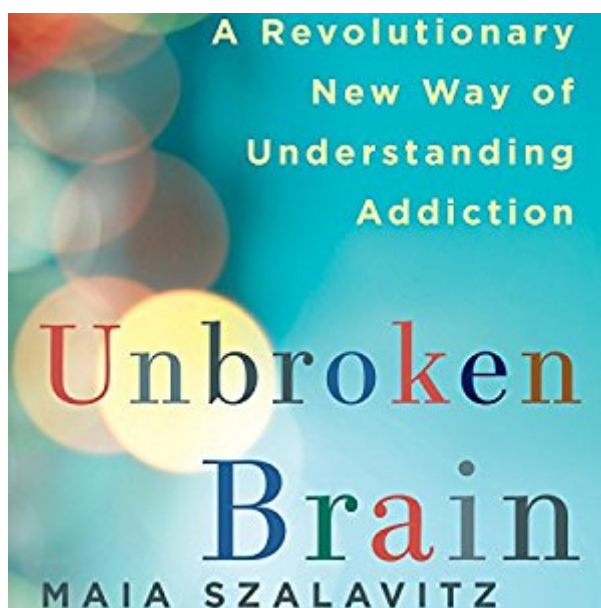


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# Unbroken Brain: A Revolutionary New Way Of Understanding Addiction



## Synopsis

More people than ever before see themselves as addicted to or recovering from addiction, whether it's alcohol or drugs, prescription meds, sex, gambling, porn, or the Internet. But despite the unprecedented attention, our understanding of addiction is trapped in unfounded 20th-century ideas, addiction as a crime or as brain disease, and equally outdated treatment. Challenging both the idea of the addict's "broken brain" and the notion of a simple "addictive personality", *Unbroken Brain* offers a radical and groundbreaking new perspective, arguing that addiction is a learning disorder, and shows how seeing the condition this way can untangle our current debates over treatment, prevention, and policy. Like autistic traits, addictive behaviors fall on a spectrum - and they can be a normal response to an extreme situation. By illustrating what addiction is and is not, the book illustrates how timing, history, family, peers, culture, and chemicals come together to create both illness and recovery - and why there is no "addictive personality" or single treatment that works for all. Combining Maia Szalavitz's personal story with a distillation of more than 25 years of science and research, *Unbroken Brain* provides a paradigm-shifting approach to thinking about addiction.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

As a recovery advocate and the father of someone in long-term recovery, I've read more books about addiction than I can count. When my son first started struggling with drugs, I made a vow to educate myself as much as I possibly could. Knowledge is power, and I wanted to know

\*everything\* about addiction. I still do. So I read about it. A lot. And I can honestly say that Maia Szalavitz's "Unbroken Brain: A Revolutionary New Way of Understanding Addiction" is one of the best books I've ever read on the subject. Maia Szalavitz is a fabulous writer who has penned a wonderful, very forward-thinking book about addiction. She introduces us to some new theories about addiction, several of which may have people re-examining the way they've thought about one of the most prevalent and deadliest problems in America today. Szalavitz sets out to show that addiction isn't a choice or moral failing. "But it's not a chronic, progressive brain disease like Alzheimer's, either," she notes. "Instead, addiction is a developmental disorder--a problem involving timing and learning, more similar to autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and dyslexia than it is to mumps or cancer." Yes, Szalavitz is blazing new trails here. The author contends that "addiction doesn't just happen to people because they come across a particular chemical and begin taking it regularly. It is learned and has a history rooted in their individual, social, and cultural development." She adds that the addicted brain is not "broken," as many other researchers and writers have suggested. Instead, she says, the addicted brain has "simply undergone a different course of development....addiction is what you might call a wiring difference, not necessarily a destruction of tissue." Looking at addiction as a learning disorder may seem strange to some, but Szalavitz states that doing so "allows us to answer many previously perplexing questions." And in "Unbroken Brain," Szalavitz--who is 25+ years in recovery from cocaine and heroin addiction herself--tells us how learning is a part of every aspect of addiction, oftentimes drawing upon her personal experience to illustrate her points. There are so many interesting and thought-provoking topics covered in this book. From the problems associated with waiting for someone to hit "rock bottom" to the myth of the addictive personality; and from the issues surrounding 12-step programs to why harm reduction isn't a bad thing. ("Harm reduction recognizes [the] social and learned components of addiction. It 'meets people where they're at,' and it teaches them how to improve their lives, whether or not they want to become abstinent." Amen to that.) If you or someone you love has been touched by addiction, or if you're just interested in this fascinating subject, I cannot recommend "Unbroken Brain" highly enough. This book contains a wealth of information, but Maia Szalavitz presents it in an organized manner while writing in a clear and understandable voice. Trust me: You will not be bombarded with a bunch of scientific language that you don't understand. Szalavitz writes in the introduction, "Only by learning what addiction is--and is not--can we begin to find better ways of overcoming it. And only by understanding addicted people as individuals and treating them with compassion can we learn better and far more effective ways to reduce the harm associated with drugs." That is definitely the approach we should be taking with

addiction. Hopefully, Maia Szalavitz's innovative new book will be the catalyst for some positive change.

I HAD to buy a brand new copy of this book. At 55, after a long history of polysubstance abuse, and a 12-step groups expat, I'm at a loss to explain how the urge to 'Use' or "Drink" to excess has faded into memory. Other compulsive behaviors have remained however, so I needed to read this book. Even if you don't like to read, you'll find this blockbuster-compelling ; as Szalavitz, both a truther and survivor of addiction, rehab and recovery, from an 'Inside Out' frankness so poetic it knocks my socks off. It shows the WHY our country's punitive, even "Draconian" measures and laws put in place failed to yield lifesaving results as we foolishly abused people with addiction on the "War On Drugs." Another thing.....AA'ers, often say "Once and Alcoholic always an Alcoholic." (I'm not sure if this is said verbatim in The Big Book but it's implied) They apply similar dogma with regards to recovery from other compulsive behaviors. In my life...well, maybe not so much.... It's all in the book. If you are affected by or interested in addictive behavior, people who are dually diagnosed with a mental illness and substance abuse.. Even if you're not ready to 'recover,' (another stigmatizing term). this book is written for you. ...Who knew some people outgrow this 'learning' issue? and furthermore explains why those laws and policies have never worked and how sadistic protocols, like being in the 'hotseat' during rehab group therapy doesn't help anyone, only reinforces low self esteem, shame and stigma. I'm so excited about the promise of this new direction in thought on how to more effectively address the Opiate epidemic and other consequences of addictive patterns (compulsive gambling to an extreme on both sides of my family tree..) even including new ways to deal with eating disorders and health problems like Obesity...well, you've just got to read this book.. That's the end of it. I'm going back to it now. Allison Biszantz Aka "Strong"

A wonderful alternative explanation addiction recovery that is NOT 12-step. The author makes a skillful presentation about how 12-step and the resulting punitive judicial approach just keeps the addiction going. What is needed is empathetic treatment of underlying childhood traumas. Without treating these traumas, the resulting tendency toward addiction won't go away. The book is extremely well organized and written. It is a pleasure to find optimism about treating addiction.

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