

ADDICTION **AND** **RECOVERY** **HANDBOOK**

**Unmask Addiction,
Unchain Recovery!**

JACK ALAN LEVINE, et al.



THE TRUTH ABOUT ADDICTION

BY JACK ALAN LEVINE

I remember distinctly feeling as if I was being pulled down into a fiery pit by the drugs. This wasn't just a one-second flash or a dream. It was a growing feeling that took root and expanded day by day. I remember feeling like Satan had grabbed onto my leg and was pulling me down into a fiery pit. I could feel myself slipping away.

For many, many years during my drug use, I remember thinking very clearly that I could always come back. What happened was I'd party, I'd cross over the line, but I was always able to get back. In college, I could recover in a day. As I got older, it took longer. It would take three days or a week to recover. But I had *always* felt that no matter how far over the line I went, I could always bring myself back. Then I had a car accident during a drug-induced blackout and the car and I almost wound up in a lake. I would have drowned. At that point, I knew I couldn't bring myself back anymore. It was the single scariest moment in my life—not the accident itself but the full realization of what I had become. I thought I was in control. I wasn't in control. The drugs were in control and there was no way back. The pit of hell had me, and the drugs had me.

It was a horrible, awful realization. I know if *you're* suffering from any kind of addiction, the pleasure from that addiction has long since disappeared. Undoubtedly, it was there in the beginning. Whether drugs, alcohol, pornography, gambling, eating, shopping, the internet, work—whatever the addiction of choice, I know that the pleasure you got from it is long gone.

Most nonaddicts wonder why the addict continues to do these things that are so unpleasurable and destructive. They wonder why a guy would gamble away his family's rent and food money. Why would someone risk her job, her health, her sanity on drugs and alcohol? Why would a guy stay on the internet looking at pornography when he's got a wife who wants to love him? Or kids who want to play with him and hug him and who need their daddy? Why? In rehab, one of the counselors answered that question in a powerful way that has stuck with me. He said, "There's comfort in familiar pain."

Let me tell you something about my drug addiction and my gambling addiction. I love to gamble. I love to do drugs. I hated the *downside* of it. I hated the pain of losing when I gambled. I hated the coming down with drugs. But when I did drugs and gambled, I was in a place where you couldn't touch me. I was in control of the world. I was in my own world where I was the king; I was the boss. I did whatever I wanted when I wanted, and a tremendous feeling of power came with that. It was a tremendous feeling of freedom, even though it was actually an illusion. The thing offering the feeling of freedom wound up being a prison. But there is hope of escape. This is a promise from God.

"... God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it..." (1 Corinthians 10:13)

After God says there's no temptation that overtakes you except what's common to man, the next line is, "but with the temptation He will also provide the way of escape." I'm here to tell you: whether you're an addict yourself, or a parent or spouse of an addict, there is a way out. The only question is: will you take it or not? There is help if you want help. I believe this book is the beginning of your road to recovery and to a great life.

It's been more than twenty-five years since I took the way of escape, and my life has gotten better every day since then. I know who I am, what I am, and why I am. My turnaround began after a car accident when I asked God for help. Let me tell you a story that I hope inspires you.

Long after I'd gotten sober, I was in Lake Tahoe, on vacation with a group of friends. We had all gone out to a restaurant, and we were lingering over a wonderful dinner. The conversation was bright and engaging in a way I seldom experienced during my drug days. As we were all sitting at the table, I was telling a story about my drug-dealing days back in college. My friend's wife Yvette, a wonderfully sweet woman, looked at me, stunned. "Why, Jack Levine," she exclaimed, "I would have never imagined *you* would ever do something like that!" My reaction might surprise you. I went back up to my hotel room that night and I *cried*. Tears of joy! The story I'd told about college really *was* me—back then. Through my tears, I said, "God, thank you so much for what you've done in my

life, that when people look at me today, they don't think of me as a drug addict wasting his life. As a matter of fact, it's so far removed from what I am now that people can't even believe that *would've* been me. Thank you for making that *unbelievable* change in me. Thank you that, today, I'm a new person. You've truly given me a new life."

If you're addicted, please listen to me. I know you feel like you don't have it in you. I know you feel like you've tried to get sober and failed. You feel like you're at war and you're getting the crap knocked out of you. It feels like you are starving and you have no more supplies. You've been out there forever, fighting. You're bloody and beaten. And your enemies are coming over the hill charging at you, and you feel like they're going to finish you off. But there's hope!

There's a great story about a little kid in kindergarten that makes the point I'm hoping for you to see. The kindergarten teacher gives out a piece of paper to all the kids and instructs the children, "Draw a picture. Draw anything you want on this piece of paper." The kids are happily drawing, but one little girl messes up her drawing. She tries to fix it, but that only makes it worse.

She starts crying hysterically. Hysterically! She's bawling and wailing. The teacher says, "Suzie, Suzie! What in the world is the matter?"

"I ruined it! I ruined it!" Suzie cries. "Everything is ruined! I did it wrong!" She hands the paper to the teacher, still crying uncontrollably. The teacher looks at her for a moment and then takes Suzie's first piece of paper and puts it down on her desk. She then hands Suzie a new piece of paper. "Here," she says. "Here's a brand-new piece of paper. Start again."

