

Confessions of a Fossil-Fuel Addict

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Recovery takes the time that it takes. I am still recovering, still learning to understand the fundamental roots of fossil-fuel addiction.

I loosely define fossil-fuel addiction as a dependence or attachment to non-sustainable sources of energy in the form of person-place-or-thing.

Soular Power cannot be defined. Rather, it is *felt*, or experienced as a current event, in a distinct manner by every living creature.

It seems that fossil-fuel addiction is a direct reflection of Soular Power deficiency. When there is enough Soular Power flowing through my system, fossil-fuels can't compete for my attention.

The tools that strengthen Soular Power connection are readily available to all people, at all times.

Background Check

I am the product of an American-dream-turned-nightmare and I'm telling my story. No names have been changed; innocence is self-protected.

My story is about recovery. Not just from unsustainable relationships with drugs, alcohol, sex, sugar, family members, or the general malaise of an ego-based capitalist consumer culture—it's also about recovering the story-teller, my original voice, lodged somewhere in the back of my mind, waiting quietly behind the static.

My story isn't finished, nor have I figured out where to begin. Me, at birth, emerging via suction cup to a proud Chinese father and an anxious Jewish mother? Me, at 3, negotiating with my parents to let me keep my bottle for another month? Me, at 7, composing edition after edition of a hand-written and illustrated manuscript called The Purple Pickle? Me, at 12, shut in my bedroom, blasting death metal music, scraping the words "fuck you" into my ankle with a paperclip? Me, at 18, graduating from a classy, private, college-prep high school with a 4.06 GPA? Me, at 20, smoking meth and dangling from a stripper pole? Me, at 21, discovering a flow of divine intelligence dribbling from the tip of my pen? Me, at 29, accomplished writer with a degree from UCSD, still struggling to kick the occasional binges with bulimia, red wine, too much caffeine? Me, at 32, healthy and happy, and pregnant for the second time?

I am telling my story, and it's looking—and feeling—better every day. But there is a chapter that must be told immediately. The life of someone you know may depend on it.

This is me, at 30, spending a week in **Crossroads Treatment Center**.

Chapter 7: At a Crossroads

"If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear to man as it is, Infinite. For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern."

-William Blake, "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell"

Crossroads Treatment Center is the clinical name of a majestic beach-front home in Rosarito, Mexico. Rhythmic waves, soft sand. Bright flowers. Big picture windows. It's the kind of place you'd expect to see on the cover of a Better Homes & Gardens magazine.

I've arrived with a small handful of heroin addicts. The youngest is a quiet boy from Texas who initially found himself addicted to Vicodin after the extraction of his wisdom teeth. The oldest is a charismatic 23-year-old from Washington DC whose white-collar parents seemed to give him the perfect upbringing.

Although I consider myself to be well-versed in the book of mind-altering organic compounds, when I first crossed paths with Dr. Martin Polanco, "Ibogaine" was new to my vocabulary.

Dr. Martin didn't bear the air of self-importance worn by many doctors. With thoughtful eyes and a mild manner, he seemed more like a writer. But in fact, he was a medical director from Mexico, looking for a writer himself. He needed content to help raise awareness of Ibogaine as a treatment option for acute addiction.

Plant medicine? I felt my heart jump on board even while my brain balked at the idea of taking on another project. I've come to recognize that my brain is preoccupied with projects, and if I were to do everything my brain suggested, I would be so busy dealing with the projected version of my life that I would completely miss the real thing. I gave Dr. Martin a Soular Power postcard and told him I would be happy to help if I could.

I researched Ibogaine the next day and learned that it binds and repairs receptors in the brain to allow for prompt physiological recovery from opiate, alcohol, and cocaine addiction. And with a powerful visionary component (it's a *hallucinogenic* plant medicine), it illuminates the philosophical pathways supporting unwanted behaviors in the first place. A behind-the-scenes glimpse into the workings of the fossil-fueled mind. People can use this. I can use this. Fortunately, Dr. Martin liked my blog and was open to a trade.

