

When you're fighting yourself

Why the cycle keeps resetting and what's happening beneath the negotiation

This isn't about willpower

If you've read the page, you know the cycle. The decision, the pull, the negotiation, the doing it, the crash, the resolve. And then the pull again.

Most people experience this as a failure of will. As not wanting it enough, not being disciplined enough, not being strong enough to hold the line. That's not what's happening.

What's happening is a system doing exactly what it was built to do – efficiently, predictably, and largely below the threshold of conscious choice. Understanding that precisely changes everything about how you approach it. To locate responsibility more accurately.

Why deciding doesn't hold – the neurological reality

The decision is made from one state: clarity, resolve, the absence of the pull. It feels real because it is real. In that moment, from that position, it's the most honest thing available.

But it's applied to a future state that operates completely differently. The inner loop has been running long enough that the baseline has shifted. What used to feel neutral now registers as deficit. The brain has recalibrated around the behaviour as the reference point for what normal feels like.

Which means that when the behaviour stops – even briefly – the system doesn't return to neutral. It drops below its adjusted baseline.

And that gap is felt as foreground tension. The pull. The urge. The sense that something is missing even when nothing has changed externally.

This is why "I mean it this time" is always true.
And why it still doesn't hold.

This is because the state the decision was made from no longer exists by the time it needs to be applied.

The decision belongs to someone who isn't quite there anymore.

It is a neurological gap between the state that makes decisions and the state that has to act on them.

UseYourAddiction is a coaching and educational initiative that transforms how compulsive behaviour is understood and worked with.

It started from a simple observation: this issue touches almost everyone, yet the standard approaches don't resonate with a large group of intelligent, functioning people. Not because they resist change, but because these frameworks don't fit who they essentially are.

UYA focuses on something else: not the behaviour, but what's actually driving it. When that becomes clear, more than change becomes possible; reconnection with what truly matters, and the return of genuine choice.

The dopamine deficit state, what the crash actually is

After the behaviour – particularly in the period that follows – the brain's reward system drops below its adjusted baseline. Not to neutral. Below it.

This is the crash. The flatness. The grey. The sense that everything is slightly less vivid, less interesting, less worth engaging with. The irritability. The low that doesn't quite have a name.

Understanding what generates it changes how you relate to it. The self-recrimination that arrives in this state – the harsh judgments, the sense of having failed badly – is real. But it's being generated by a depleted system. Louder, darker, and less accurate than it feels.

This is not the moment for honest self-reflection. It's the moment the system is most convincingly arguing for its own continuation, because the most reliable thing that will lift the deficit is the behaviour.

The brain knows this. The pull that follows the crash isn't a separate event. It's the same loop completing itself. Knowing this doesn't make the state easier to be in. But it can change what you do with it. The clarity that comes after the system has settled is consistently more reliable than anything generated inside the deficit state.

The most useful thing available in the crash is to recognise the state for what it is – and wait.

The mechanics of the negotiation

This is worth looking at most closely, because it's where the determination actually gets undone through a sequence of moves that each feel completely reasonable from inside them.

It starts with context. This situation is genuinely different. This week has been harder than usual. The circumstances that led to the original decision didn't account for this. A good negotiator always starts with legitimate grievances. The mind is a very good negotiator.

Then comes reframing the decision itself. The original commitment was too absolute. Too rigid. It didn't account for nuance, for real life, for the complexity of actually being human. A more reasonable version would allow for this.

Then the calculation. Just this once, given everything, is actually the rational choice. The stress of not doing it is affecting other areas. Getting through this moment matters more than the rule. The rule was never really designed for circumstances like these.

And finally: this will be the last time. Genuinely meant. Because from inside this position, it is the last time. The decision to stop is still intact – just temporarily suspended for reasons that make complete sense right now.

Every step feels like thinking. Like rational deliberation. Like taking the full situation into account. It isn't. The reasoning is constructed backward from the conclusion the system was already moving toward. It arrives feeling like a decision. It was never really a decision.

Knowing the moves doesn't automatically stop them. But it creates a gap.

The moment you can recognise "this is the negotiation starting" rather than "this is me thinking clearly about my situation" – that gap is where something different becomes possible.

The persona split - where it comes from

The split between the self that decides and the self that does it anyway isn't primarily neurochemical. The deficit state sustains the inner loop.

But the root of the fragmentation is older and deeper. It comes from the bigger loop – from how someone learned to relate to their own internal experience over time.

What that produces, in lived experience, is genuinely different internal states for different contexts. Not just different behaviour – different experience. Different feelings, different logic, different values that feel operative in the moment.

The professional self that functions. The private self that doesn't. The self that committed to the relationship and the self that pulls away. The self that decided and the self that negotiates.

Each one is real. Each has its own coherent internal logic. Which is what makes the switching so disorienting – you're not playing a role and dropping it. You're genuinely being different versions of yourself, each feeling like the true one while it's active.

This fragmentation is an adaptation – usually an old one – to environments that required different things from the same person. The behaviour didn't create it. It arrived into a system that was already divided, found an existing split, and plugged into it perfectly.

The fight between these parts isn't a fight between the real you and something alien. It's a fight between parts of you that have never been in the same room.

And this is why addressing only the inner loop – the behaviour, the baseline, the deficit state – tends not to hold.

Because the fragmentation that generated the need for the behaviour is still intact. The background tension it produces still needs somewhere to go.

The capacity that changes things

Research on psychological flexibility – the ability to change your relationship with your own thoughts and feelings rather than being controlled by them – consistently shows that this is what shifts in people who move through this kind of pattern rather than staying in it.

The elimination of one side of the split isn't what changes things. Neither is the permanent suppression of the part that wants the behaviour.

What changes is the development of a capacity to observe both parts – without being fully captured by either.

This means the negotiation becomes recognisable before it concludes. The deficit state becomes something you can place rather than something that places you. The crash lands, but doesn't determine what happens next.

The pull is present, but there's a noticeable, increasing gap between its presence and your response to it.

What “the fight” is actually pointing at

This is what most approaches never get to.

The behaviour isn't a malfunction.

It's a highly efficient response to a real problem – the background tension generated by a system that learned to manage rather than process, to construct a life around what's expected rather than what's true.

The pull is pointing at that tension. The negotiation is showing you what the mind does with pressure it can't process directly. The crash is the gap between the managed life and the real one, felt in the aftermath.

All of that is information.

The proposition is this: follow the signal back. Treat the behaviour as the most honest information available about what's actually happening underneath – not as the problem to be eliminated.

When that shift happens, something else becomes possible.

What integration looks like

A gradual reduction in the distance between the parts.

The self that functions and the self that struggles becoming less separate. The things that are true privately starting to have more room in the rest of life. The negotiation becoming recognisable earlier, before it's already concluded.

And underneath all of that – a more honest relationship with your own experience.

Less management. Less explanation. Less energy going into maintaining versions of yourself that don't fully connect. More of what was always there, before the fragmentation made it necessary to keep things separate.

That's what becomes available when the behaviour stops being the enemy and starts being the guide.

The bigger picture behind all of this – where the background tension actually comes from, and why the system got organised the way it did – is in Behind the Pattern.