That's what God is saying to you today. It doesn't matter what happened before. "Here," He says, "Start again." God promises His mercies are new every morning (Lamentations 3:22-23). We should come to Him, lay our burdens at His feet and He will give us rest for our souls (Matthew 11:28-29). The best move I ever made in my life was believing God. I pray you will too.

The great news is there are resources and ways available to you right now to ensure you live a life free from addiction regardless of what or who you think God is, or if you believe in Him or not.

CAUSES OF ADDICTION

I work with people closely in many areas of the addiction rehabilitation process—physical, emotional, and spiritual—and I’ve learned a few things along the way.

One of the reasons people don’t get help is because of the stigma associated with addiction. When they hear the word *addiction*, people often think of driving through some bad neighborhood in the middle of the night buying crack. Sometimes that’s how addiction really is, but often it’s not. Getting rid of the stigma is an important step. There are many schools of thought regarding the cause of addiction among scholars, doctors, psychiatrists, and psychologists, all lining up on different sides. Some say you’re genetically predisposed. Some say it’s your environment. Some say it’s your personality. Some say it’s the substance itself—that the drugs or gambling were too tempting. That discussion has its place, and I’m all for finding out whatever we can about addiction in order to help people. But from another perspective, I find the discussion rather fascinating, and here’s why. (By the way, this is something I tell many people whom I counsel.) Let’s say you broke your leg playing soccer. That’s not good, of course. Nobody wants a broken leg. Now, let’s say you broke your leg in a car accident. Okay? Also, not pretty, and not desirable. Now, let’s say a guy came with a baseball bat and *clubbed* you in the leg because he was mad at you and broke your leg. Or let’s say you broke your leg just tripping over the sidewalk.

That’s four different ways you broke your leg. Here’s my question. What could *possibly* be the difference? How could it possibly matter why or how you broke your leg? The only thing that matters is *you have a broken leg*. How it happened might be of some academic interest, or of interest to the justice system, or to history, but the only pressing question for you right now as you sit there with your broken leg is: what are you going to do about it?

Addiction is the same way. We can sit around and talk about all the reasons and causes for addiction, and that’s not unimportant. Yes, there are different causes, and yes, some people are more genetically predisposed. And yes, environment can be an issue. But at the end of the day, we have someone who’s *addicted*. At the end of the day, someone has *broken his leg*. So really what’s the difference how you got there? The only thing that matters is: what are you going to do

about it? And if you had that broken leg, would you say, “Well, you know what? I can’t get my broken leg fixed because it happened in a soccer game. Maybe if I’d broken it in a car accident, it would be worthy of being fixed. But since it happened in a soccer game, I can’t get it fixed.” That’s ludicrous. It’s ridiculous. And yet it’s often how we think of addiction.

Look, it doesn’t matter how you got to that state. It just matters what you’re going to do about it. It’s not like you checked a box and said, “Hey, I want to wake up, ruin my life, become an addict, and throw everything away. I want to have physical, emotional and spiritual pain that I can’t seem to recover from and live the crappiest life imaginable.” I know that’s not what happened, so never let the *how* you got addicted serve as an excuse for not taking action to address the problem.

I’m not a psychologist, but we know when you’re a kid, you develop defense mechanisms in your mind that are very helpful and very valuable when you are a young child. Those strategies help you cope and avoid pain. They help you deal with the painful, unpleasant circumstances of your life (whether real or perceived). However, often they can hinder your recovery. As by trying to protect you from emotional pain, they can actually lead you to drug use (which can then turn into full blown addiction) as a way to deal with or ignore that emotional pain. This happens if these defense mechanisms, which help you when you’re a little child are not discarded at the proper time (when you are not a little kid anymore and when they have served their usefulness).

When you get older, those defense mechanisms you had as a child, (which are usually subconscious and have been a part of you since childhood), are no longer necessary. Like a stroller, you needed one when you were a little child, but now you can walk on your own just fine. The last thing you want to do as an adult is say, “I need to get back into the stroller to get around.” But unless we adjust our perspective, unless we see, understand, and release the coping strategies we imported from childhood, we can get lost unnecessarily for our whole lives in addict-like thinking and behavior, which eventually changes our body and brain chemistry for the worse. Fortunately, therapy and/or counseling can help us recognize and bring to the surface the specific issues in our own lives. Once an

addict can recognize them, he can deal with them. I believe it's the spiritual equivalent of turning on the lights in a dark room and the key to many addicts' complete recovery!

Addicts do what they do, use drugs and alcohol because of a perceived benefit. That perceived benefit is generally an avoidance of pain, or making them feel better about their present situation or providing comfort from an abuse or trauma that they do not want to think about or remember. The perceived benefit turns out to not be a benefit at all, as it leads him down the road of addiction and ruined, hopes, dreams, futures, and ultimately lives. But the addict is engaging in the addiction because they *feel* it gives them some benefit.

You need to be able to be with yourself and love yourself. You also absolutely need intimacy and supportive relationships. I once heard someone break down the word *intimacy* in a way that really struck with me: "into-me-see." Intimacy. To an addict, that's *terrifying*. We won't even look into ourselves. How are we going to let anybody else in? Establishing intimacy is essential. We don't have to be perfect. But we have to be real. We are who we are, and we have to learn to be proud of that with all our faults and all our wonderful traits, as well. We need to have supportive marriages and families. And those who are single need supportive relationships and friendship groups. We also need to have a purpose. This is why employment and work resources are important, and most recovery programs can help with those things. It's important to work and derive a sense of accomplishment from what we do.

