) with whom you are involved or, more likely, consumed. One must set aside drinking from the all too familiar cup of heightened anticipation and/or arousal. Can you imagine beyond momentary bliss; will the possibility of serenity do battle with probable insanity? No easy task: snatching reality from the vicious jaws of fantasy! Actually, what keeps us attached to that addictive cycle is not just depressive resignation but also OCD grandiosity – "I've got this" or "What's wrong with watching a quick video?" The challenging words of F. Scott Fitzgerald come to mind: The test of a first-rate intellect is the capacity to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function. One should see things as hopeless yet be determined to make them otherwise! Or, to draw on the 12-Step vernacular, one can acknowledge being powerless, yet still be far from helpless!

**Strategic Step:** Shift from physiological arousal-anticipation to down to earth conceptual engagement: confront denial, then make a list of your behavioral patterns, pro and con.

And it usually takes time to generate the agile objectivity and insight of emotional distance. According to Recovery at the Ranch, “When you are long past doing something, because it’s been months or years since you did it, it’s easier to see where and how you engaged in certain behaviors that fell into a pattern”.

Consider making a list of behaviors that you’ve been doing that you believe constitute a pattern. This is the only way that you’ll have any real idea of what you’ve been doing in your life. As in (any recovery work), it helps to take notes that you can refer back to. If you like, make two separate sheets, one for good behavior patterns and one for bad patterns of behavior. Or, simply list the behaviors and then see if they fall into patterns. After that, you can weigh and balance how you feel about them and assign them either a positive or negative value. What this value means is not whether or not you like the behavior. You liked getting high, correct? That didn’t mean it was a positive behavior pattern. No, here the positive or negative value refers to whether it enhances or detracts from your recovery efforts” (Recognizing Patterns – And How to Change Them in Recovery”, Recovery at The Ranch, February 16, 2013).

### LG and G: Let Go and Grieve

**Let Go:** For many territorial creatures, human and otherwise, “let go” are two of the most difficult words to accept in any language. First, letting go often equals retreat as in defeat, shame, feeling helpless or powerless, along with the loss of favorite-fixated objects, territories, or fantasies. And soon followed by diminishing status and/or self-esteem. However, a more productive association exists: retreat as in temporarily stepping back, processing raw emotions, allowing tears to heal wounds, reaching out for support, and taking time for reflection and rejuvenation. Retreat, in fact, lays the groundwork for learning from loss, gaining new perspective, acquiring resources, and formulating strategic and imaginative action plans. Of course, letting go invites uncertainty, possibly being out of control; perhaps flooded with overwhelming emotion. Letting go may open a Pandora’s Box of feelings and furies, both old and new. (One is ripe for flooding when denying, numbing, or distracting from longstanding pain, for example, not wanting to face unresolved emotional issues with a critical – in all senses of the word – parent). Finally, letting go conjures loneliness, coming face-to-face with your stark, unmasked, oftentimes impostor or unworthy sense of self. But such aloneness and vulnerability primes reaching out for support. The key question: how strong the foundation of this support system?

**Strategic Step:** The New “R & R” – Can you see the positive in Retreating? Will you take the time for Reflecting?

**Grieve:** Especially when involving sex or love addiction, to let go of an object of fixation or fantasy means to invite grief – a sense of loss, emptiness, unworthiness, isolation, and/or loneliness. And when the loss is acute or profound, emotional memories crash the flood-gates. Grief, itself, is multidimensional involving a passage through such powerful emotional states and behaviors as shock, denial, anger, rage, sadness, melancholy, angst, fear, guilt, and ambivalence. However, if sufficiently grieved, if one is meaningfully supported in this grief process, a landscape and mindscape of relief, serenity, and profound possibility loom. As I once penned: Whether the loss is a key person, a desired position, or a powerful illusion (or addiction), each deserves the respect of a mourning. The pit in the stomach, the clenched fists and quivering jaw, the anguished sobs prove catalytic in time. In mystical fashion, like spring upon winter, the seeds of dissolution bear fruitful renewal. And, especially when practicing the mind-body muscle-building MODEL GENT to defuse obsessive or addictive urges, acknowledging feelings of grief doesn’t require an explosive outpouring of emotion. Clearly, one must connect to poignant or piercing emotional memories. But with practice and support, instead of abandonment, rage, shame, depression, panic, or acute fear, one may mostly muse on the sadness or lingering regret underlying those more charged states.