This house is gorgeous. I wander from room to room, admiring the views. There are many places to sit, or walk, or lie down—all of them welcoming and comfortable. My private bedroom is huge and so are the decks overlooking the beach. I watch a whale sounding in the deep water, while horses run across the sand. This place inspires an inherent sense of wonder and well-being. It's a natural setting for healing.

Later that night, watching a documentary about Ibogaine called *Rite of Passage*, I hear another new term: Poly-substance Abuse Disorder. Ah, yes. Here is a diagnosis I can stand behind. Others had always given me a claustrophobic, false feeling. I knew I didn't just have an eating disorder, or anxiety, or alcoholism—and focusing on any one of these issues seemed to prevent me from addressing the root system supporting all three. Also, I didn't suffer with any one issue constantly. I tended to work in phases.

When it comes to addiction and recovery, Western medicine is like a gun that fires backwards. It draws points and lines and prescribes more drugs—and if you ask it what it's doing, it will look at you and shrug and suggest rehab in a sort of cocky way. That's because it is not a system designed around healing. It's a system designed around sickness: for diagnoses that stick to your forehead forever, for maintenance medication, and then for medication to offset the side-effects of medication. But there's no use in banning it entirely, since it still does a lot of good. It's just that Western medicine needs rehabilitation, too.

If only Western medicine could release its dependence on pharmaceutical companies and profits, and being "right." Millions of people are in desperate need of the healing effects of plant-based alternatives: herbal supplements, high-grade hemp oil, and Ibogaine are just a few examples.

Dr. Martin has assembled a professional team that feels like a family, and we eat a lovingly-prepared meal together at the large dining table.

I'm curious about the boy from Washington DC. His name is Bobby and he has a very available expression on his face—quite different from the other two patients, who are tucked away in their bedrooms. Not that I blame them, of course. They're on the verge of opiate withdrawal, an excruciating sensation that would drive just about anyone back to a drug.

Bobby is friendly and charismatic. He tells me that he started drinking alcohol at age 14, because he liked the way it felt. Then he started popping pain medication, and liked that feeling even better. By the age of 18 he was snorting, then shooting, OxyContin—a heavy-duty prescription narcotic. This was a costly habit, he says, running him up to \$800 a day at one point. To finance the operation he had already started selling drugs, but decided to cut costs by moving to a more powerful, less expensive substance: heroin.

“I was using about \$200 worth of heroin a day. I would get it and immediately be thinking, *I need to stop, I can't keep doing this*. But there was something inside that was overpowering me. It would not allow me to stop.” Bobby’s blue-green eyes are earnest. “My parents tried to help, but I would steal from them. I’d been to numerous rehabs, from Florida to Maryland, all over the place. I would go to 12-step meetings, too. Once I got clean for six months and once for eight months, but eventually my desire to get high was stronger than my desire to stay sober.”

Addiction carries a distinctly unpleasant social connotation, like having stinky feet or bad breath. It implies a failure to perform, a weakness of character, a blight of breeding. Like mental illness, it outcasts and isolates. So the addict wonders, *What is wrong with me? Why can't I be like everyone else?* There is shame. And shame, conscious or otherwise, seeks punishment—which leads to more abuse. Alternatively, the addict refuses to admit him or herself into this category to begin with, because it’s too crippling to the ego. Natural instinct for personal preservation prohibits this self-imposed crisis of identity. The destructive behaviors continue, insulated from direct perception.

That’s why so many people suffer with addiction, but only a few tackle recovery. Of those that do, it’s generally from commonly delineated addictions like cigarettes, alcohol, drugs, and gambling. What about codependence—the addiction to other people? What about materialism—the addiction to money, and shopping, and having more stuff? What about power, status, and approval? What about sex? What about sugar? Television? Video games? Facebook?