Hopefully, you'll be able to work at something you're passionate about or good at. You should strive for excellence and look for a sense of accomplishment, rounding out life with leisure activities, hobbies, and interests—different healthy ways of relaxing and enjoying your time. I know to an addict all of this sounds impossible. But I'm here to tell you, it's *not* impossible. I've been there, and I've done it, and so have millions of others. Your addiction has convinced you to believe the lies. As you recover, you're going to learn how to reprogram and recondition yourself so you can appreciate life and the beauty and joy around you.

There are many different avenues of recovery. *There is a way for you.* Would you at least go take a look? If I told you there was gold in

my backyard, you might not believe me, but you would at least take a look because you'd be scared to miss it. Don't miss this. It's there if you look for it.

THE LIE OF ADDICTION

The great lie of addiction is that addiction makes you believe you are better off with the addiction than without it. For instance, if you are addicted to drugs and alcohol, the addiction has convinced you that your life is better with drugs and alcohol than without them.

In many cases, the addiction has convinced you that you need it to survive, that it is your life saver, your friend. It exists to help you. It makes you believe it gives you energy, it understands you, and is on your side unconditionally. This is a lie. The truth is addiction seeks to steal, kill, and destroy your life.

It is much like a pedophile looking to attract a child into his car with candy, dangling the candy, telling the child the candy is free and it's especially for him. Then, when the child gets close, the pedophile captures the child and does unspeakable things to him. Addiction seeks to do the same to you. It wants to gain control of your life, and, usually it does just that.

Feeding your addiction becomes the single focus, primary importance, and number-one objective of your life. We constantly think about how to satisfy, engage, and fulfill our addiction. Addiction is almost always disastrous. It causes a loss of your real identity, as well as physical, financial, relational, and spiritual consequences that are severely damaging to you and your family, friends, and acquaintances. In many cases, it leads to jail or death if left untreated.

The addiction makes the addict believe everyone is against them. They don't understand them, and they don't appreciate and love them. The addiction wants you to believe it is your friend and your defender. It's a lie! Nothing could be further from the truth. Addiction is evil. The great attribute of a good liar is they make you believe they are telling the truth. If it were obvious that someone was lying, you would not believe them. Your addiction is a great liar. That is why it is described as a cunning, baffling and insidious disease. It creeps up on you. It's like a time-release capsule. You think it's having no effect and then it knocks you on your ass, and you are not able to get up off the ground. This is the great lie of addiction.

The good news is there is truth. You can have it, but you must *choose* it. You can overcome and have victory over addiction. Your life will certainly be better without it than with it. As a matter of fact, with it you have no life at all. These are facts and circumstances that many addicts have learned the hard way, and we share them with you today as a history lesson and a reminder and a warning for everyone currently struggling with addiction. It is quicksand, and it will suck you in, drown you, and bury you. You must choose to seek the way out. There is help if you choose it and that is the truth!

THE PAIN IS THE SAME FOR EVERYONE

We know drug use or alcohol use is just a symptom of the real problem. I've worked with thousands of addicts over the last thirty years, and the one thing that amazes me about all of them is the remarkably deep amount of pain and hurt inside of them as the addiction has ravaged them spiritually, emotionally, physically, financially, and mentally. The mind-boggling fact of all of this is every addict has the same pain, regardless of how many drugs they use or how much alcohol they drink, regardless of how often they do it, and regardless of how long they have been doing it. The pain is the same.

I've seen people addicted to all different kinds of drugs: uppers, downers, painkillers, meth, heroin, cocaine, barbiturates, amphetamines, opiates, cannabis, alcohol, tranquilizers, sleeping pills, legal and illegal... You name it. But, the fascinating point is regardless of which drug they were addicted to, the pain they shared, the pain they suffered, the ravages of addiction on their life physically, emotionally, spiritually, mentally, and personally was always the same.

I will say it again. The mind-boggling fact of all of this is that it is the same pain for every addict, regardless of how many drugs they use or how much alcohol they drink, regardless of how often they do it, and regardless of how long they've been doing it.

No fixed amount of time makes you an addict. It's a mindset.

I've seen people get heavily addicted in six months and hit bottom, and I've seen others whose addiction finally caught up with them after years. Regardless of whether it grows slowly or fast, it's growing. The end result is always the same. The addict winds up a

mere shell of themselves—a person who knows they are trapped, being suffocated, that the life is being sucked out of them, and that their addiction has completely overtaken their minds and their bodies.

It's as if they now live simply to feed the addiction. They know it's not a good thing, and sometimes they even wish they could find the way out, but they are so addicted and have become so comfortable in this pattern of addiction that it literally becomes the only thing they really live for. The addiction itself has overtaken them, lied to them, confused them, twisted the truth, and made them believe that only in their addiction can they find comfort from the realities of the world. When in truth the realities of the world are where they would find comfort and love, and the addiction is killing them and isolating them.

So, the bottom line is the pain is the same for every addict.

The great news is there is also hope, freedom, and a recovery program available for everyone. No one will be able to say there wasn't a way out. There is a way out for every addict. The only question is are you willing to take it?