**Strategic Step:** Can you not hold on to the familiar so tightly? Take time and space to grieve. The Next “R & R” – Reveal and Release the pain; now, imagine new possibilities, explore supportive resources.

### Grief Muse

And “muse” is an apt term, especially when considering the “grief muse” as a source of rejuvenation and creative inspiration. As the Algerian-French Nobel Prize-winning author and philosopher, Albert Camus, so poignantly noted: Once we have accepted the fact of loss, we understand that the loved one (including, I will add, the object of codependency, fantasy, or addiction) obstructed a whole corner of the possible, pure now as a sky washed by rain. Your life feels like an empty canvas; you are demotivated. Your life feels like a blank canvas; you are stirred to explore and design anew. However, to let go of addictive patterns you may not want to immediately start painting on the canvas. This may be time for noodling or sketching; or for that most unlikely possibility: doing the head work, heart work, and homework prerequisite to becoming more comfortable in your own skin! Remember: One must begin to separate...one must be separate to begin!

**GE: Get Empathy:** In his popular book, *Recovery: Freedom from Our Addictions*, Russel Brand observes that addiction is just another way to get what one didn't sufficiently receive growing up... healthy human connection. Of course, addiction tends to follow an obsessive or impulsive, dangerous pathway, one typically fraught with destructive consequences. However, if healthy connection is a key addiction antidote, then how can we experience connection and closeness with others? And I'm defining intimate connection as a relationship or group setting in which you can gradually share your fears and shame, vulnerabilities and emotional intensities. And even if fearing being judged, the other person or group still feels safe enough that you go ahead and begin to risk expressing and exposing those shadow elements. And, when it's a true give-and-take connection, when both parties are feeling strong enough, the sharing and vulnerability is mutual. And, it is a process, not a one-off experience. Back and forth vulnerable sharing, grappling with misunderstanding, all contribute to that feeling of being heard and seen, and the hard-earned evolution of trust. And as trust builds, we understand that the most valuable friend is one who can give us TLC; but not the common variety. No this is the Stress Doc's TLC: Tender Loving Criticism and Tough Loving Care!

So, what are the positives of having another offer an empathetic, TLC ear and shoulder. First, to be seen and heard by another means that you haven't scared the person off or pushed him or her away. You may be wounded, but you are not beyond receiving care or repair. You are worthy of genuine engagement. And when you share with others struggling with their own pain, both different from yet similar too your own, you are not alone. You are not a freak of nature and (lack of) nurture. You are part of the “all too human” family. Whether with one other person or with a group, allowing ourselves to ask for and reach out for help, finally admitting that we can't do it alone, is the first step of recovery.

**GE: Give Empathy:** As you begin to recover, as you feel more comfortable in your own skin, as you feel a greater sense of self-worth, it is natural to want to pass on what you have been finally able to receive. Lending an ear and sharing with one who is vulnerable is a test: have you made enough progress in dealing with your demons that another's demons or dark side doesn't adversely trigger you? It's natural for your own emotions to be stirred when listening to another's pain. Can you listen and share with a sense of detached compassion? To be present with the other yet also know that a sense of boundaries is vital. For example, right now I can only give this much. Or, I realize emotions are getting stirred that I need to feel and examine, before I can be there for you in a helpful way. Listening with head and heart to another is a window to our own soul and suffering. Ultimately, getting and giving empathy is an endless Yin/Yang cycle of sharing, learning, disagreeing, even healthy fighting, setting boundaries and, gradually, sometimes with great difficulty, evolving greater levels of knowing, intimacy and trust.

**Strategic Step:** To truly give to another one must know how to ask for help and to be on the receiving end. Humility is a foundational component of a helpfulness not based on strength and weakness or status but on, despite all the differences, our common humanity.

**EN: Expect Nothing:** As you wrestle with, evolve, and emerge from the dark night of pain...new emotional muscles, unforeseen perspective...a new light of day. You have uncovered deep patterns of memory; also, conceptual seeds nurturing past-present-future discovery. You are ready to formulate fresh plans or possibilities, perhaps make novel connections or explore enriched resources. However, when fighting addictive tendencies, the biggest, the most perplexing realization is that while singing about myriad possibilities you must

also mute your ego, entitlements, and expectations. We have arrived at the Buddhist segment of the counter-obsession and addiction model. Not only do you not invest pride, worthiness, and sense of self in how the other person sees you or relates to you, but you begin to recognize the folly in trying to control another adult, especially an individual who is the object of immature fantasy; one with whom you are codependent or enmeshed. (Of course, some adults must be controlled. e.g. Weinstein, Cosby, etc). All you can really attempt is taking control of your own emotions, perceptions, and actions. (And remember, it's always progress and not perfection; it's the path of, not to, mastery). The paradox: at the moment you are feeling a renewed sense of power...you must also embrace your powerlessness!