While the subject or content may change, the mechanism is the same. Addiction is an unsustainable reliance on external experience to fill an internal void. Regardless of the degree of dependence, quality of life is compromised.

Breaking the cycle of addiction requires two steps, each consisting of an infinite number of sub-steps. First you must dig up the roots of fossil-fuel attachment and dismantle the belief systems holding them in place, often releasing stored pain in the process. Then you must install your own Soular Power system.

Before you can start digging, however, you have to be solid where you stand. Being perceived as defective contradicts a basic need for acceptance and belonging. When addiction is recognized as a collective experience, the mental structures holding healing at arm’s length can fall away. The truth is that, as an addict, you aren’t in the margins at all. You are completely normal; well within the printable area of the same page many others are on, in the one book every living person is reading.

Let’s take a cursory glance at the previous chapters.

1905: Addiction is a moral problem. You're a bad egg. This is the socially stigmatizing, stinky foot sensation lodged in mainstream perception. Of course, this belongs to the same generation of thought that celebrated slavery and denied rights to women.

1935: Addiction is a disease. You're sick, you can't help it. You need God. This spawned the 12-step recovery model, which remains a popular therapy route. But there is no actual recovery. You're an addict forever, even when you've stopped using.

2005: Addiction is a biochemical imbalance. And the modern world—with its toxicity and noise and speed and terror—is one giant biochemical imbalance.

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Ibogaine is extracted from the Iboga root. Its therapeutic use originated with the Bwiti tribe in Africa, where shamans would adorn their subjects in body paint and dance around them, fireside, for the duration of an evening. The entire tribe would support and participate.

At Crossroads Treatment Center, an East-West blend accompanies the African root. In a special facility neighboring the hospital, a full staff of doctors and nurses carefully track and monitor each patient. Soft music, peaceful imagery, and meditation areas provide a tranquil space. Then it's back to the beach house for pampering. It's a period of intense wonder and gratitude, as many people experience a mental and physiological peace deeper than anything they have known.

It's chilly out, but this many stars in one sky are well-worth the prickle. The sound of night waves and the clear, crisp scent in the air bring my senses to heightened life, quieting my mind. In preparation for treatment tonight, we're doing a purification ritual with Japanese paper lanterns. The idea is to shed as much conscious negative energy as possible before asking Ibogaine to dunk our heads into the living waters.

We each have a brightly colored lantern, collapsed into a neat little square. I open my pink one slowly, careful not to rip the delicate sides, and then hold it aloft as Dr. Martin lights the wick wired into the bottom. The hot air produced by the flame expands within the paper lantern and it poofs and poofs until it's ready to float by itself. I verbally fill my lantern with everything I want to clear from my internal landscape: fear, doubt, regret, blame, and judgment.

"I'm going to need three or four of these to hold all my bad stuff and negative energies," says Bobby.

"Ah, no you don't," I reply. "They're like zip drives. Whatever you put into it automatically compresses. In fact, you could actually fit three or four lifetimes into one lantern."

This is a mutually supportive process; holding each other's lanterns as we spark the wicks, creating safe space for toxic thoughts and feelings, affirming the power of natural transformation.

My lantern is full and pulling slightly from my grasp, eager to carry my darkness into the light.

And there it goes. Floating away, far out over the ocean, rising into the night sky, until it looks like an orangey star.

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For 30 years, the prescribed solution for heroin addiction has been methadone. Methadone is a synthetic opiate given under clinical supervision. It prevents withdrawal by preventing recovery; you're still addicted to high-powered pain medication. The biggest difference is that your money goes to the drug dealers in the pharmacy, which is legal, instead of the drug dealers on the street, which isn't. Buprenorphine is a recent alternative, preferable to methadone in that it purportedly offers less risk of addiction, and can be given in an out-patient setting.