HIGHER POWER

As an addict, I've trained myself (with the help of God and others) to think differently. I still face temptation, as do most addicts, but I want to let you see into my mind so you can see where my freedom has come from and how I maintain it to deal with temptation when it comes. So when a temptation arises, here's what I've trained myself to do. I immediately think, "You know what? This addiction [cocaine, Percocet, alcohol, placing a bet, or whatever] seems appealing right now. So let me think through the end result of that action." Already, by thinking about the consequences, I'm making headway in defeating addictive behavior.

Then I walk myself through it. I tell myself, "You'll have the cocaine, and you will definitely disappear again for three days. Once you start doing one line, you won't be able to stop, and you'll go through a quarter ounce or a half ounce of cocaine in three days. You will lose everything you have worked for in your life. You will lose your credibility. You will lose the respect of your family. You will lose respect for yourself, and you'll lose all the wonderful things

you've accomplished. Not only that, you will feel like complete crap, disgusting and horrible." I remember how my mind and body felt when I was coming down from doing those drugs. So now there's some rationality happening. The thought I had about how nice that line of cocaine felt when I first did it has a counterbalance. I know there's *no question* that if I do that first line, I am going to wind up back in that situation. That is a place I never want to be again. It is not even close to being worth doing the line.

I even have a board of directors meeting with myself. This might sound funny to you, but I'm telling you, it works for me. The board consists of me and God. But sin—the devil—also attends the meeting. Everybody has a voice at the board of directors meeting.

God says, "Jack, you don't want to do that. That's bad for your life. I have good blessings in store for your life. Trust Me and all will go well with you."

So, I say, "Okay, God, that's great."

Then Satan, who is the embodiment of sin itself, speaks up and says, "Jack, God's an idiot. What you want to do is party. You need pleasure now. You *need* to do these things. You need to gamble; you need to use drugs. You can steal; you can cheat on your wife—anything you want. Go for it! You know it's okay. God will forgive you, so you can do whatever you want."

I say, "Okay, that's interesting. You've had your say." Then, of course, I say, "God, I'm with you. I know you're right, and I know how much pain I suffered by believing the devil before."

Then we vote.

But here's the thing. Sin has no vote. He has a *voice*. He gets to speak, but he has *no vote*. God and I vote. We vote *yes* to God, to the good things of life, the good things of the world, and the wonderful life He's already given me.

I'm sharing this with you because I want you to understand that whatever those urges are toward behavior that isolates and destroys you, I'm calling it sin because that's how I relate to it. But whatever you call it, the point is, that voice may not *ever* leave your head. "Hey, come use drugs... Come gamble... You need to isolate yourself... This is your relief... I'm your buddy... I'm the object that always gives you relief and pleasure."

That voice and desire may never go away entirely. That's okay. He can speak all he wants, but he has no vote. He doesn't have control of my life anymore. For example, I'm a lifelong Yankees fan. Here comes a friend's voice telling me how great the Red Sox are. You know what? He can talk himself blue. He can cite every statistic of every Red Sox player from the beginning of time to the end of time. He's not changing my mind. It really doesn't matter what he says. I'm not becoming a Red Sox fan. *I'm a Yankees fan*. I know who I am. I know which team is my team. In the same way, you need to unshakably know whose team you're on. The old adage is simple. If you have two dogs and you feed one and starve the other, the one you feed becomes strong and the one you starve eventually dies. Which will you feed... your spirit or your addiction?

I know not everybody reading this believes in God, and that's up to you. If you don't believe in a higher power, you shouldn't let that fact dissuade you from trying to find help. But I will tell you this, God was absolutely essential to my recovery, and I believe He can be to yours as well. The reason Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous tell you to seek a *higher power* is because internally you feel estranged from it. You feel separated from it. You know in your heart that you have that yearning for fullness. There's a void, an emptiness in the life of every person who does not have a spiritual relationship with their Creator.

If you disagree, I can't force you to believe the way I do. But in counseling thousands of addicts, I *know* that emptiness is there. The relationship with the Creator I'm talking about is not a fearful one. You shouldn't have the attitude, "Oh my gosh, I'm going to do something wrong and there's a guy up there just waiting for me to screw up so He can slam me with a baseball bat!" That's not how we think of our own kids. I love my kids. I love them so much I don't want them to screw up. Now, at times I may have to discipline them because they screwed up. It's not because I'm waiting gleefully to nail them but because I love them and I want them back on the right path to blessings, happiness, and peace. That's exactly how God is with us. God loves us and wants us to have all the blessings of this abundant, wonderful life He created for us.

WHY NOT GO?

In order to begin that recovery, the addicted person needs to understand that, with the help of loving, helpful friends and a suitable recovery program, the seed of renewal resides within every suffering person. It's not embarrassing to need help. There's nothing to be ashamed of in needing help. We all need help in a lot of areas.

We need teachers to help us learn. We need doctors to help us when we're sick. We need mechanics to fix our cars. The question is where to get the right help. Many years ago, I was the editor of a magazine called *Back Pain Magazine*. This was after I had back surgery myself, and it was a pretty specialized publication, as you can tell from the name.