**Strategic Step:** Expect nothing from another, be open to myriad possibility, yet err on the side of boundary...and, as much as you are able, resist the urge to do it perfectly and, please, don't take it all so personally.

Of course, limiting expectations does not mean foregoing desires, dreams, and ambitions. It just means being dedicated to your work, to your calling (or supporting another's path) ...without anticipating a preconceived recognition, payoff, result, or answer. (And, naturally, not being robots, we do take things personally; emotional expectations and fantasies get stirred. And when they do, if you start racing – replacing moderate hope with manic hype – or pacing and grumbling – “look at how I sacrificed for the other, for them...I deserve better” – the “Heaven's Reward Fallacy” – return to “LG & G”: Let Go and Grieve). As we say in 12-Step “codependence parlance,” in terms of personal sanity, stability, and serenity, all you can do is “take care of your side of the street.” (And set limits when others try to export their actual or virtual, controlling or manipulative toxins.) As a 12-Step colleague recently noted, “If I basically don't have expectations of my wife, whenever she is responsive, I am grateful”.

**NT: No Touching:** Speaking of which, for those who struggle with sex, codependency, and love cravings, how to stay grounded in the realm of relationship reality and not be sucked into a web of romantic fantasy (the aforementioned Romantasy)? Or, how not to succumb to its dysfunctional converse – a state of numbness. One answer: be careful and conscious of the power of touch! Let me start with self-touching, that is, auto-erotic stimulation or masturbation. Naturally, over the course of a life cycle, masturbation can provide momentary pleasure, tension release and relief; even imaginary and enjoyable distraction. For a time, it can be a lifeline for social isolation or disconnection.

However, when the auto-erotic becomes chronic, whether to: a) numb emotional pain, loneliness, rage, jealousy, shame, or anxiety directly, b) engage in obsessive-compulsive behavior disconnected from reality, or c) escape repetitively and relentlessly loss, emptiness, and grief, then this touching is potentially another addictive mechanism. Combined with hits of dopamine, repetitive behavior (along with habitual surroundings or situations for this compulsive behavior, e.g. watching porn at night at your computer while eating a favorite snack) all too often help turn feeling into craving or make one susceptible to addictive triggering! By ritualizing and bandaging over real, deep-seated pain, a wound will fester, perhaps become viral. Alas, the human act of touch has now regressed into a serious, destabilizing threat to psychological and physical well-being.

**Strategic Step:** Be conscious of how touching, apart from a sense of conscious boundary, can easily be seen as intrusive and/or invasive...and can become addictive, whether through self-stimulation or when enmeshed in a codependent relation.

So, touch is double-edged. As an infant and child, it's a requisite for mind-body health and sense of safety, security, and well-being; of feeling wanted and loved. As an adult, touch – who, how and where, when and why – can communicate all kinds of emotion – from affection and caring to passion and intimate devotion. While it's opposite, chronic withholding or worse – physical and sexual abuse – almost invariably leave deep-seated scars. For the individual caught up in immature fantasy and instant love, or one suffering from a sense of loneliness and emotional hunger for connection-affection, touching might be likened to playing with fire. If not of a very casual and basically conscious variety, premature touching, before a solid relationship foundation has been established, often fuels a fictive romantic reality and emotional codependency. Which is why the cautionary letters NT: “No Touching”...at least not prematurely, and not without a sense of boundary!

### Closing

A Seven-Step (12-Step Lite, perhaps) mantra/model for defusing and setting boundaries around sex, love, and fantasy obsession and addiction has been outlined and briefly illustrated. MODEL GENT breaks down into seven components:

- MO: Mute Obsession
- DE: Detach from Excitement
- LG: Let Go
- G: Grieve
- GE: Get Empathy/Give Empathy
- EN: Expect Nothing
- NT: No Touching

In no way is this model a substitute for psychiatric intervention and 12-Step participation. However, it is a mantra-model for quickly resisting urges and cravings, for healthier refocusing until more substantial support can be engaged. *Amen and women, to that!*

**Volume 7 Issue 8 August 2018**  
**©All rights reserved by Mark Gorkin.**