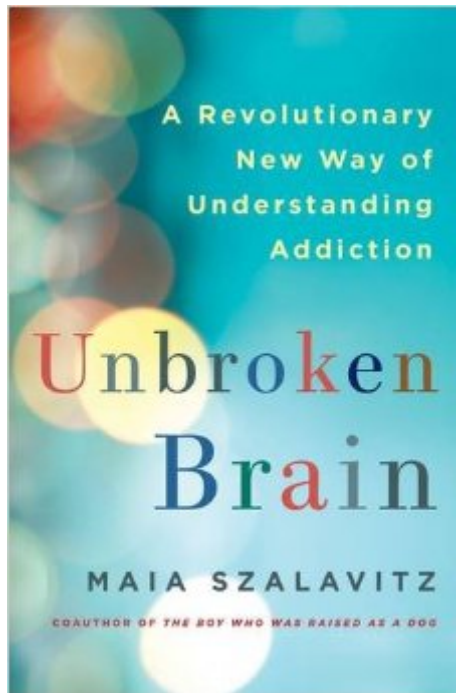


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# Unbroken Brain: A Revolutionary New Way Of Understanding Addiction



## Synopsis

More people than ever before see themselves as addicted to, or recovering from, addiction, whether it be 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of addiction is trapped in unfounded 20th century ideas, addiction as a crime or as brain disease, and in equally outdated treatment. Challenging both the idea of the addict's "broken brain" and the notion of a simple "addictive personality," The New York Times Bestseller, *Unbroken Brain*, offers a radical and groundbreaking new perspective, arguing that addictions are learning disorders 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. Her writings on radical addiction therapies have been featured in The Washington Post, Vice Magazine, The Wall Street Journal, and The New York Times, in addition to multiple other publications. She has been interviewed about her book on many radio shows including Fresh Air with Terry Gross and The Brian Lehrer show.

## 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...."

In this book, Szalavitz takes a detailed look at the evolving understanding of just what drug addiction is and how it develops. (Do note that although the back of the book refers to addictions in the broad scope, mentioning sex, gambling, porn, and the internet, in addition to alcohol and drugs, the book is definitely focused on drugs. That said, because this new understanding of addiction applies to a vast array of addictions, this book is definitely of value to anyone interested in any addiction - food in my case. I weigh half what I used to and want to keep it this way.) Szalavitz presents addiction as a developmental disorder. Although I personally see it as more of a case of learning gone wrong (a maladaptive way to deal with stress), her view and mine overlap in nearly all aspects. A key point she makes is, "In both autism and addiction, for example, repetitive coping behaviors are frequently misinterpreted as the source of the problem, rather than being seen as attempts at solutions." This is very important when it comes to preventing addiction, dealing with it in self or others, and policies involving it, both in its treatment and in the legal eye. Szalavitz further explains the core of the issue, "Critically, addiction is not created simply by exposure to drugs, nor is it the inevitable outcome of having a certain personality type or genetic background, though these factors

play a role. Instead, addiction is a learned relationship between the timing and pattern of the exposure to substances or other potentially addictive experiences and a person's predispositions, cultural and physical environment, and social and emotional needs.

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.

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