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, opioid detoxification is characterized by acute withdrawal symptoms which peak 48 to 72 hours after the last dose and disappear within 7 to 10 days, to be followed by a longer period of general malaise and craving.

According to Paige Guion, a registered nurse with 20 years of experience in treating heroin addiction, Ibogaine detoxes people completely. 100% of the time. No withdrawal, no malaise, no craving. It's not a magic wand—you'll need to actively implement lifestyle changes and follow through with them—but it's an open window, a golden opportunity, a get-out-of-jail-free card.

Ibogaine addresses biochemical imbalance in the central nervous system. It blocks the neuro-receptors that bind to opiates, allowing for physical detoxification within a 48 hour period. It then restores the brain to its original, factory settings—deleting the modifications produced by repeated drug use.

Ibogaine is illegal in the United States, however, classified as a Schedule 1 controlled substance along with LSD and psychedelic mushrooms, and declared to have no medicinal value. The Federal Government actually lists marijuana in this category as well, even though it has proven to be effective in treating a wide array of conditions, from anxiety to cancer. It stands to reason that these policies are not designed with the ultimate well-being of the people in mind. Rather, they cater to the profit-making potential of big pharmaceutical corporations. When people are sick, depressed, or addicted, the industry thrives.

Mexican treatment centers such as Crossroads offer the safest access to Ibogaine. Patients come through in small batches, usually three or four at a time, and receive personalized, holistic attention from a small cohort of doctors, nurses, therapists, and aides over the course of one

week. A far cry indeed from the bustling world of biological warfare populated by an ever-shifting sea of chart-flipping strangers.

Dr. Martin Polanco was raised in Texcoco, Mexico, where his mom worked at The International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (perhaps this explains the wholesome, rooted, not-for-profit feel about him). Afterward, he studied at the British School in Mexico City and then the Universidad La Salle, consistently ranked number-one for medicine in Latin America.

Ibogaine initially made itself known to Dr. Martin by way of a BBC documentary. Afterward, he watched the powerful plant medicine save the life of a family member. He opened his first clinic in a **small town on the outskirts of Mexico City.**

14 years later, he still finds inspiration in the transformative process facilitated by Ibogaine. He watches patients move from deep despair to renewed hope in a matter of days. Dr. Martin works long hours, and often with difficult cases. But he radiates the tremendous inner stillness of a man who is following his passion and fulfilling his purpose.

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“Any hallucinations yet?” asks **the emergency room Dr.** for perhaps the fifth time.

“Nope... You still have three eyes just like you did when I first met you,” I reply.

Twenty minutes later, here I am. Watching the walls breathe. The entire universe seems to be yawning, an eternal opening, spiraling into greens and purples. Absolutely everything is rimmed with irony. Why do I take myself so seriously, so often? A great sigh of relief in my soul. It’s all going to be okay, it’s all okay already, it’s always been okay.

How ironic. My experience—whatever I concoct and conduct and consider—is completely self-generated. My “issues” exist completely in my mind. If I can detangle myself from my own web, I can have whatever I want.

It’s the webbing itself that’s so sticky. My mind’s eye is a buzzing light saber, swinging about, splicing the knots, exposing blind spots. This is quite the complex operation, I think to myself, from the bottom of a barrel, looking up at the life-concept my ego has constructed. So many gears engaged in the reading of meaningless gauges. So many misfires and pitfalls along the beaten trail of authority in my life. I can’t gain freedom for myself by rebelling against somebody else, or judging myself. I’ve been trapped in my own mental mutiny.

How ironic. The more I can accept myself as I am, the more easily I evolve.

I am reminded, with the sensation of a gentle laughing poke that is at once lively and dead serious, of what needs to be done. I must focus the power of my mind, sharpen it with

meditation, exercise unconditional acceptance. Slice through these old cobwebby paradigms, live my life in present time. If I am not taking the risk to be fully myself, to open all the way, my Love won't come out, and Love won't get in. And then I will be starving again; reaching for comfort in old broken places.

