

**CYCLE OF COMPULSIVE/OBSESSIVE BEHAVIORS**  
**From John and Martha Beck**

**A**

**Perceptions** of isolation, separateness,  
and aloneness. **Beliefs of not belonging** with  
others. . . "somehow I don't fit it"

**D**

**thoughts and behaviors** of  
denial, concealment and pretending

**B**

**thoughts/feelings** of  
self pity, hurt and sadness

**behaviors** of  
self indulgence, medication  
distraction

**C**

**feelings and thoughts** of  
self hatred, guilt and shame

A. **Perceptions** that I have that keep me apart and alone;

1. I am. . .

2. Life is. . .

3.

B. Behaviors that I choose to become involved in that are indulgent, medicating;

C. Inner sentences of shame and guilt;

I am

I am

I always

I never

D. Methods that I use to pretend that everything is OK;

## Working with the Cycle of Compulsive Behaviors

Traditionally most processes designed to break compulsive or obsessive behavioral cycles have focused on the intervention points of either B. (the specific destructive behavior) or D. (the denial or concealment phase). It may be that in focusing energy on either of those steps that we unwittingly “dump gas on the fire”. Any intervention that tends to amplify the sense of aloneness (step A) or helps to trigger shame (step C) may add to the intensity of the cycle. If someone is feeling discouraged to start with and then we remind them of how unsuccessful they are, or if we use techniques of shaming or guilt we may give them evidence to support the sentences that they use to justify staying in the cycle. Depending on how fearful the behavior is we may respond with lots of anger and condemnation. Sometimes we choose to plead, to reason with and beg, usually to no avail. The dismal success that most drug rehab programs have may just be one of the many testaments to this concept.

What we suggest in order to avoid the dynamic described above and to minimize the chance of “enabling” is to focus intervention techniques in area A and C. Methods of encouragement, cooperating, including and validating which tend to dispute feelings and thoughts of aloneness may have a much more powerful impact on the cycle than a direct confrontation about the destructiveness of the indulgent behavior. Most individuals in the cycle already have an acute awareness of the destruction, that’s precisely why those behaviors are picked. They can be used to reinforce the feelings and thoughts of shame and self hatred, just as our nagging and condescension can be used.

Any type of encouragement, done with sincerity and nonjudgmental commitment can act to break up the cycle. Those types of positive responses may in fact be met sometimes with defensiveness, precisely because they do not reinforce the destructive cycle. Be aware that if your partner, child or friend, meets your movement to disengage and be more positive with some anger or disorientation, it may be a good indicator that you are now outside their cycle of compulsivity.

We have listed some sentences that may be helpful in disengaging from this cycle. If you are in a cycle with someone else it is very helpful to look at your personal cycle and how it intersects their cycle.

### Encouraging sentences

I sure love you.	It’s nice to have you as a friend.
It’s good to be with you.	I appreciate you.
Thanks for being you.	I am able to grow because of you
You are important to me.	I like how I feel when I’m around you.
The sun shines through your eyes.	You sure work hard.
I appreciate the things you do.	It’s nice to feel your strength.
I have learned a lot from you.	I’m blessed/lucky to be with you.
I admire your ability to. . .	Things I like about you are. . . (list personality qualities)
I liked how you. . .	You sure must love/like me a lot.
How do you handle your sadness?	I like to listen to you.
What’s it like to be you?	Does anyone know how discouraged you get sometimes?
Who is there for you?	What do you like about yourself?
Can I hold you?	.

## CYCLE OF JOY AND EMPOWERMENT

A

**Perceptions** of togetherness,  
connectedness, oneness a sense of “kindness”  
- same kind as others  
Positive CONGRUENCE

D

disclosure, sharing of feelings  
of self love and closeness to others

B

cooperative, positive  
productive behaviors.

C

Sense of “Okness”  
appropriate ego esteem (I’m good at doing things)  
high self esteem (I’m worth(y) just because I exist)

A List 3 perceptions that you have that enhance okness w/self and closeness with others ;

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

B. List three cooperative, productive behaviors that you consistently do;

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

C. List 1 positive inner sentence each for ego esteem and self- esteem.

Ego esteem

Self esteem

D. List three ways that you share your positive inner perceptions and feelings with others.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.







