

The Illusion of Control

Closely related to self-centeredness was another main root of our sick thinking: our *illusion of control*, a term used frequently by Anne Wilson Schaef, Ph.D.[4] We clung to a primitive belief that we actually had the power to make others feel, think, speak, and act. From the time we were children, if we saw someone weeping we would think, "What did I do to cause this?" It was our job to keep our mother happy, to make our father quit drinking, to stop the fights between them. Our parents divorced because we hadn't been good little girls. Our uncle molested us because we wore that short skirt or looked at him

seductively. Mom was in a bad mood because we hadn't scrubbed the floor well enough or had the right music playing when she got home from work. We could make our boyfriend happy by listening to him attentively or by drinking with him. If we acted in the right way, we could convince everyone that we were truly exceptional people. If our husband wasn't treating us well, it was because we hadn't yet found the magic formula, so let's keep trying.

Operating perpetually out of this illusion of control was physically exhausting and emotionally debilitating. Being the puppet-master of the universe was a big job, and it lay heavily on our shoulders. We needed to be constantly vigilant, watching for cues, assessing the evidence to see if we were managing things correctly or not. We became exhausted, but slept poorly. We often had headaches and backaches and stomach pains caused by the enormity of our task.

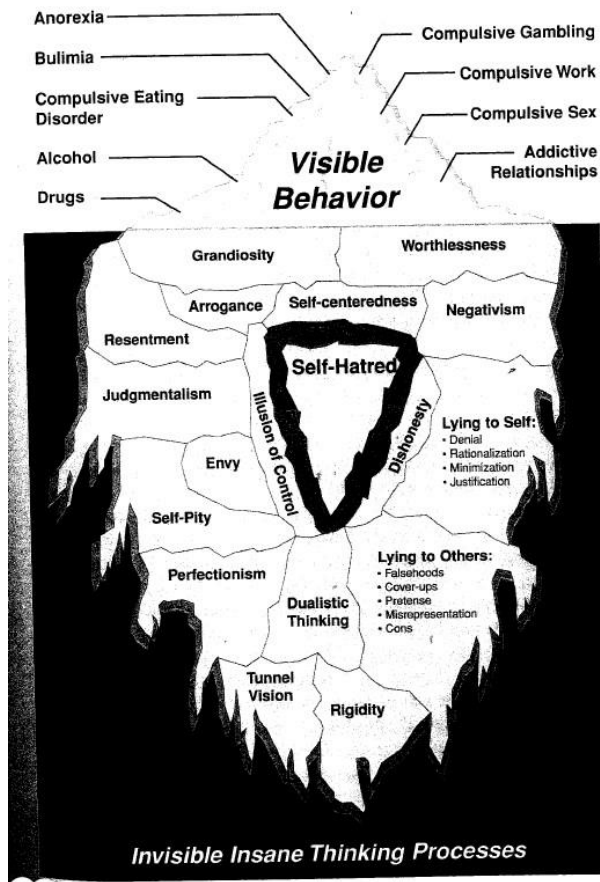


Figure 2: The Iceberg Theory of Addiction