What I learned from running that magazine was there were a lot of different ways to treat back pain. *A lot of ways.*

Here's what I found. If I went to the surgeon, he would say, "I can heal your back pain. I need to operate on you." If I went to the chiropractor, he'd say, "I can heal your back pain. I need to adjust you." If I went to the doctor, he'd say, "I can heal your back pain. Just take these drugs." If I went to the physical therapist, she'd say, "I can heal your back pain. I need you to do these exercises." The acupuncturist? "I can heal your back pain. I need to stick a few needles into you." The yoga instructor says, "I can heal your back pain. You need to meditate." The reflexologist, says, "I can heal your back pain. I just need to massage your toes." And on and on and on.

So, through that job, and through my own experience, I learned there were many different treatments for back pain. Believe it or not, most of them worked—but not for everybody.

Some treatments worked for some people and other treatments worked for other people, but none of them worked for all the people. In the right circumstances, nearly every one of these treatments could be quite effective for *someone*.

The same holds true in addiction. There are different ways to treat addiction. The reason I share this experience with you is because I want you to understand that there may be one voice or one group talking the loudest and with the most authority saying, "This is what you need to do." That's not necessarily the case. It may be a very good idea, but just because they're talking the loudest and with the most authority doesn't mean they have the best system or solution for *you*.

Perhaps it worked for *them*, and something else will work better for *you* or your loved one. There are many different ways of going at this. We just need you to *get better!*

What I learned as the editor of *Back Pain Magazine* applies to addiction recovery. It doesn't matter which way you gain victory over addiction and live a life of freedom. It just matters that you do it! If you want to go to New York from Florida, there are several different ways you can do it. You can fly, take a train, ride a bus, or drive a car... You can even hitchhike, go on horseback, or walk. Some of the methods take longer, and some of them are much more efficient than others. I guess it depends on how motivated you are to get there, how quickly you want to get there, and what you are willing to pay. They will all get you there!

The important thing to remember is resources and methods are available to you right now to ensure you live a life free from addiction. It doesn't necessarily matter which one: a complete surrender to God, a thirty-day rehabilitation program, a twelve-step program like AA (Alcoholics Anonymous), NA (Narcotics Anonymous), GA (Gamblers Anonymous), therapy or counseling, intensive thirty-to-sixty day inpatient programs like at the Beachcomber, long-term rehab programs like Teen Challenge and Faith Farm (ninety days to one year), intensive outpatient programs, like the Celebrate Recovery program and many others. There are many good options. Like back pain, not all work for everyone and some work better for some people than others.

THE KEY TO YOUR FREEDOM

I have to fly a lot for business, but I really do not enjoy flying these days. It seems the skies have gotten very turbulent. And, I really hate turbulence! I hate that feeling of bouncing up and down on the plane like a knuckleball, and the large drops. Once I was sharing this with a friend of mine who was a pilot in the Vietnam War. He looked at me and laughed and he said, "Jack, if you understood turbulence, you wouldn't be afraid of it." Then he proceeded to explain to me how turbulence in the air is really like turbulence at sea. The boat goes up and down in the waves but you know the boat is not going to sink. It's just a bumpy ride. He explained to me how the air pockets in the sky had that same effect on airplanes. I have to

tell you, it did make me feel much better because I really understood how it worked. I truly believed that we weren't going to crash just because of turbulence. It gave me great peace of mind and helped me enjoy flying much more, even with the turbulence.

It's the same thing with addiction. If you understand addiction and what it does and why, and how it works, you will be less afraid of it. And, certainly, if you understand recovery, what it does, how it works and why, you will be more excited and encouraged to embrace it and have it work for you.

Many people don't do things because of fear of the unknown. So, instead they just stay in the knowledge, or I should say lack of knowledge they have. Scared to act, even when those actions would be beneficial to their life and health. We want to eliminate this issue for you. We want to educate and inform you about addiction by teaching you why addicts think and behave like they do, the effects of the addict on the family, and the most effective paths to recovery. This gives you a working knowledge of addiction you can apply in your own life, or in the life of an addicted loved one.

More importantly, when you understand not just why addicts think and behave like they do, but also see the paths to recovery and what you can do to take control of your own life or to help an addicted loved one take control of theirs, it will be an eye-opening and wonderfully empowering experience for you.

It all starts with knowledge. Knowledge is the key to wisdom. When you have knowledge and understanding, you will find great peace and comfort. In this same way, you can achieve your goals. Imagine trying to put together a model airplane without instructions or assembling a car engine without instructions. You probably couldn't do it. Yet, when you follow the instructions step by step, carefully and accurately, you can complete the task and accomplish the goal. It's the same with addiction.

MAKE THE COMMITMENT

In life we have to make choices, and our choices have consequences. It seems that when we are determined to get something done and turn our attention to it, we get it done. It usually means accepting the challenge, picking up the gauntlet, and making the decision to go forward. We usually do that when the results or

benefits of what we are going to get become more valuable to us than the price we pay or commitment we make. If you sign a contract to buy a house, you are committed. If you buy airline tickets to take a flight, you are committed. If you sign up to join the Army, you are committed. If you put food in your mouth and swallow it, you are committed to eating it.

So, what commitment are you going to make to the rest of your life? If you take a trip from Florida to California, you commit by getting in the car and pulling out of the driveway. You are on the way. Plans may change along the way. There may be twists and turns, changes and challenges to your plan as you go. Road conditions, weather, health, and other factors could impact your journey as you continue on to your destination. However, none of these conditions and circumstances should change the fact that you are committed to getting to your destination. A life of recovery is the same way. You begin the journey and then continue to move forward regardless of what comes your way.