This Love is the power, the Soular energy.

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The next day, I interview Bobby.

Bobby: I was so nervous. I had never experienced hallucinogens before. I could feel it working and I was resisting it, and then all of sudden I just let go and completely relaxed. Immediately, I got sucked through my bed. I ended up in this huge cylinder of fire and lava and smoke and crumbling rocks. I was completely alone. Faces like evil demons tormented me, saying, *This is what happens when you use, when you get high, and we have a place for you here*. Then I saw a vision of a remote control in two pieces. The wiring and buttons were on one end, and the shell was on the other. Then the shell and the insides came together, and formed this perfect remote control that started to swivel and shine. The revelation, what I understood, was that I have control of my addiction now.

When the hallucinations ended, deep clear thought began. I thought about all the people I had harmed from day one. I felt the pain I caused my parents. It was extremely uncomfortable and I was looking for any way out, but there was nowhere to go. I had to look at it. And there was a song that was playing over and over again in my head. It was from a scene in the movie *Mortal Combat* where a guy who killed people and stored their souls was killed by the good guy. When the bad guy died, all of these souls were released through pure light. I honestly think my soul was released from the bind of addiction. It was beautiful beyond all understanding. I came out with no withdrawals, which was amazing. No cravings to use heroin or smoke cigarettes.

After everything had worn off and I had eaten a great breakfast, one of the caretakers said, *All you need is a hot shower and you will feel like a new man*. So I went and took a shower. Then I came out of the shower and looked at myself in the mirror, and I felt this intense joy come into my body. Like when you are a child and you have an ecstasy of excitement—pure inspiration and happiness and gratitude. This presence came into me and became part of me again, and I started crying and crying and got down on my knees, praying and thanking the energy for coming in. I never thought it would come like this, ever. But it's exactly what needed to happen. I had tried everything to stop using drugs, from changing jobs to girlfriends to this or that—all of these external shifts. Nothing took away the obsession to use. Ibogaine did. It works. It will change your life, for sure.

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A Soular Power recovery is about sustainable transformation. Though Ibogaine will wipe your physical slate clean, you still have to take your own steps forward. This means forging into new territory.

What sets the 12-step model apart from the doctor's office is also what makes it successful. For one thing, it's donation-based. Beyond this advantage, there seem to be three key factors. The first is surrender to a higher power—call it God or Source or The Force or The Schwartz or The Universe or Your Higher Self—that benevolently orchestrates your life experience when invited and allowed. The second is community: walking your path and sharing your process with like-feathered birds. The third is one-on-one support in the form of a “sponsor,” or personal advocate, who establishes a direct line of attentive communication as you take the steps necessary to make sustainable change.

If fossil-fuel attachment is indeed a function of Soular Power levels, then potent outlets for recovery come in many forms. Groups incorporating those three key principles (a higher power, community, and one-on-one support) could be grounded in activities such as surfing, playing music, yoga, dancing, gardening...anything that stimulates creative energy flow. The languages could be engaging and affirmative: ride the wave, play the instrument you are, relax and breathe in any position, feel your rhythms, thrive where you're planted. Recovery is every day, all the time. It's a productive lifestyle, and a positive state of mind. If we took a more joyful approach to recovery, perhaps it would be more popular.

When we see addiction as an isolated failure, we point fingers. When we see addiction as a collective condition, we hold hands. We stop hiding from each other and start supporting each other, stronger than ever, in ways never imagined.

The trick is to move toward, lean into, and visualize your Light. Cultivate the conversations that empower self-realization, restore relationships, and build community. Grow green from the inside out, one choice at a time: Ibogaine instead of **methadone**, bike instead of car, vegetables instead of steak, water instead of vodka, laughter instead of anger, Love instead of fear.

For more information about Crossroads Treatment Center:

For more information about The Soular Power System:
www.soularpowersystem.com