When athletes like football, baseball, or basketball players play the game, we expect them to give their best efforts during the game. In other words, we expect them to be committed to playing their best. Your recovery journey is the same. You play the best you can, give it your best effort, and leave the outcome in God's hands. You just do the best you can. We often look at athletes and judge them based on the effort they gave and not so much on the results of the contest. Many great players have been hailed as heroes because of their individual commitment and effort, even if their team lost the game. The most frustrating thing is seeing an athlete (or a person) not giving one hundred percent effort. When athletes or players don't give one hundred percent effort, we have words for guys like that—lazy, slacker, stiff, bum, loser, the list goes on. So, it's not so much about the result of one game or one season as it is about the effort. I know God will bless your effort more than you can ask or imagine.

I believe that's the challenge for us in recovery. We must make a commitment to begin the journey. Your individual journey starts with change. A commitment to engage in any of the proven ways of recovery would be an awesome start (e.g., coming closer to God, a twelve-step program, a thirty-day rehab facility, out-patient therapy,

Celebrate Recovery, counseling, therapy, in-patient rehab, long-term care). The bottom line is you need to make the commitment to begin the recovery journey. When you commit to something, it means that you are going to do it. You attempt to do your best at whatever you said you were going to do.

I pray that today you have the desire to make the commitment to beginning your recovery journey. I pray you have the desire to cast off the lifestyle of addiction, to break free from that bondage, and to seek treatment for this disease and begin your new life. It starts with a commitment to the recovery journey!

So, don't delay. The choice is yours. No one can make the commitment for you. It has to be your decision and your commitment. I can tell you one thing. I believe you will never regret it, and I believe it will lead you to the happiest life you could ever imagine. Your life is not over. Your addiction has not defeated you. Far from it. Your new life begins now with your commitment. As in a marriage, as in accepting a new job, as in getting behind the wheel of the car, the journey begins when you commit to getting started and then begin to walk in and live that commitment. In the case of recovery, it is always worth it!

AVOID MAKING THE MISTAKE

It's so easy to put things off, especially things that are uncomfortable or things we believe may cause us short-term pain. Yet, if you were dying from a heart attack, you certainly wouldn't put off going to the emergency room and getting life-saving heart surgery. Why? Because even though there is short-term pain involved, the long-term result so far outweighs the short-term pain that you would run to it immediately.

I remember having a hernia and knowing I would need hernia surgery. I was so excited about the hernia surgery. I knew it would hurt and there would be some pain and soreness through the recovery process, but I was so anxious to get rid of the hernia pain that a week or two of short-term pain seemed like a small price to pay in comparison to being able to get up to play ball again, hold my young son, and do basic things without pain.

And I was right. It was a small price to pay! Addiction is the same way. Often we put off beginning our recovery journey because we

are scared of the short-term pain of addiction withdrawal and the perceived suffering we may go through. We live the saying, “There’s comfort in familiar pain.” Even though in our minds we know there’s a better way of life, and we know it’s a small price to pay to get there, we still use the fear of the recovery process as an excuse to cling to the old way of life that is killing us! Our addiction is still controlling us and destroying us.

Don’t make this mistake. Don’t let addiction suck more life out of you or take away more years of your life. Don’t let it take away more time with your family, your joy, your peace, your happiness and the life God intended for you to have.

Addiction is a lie. It’s a trick and that is exactly what addiction does. It lies to you. You need to address your addiction issues now. Yes, there may be some short-term discomfort and even a little pain and suffering, but with medical detox programs, these are minimized to a great extent.

Of course, you have emotional and psychological issues that need to be worked through and a new recovery lifestyle that needs to be learned and established. But these things are a blessing. You have to take a test to get your driver’s license, but it is worth it. You have to go on some dates to win over a boyfriend or girlfriend, but it’s worth it. You have to exercise to keep fit, but it’s worth it. Why? Because the end result is worth the short-term sacrifice. This is the same truth about addiction recovery... Don’t miss it!

AM I HOPELESS?

Our lives are a journey and a gift from God. We are to look at them as we would chapters in a book or scenes in a play. Yes, in a chapter in our lives, we suffered from addiction and the spiritual, physical, and emotional problems that our addiction caused for us and our loved ones. But now we will have so many more awesome, exciting, and happy chapters on our recovery journey. Can you imagine a football player practicing and complaining to the coach that the opposing team was hitting him? Well, of course, they’re hitting him, that’s part of the game. That’s why players train and practice, to get tougher and stronger so they can withstand the hits of the opponent in the game and win.

So, yeah, we have some pains and problems in our life, and addiction hurt us when we suffered through it. But we rise above that with faith, hope, and excitement, as we look forward to our recovery journey and the beginning of the rest of our life—a life focused on faith and hope, and certainty that we have value as an individual, that God loves us and God has a specific purpose for our life.

We need to stop thinking about our lives in terms of accomplishments and start to think of them in terms of a journey. Imagine a ride at Disneyland. The question wouldn't be, "How long did the ride last?" The question would be, "How did you enjoy it?" We want to be able to enjoy our lives and enjoy the journey. Yes, we face some hardships and trials along the way, but just like an army boot camp recruit, who is training to get tough so he fights well to win the war, we can use our addiction as a training ground. We use it as an inspiration point. We use it as a turning point in say, "Yes I suffered through this, but God is letting me use it to help others and see the purpose in my life."

God has shown me and millions of other addicts that we can have a recovery journey of faith and hope. God promises if you seek Him with all your heart, you will find Him. (Jeremiah 29:13) So, rest assured that even though other people may have deemed your life not of great value, and even if you yourself have deemed your own life to be not of great value, the good news is you are not the final judge. God is the judge, and He has deemed you extremely valuable. He created you in His image and He created you to live an abundant life here on earth and forever. So, take that step of faith. Do not lose your hope. We lose hope when we believe tomorrow could never be better than today. So, don't lose hope. Get on the road to recovery. You are far from hopeless.

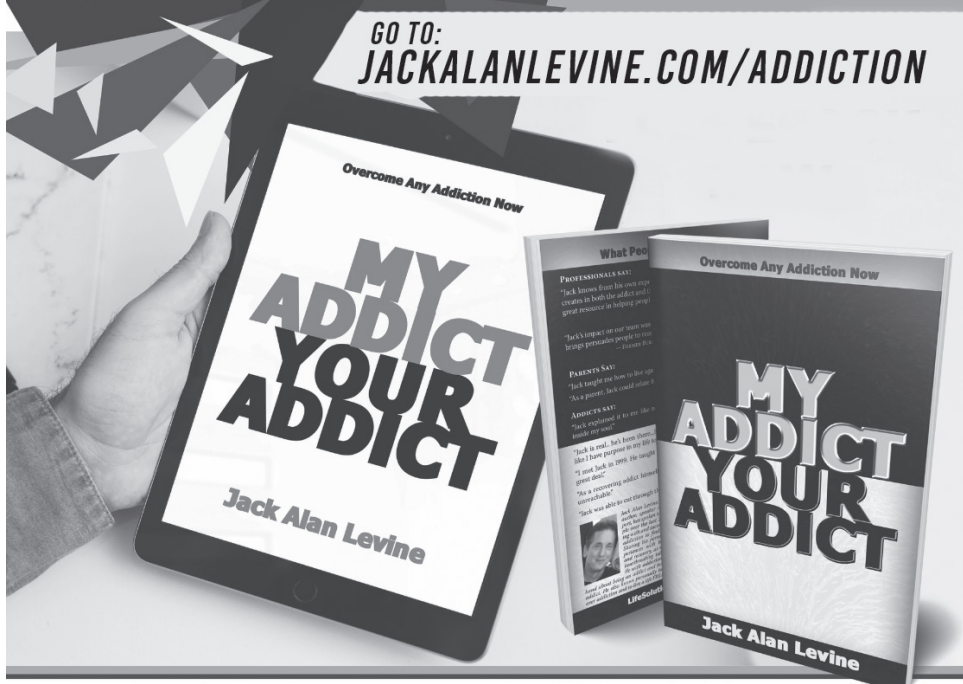
Just take that first step on the journey. If that is a step of faith toward God, just ask God to help you and admit you can't do it by yourself. He will not let you down. He will help you and restore you better than ever. Try it, please. What have you got to lose? If you're like me, your addiction has stolen everything from you that mattered already.

What have you got to gain? Everything! How about your life back and better than ever, better than you could have ever imagined

it? That's the power of God. Let Him use it on you as you begin *your* recovery journey. And that, my friends, is the path, the map, the key to a happy, joyful, and peace-filled life. You deserve it. God wants you to have it. The ride doesn't end at your addiction. That's like thinking school ends at sixth grade, dinner ends with a roll and butter, or a football game ends after the first quarter. Nope, you'd miss the best part if you left early. So keep going. Hop on. The ride is just starting!

OVERCOME ANY ADDICTION RIGHT NOW

GO TO: JACKALANLEVINE.COM/ADDICTION



Creator of Free for Life Overcoming addiction program

Break Free From ANY Addiction Now

With Addiction Experts and 200+ client powerful video program

Free For Life At Last: Overcoming Addiction

The 4 part, 9 CD hour audio program is groundbreaking, breakthrough and life changing. Designed for addicts and their families, he gave them the fresh information and guidance necessary to take sound and steps to overcome any addiction issue including alcohol, drugs, gambling, and more.

7 Healthy addicts and family members are interviewed who share how they did this, and how they do it.

7 Powerful family members what they need to do for their own sanity, and how to get help for their loved one.

Quizzes from addicts "I read it and realized there is real..." "This had an effect on me that I had not expected." "The last one of my part!"

Quizzes from parents "I was amazed at the way he explained it..." "The last one of my part!"

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Jack Alan Levine LLC
For more see go to http://www.jackallevine.com or http://www.addictyouraddict.com
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Free For Life At Last!

Overcoming Addiction Program

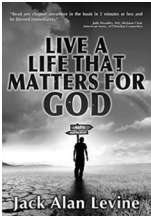
With Nationally Renowned Author, Speaker & Addiction Experts, Jack Alan Levine

DIGITAL ONLINE VIDEO SERIES



CHECK OUT

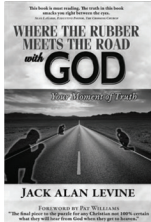
LIVE A LIFE THAT MATTERS FOR GOD



"From a clinical perspective, Live a Life That Matters for God has great value as a teaching and therapeutic tool for the soul. From a spiritual perspective it is a direct hit right to the heart of every Christian. This uplifting book will inspire you no matter what chapter you are reading. I love that you can pick up any chapter, anywhere, in any section in the book and be blessed immediately. Jack covers so many different topics that are relevant and critical to our growth as Christians, our happiness and our desire to walk closer with God. Jack's style is straight to the point and laser focused. Jack doesn't just tell you to do it, he shows you how!"

Julie Woodley,
MA, Division Chair American Assoc. of Christian Counselors

WHERE THE RUBBER MEETS THE ROAD WITH GOD

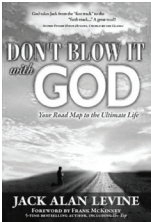


For every believer who wants to make sure they hear "Well done good and faithful servant."

"A knock out punch for Jesus if there ever was one. Jack Alan Levine's book is the heavyweight champion of the world when it comes to Christians walking a life of faith with God. Read it and make certain you will wear the champion's crown of life for Christ."

Nate "Galaxy Warrior" Campbell,
3x Lightweight Champion Of The World

DON'T BLOW IT WITH GOD



In "Don't Blow It With God", Jack Levine reveals his road map to discovering God's blueprint for living the ultimate Christian life each and every day. Come along for the ride as God teaches Jack life-changing lessons that will help you in your life journey. Jack discovers how to live an abundant Christian life experiencing true joy, peace and happiness and along the way you will discover the formula and the insights about how you can too.

"Jack's unique style of communicating God's plan for an abundant life is a must read for all Christians. This book knocks it out of the park. If you've been striking out and want your life to be the perfect game for God then you need to read this book."

Chris Hammond, Major League Baseball pitcher

MY ADDICT YOUR ADDICT

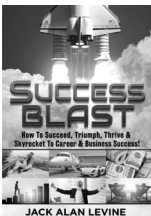


This book is about addiction. Author Jack Levine has counseled thousands of people over the years who have gone through addiction, and knows what a torturous life it can be to be caught up in it. It's an awful thing.

He's experienced addiction in his own life and as a parent, as he watched his son struggle with addiction for years (it started when he was 18).

Whether you are in the throes of addiction yourself or seeing a loved one suffer through it, this book can help you. Jack has results and solutions for real-life situations. Each person's situation is different, but the root is the same for everybody. Through his own story, he can tell you what the choices are, the impacts of those choices, the results of those choices, and what sacrifices you'll have to make to get where you want to be.

SUCCESS BLAST



"This is it. A book that finally gives honest, real-world advice on what it takes to work hard, to fight for what you want, and succeed big. I'm already a well-read, successful executive and within the first few pages I simply HAD to start taking notes on all the powerful, creative ideas and inspiring stories that Jack Levine shares in these pages. This book will Blast you up to a whole new level!"

Aaron W. Kassler, Merrill Lynch Vice President & Senior Financial Advisor.

JACK'S OTHER BOOKS...

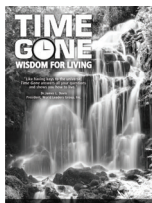
DOWNLOADING GOD



"Downloading God is the file of information that today's generation needs to click on more than ever. Jack Levine's authentic and transparent self-disclosure rings through in his passionate devotion to his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. His simple, straightforward, trademark writing style as in his previous books allows the reader to easily absorb, appropriate and apply the word and truth of God in a realistic, revolutionary and redemptive way. 'Downloading God' has short chapters all themed around a clever computer technology motif which makes the timeless truths of God both real and relevant to contemporary culture."

Dr. Jared Pingleton, VP American Association of Christian Counselors,
Clinical Psychologist, Credentialed Minister

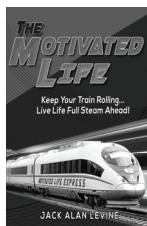
TIME GONE



Each year we like to send a holiday letter to our friends and loved ones looking back at the past year and looking forward to the coming one. These letters are extremely personal but also extremely universal. Though written at holiday time, the observations I share are a true reflection of life all year long. In them I share my struggles, joys and thoughts, which like yours, change from year to year and I'm sure mirror many of the same things you go through.

I've left some personal things in here to give you a sense of who I am - a regular person like you with all the normal victories, defeats, happiness, sadness, joy and pain that we all share. Each letter contains reflections, lessons learned, wisdom and insight that God laid on my heart that particular year. I believe these will help you with your life and have great value to you. In these annual holiday letters I ask people to stop, take stock of where they were at, and consider how they were going to move forward. I hope that by sharing these letters with you it will cause you to do the same.

THE MOTIVATED LIFE



What powers your train? You know, some are powered by steam and some by diesel. Some are powered by electricity, and others are powered by battery. Some are even powered by solar energy. But, one thing's for sure. The train needs power to run, and so do you in your life.

So, what powers your train in life? Is it passion and purpose? Is it survival, money, or accomplishment? Is it fear? Perhaps fear of loss? Fear of missing out? It's very important to know what powers you, what motivates you, and what drives you forward each day. And, it's very important to have something that does all of these things. The more powerful your train, the faster and farther you can go and the quicker you can get there.

"It will encourage and accelerate you! Enriches, equips and inspires you to get the most out of every are of your life. I wholeheartedly recommend it."

Peter Lowe

President & Founder Peter Lowe International Get Motivated, Success Seminars

LEARN MORE ABOUT JACK



JackAlanLevine.com
