

Ruts and Grooves

We humans have an amazing ability to automate many tasks, thus we can use our thoughtfulness and willfulness to engage “more significant”, perhaps higher level concerns. Some scientists call this ability with automation our zombie brain. Athletes and others who rely on programmed repetitive motion, something we might also call muscle memory, know that if we train well, we can ask things of our bodies and brains to react in circumstances in a predictable and desirable manner getting positive results, as long as we don't over think at such times. Actually, in performance (flow) mode, it is better when we don't think too much and just rely on this flow of programmed or trained action.

Good news and bad news is that we have this ability, whether we have purposefully trained for a specific function or not. Addiction and compulsive behaviors use the same system of unthinking muscle memory to consistently accomplish the ends of those behavior patterns. Good habits and bad habits have consistency in common, but the outcomes differ by good outcomes or bad outcomes.

Ruts are the bad habits and patterns we repeat, getting unwelcome results. Grooves are those habits and patterns we prefer to engage in to get

the results we want. The great challenge is how to break out of the ruts and proceed into the grooves. The good news about the bad news is that the amazing way we consistently hit lousy targets (as in addiction or compulsive patterns, bad habits) is the use of good skills to get and maintain bad patterns, consistently getting bad results. So it's not a complete revamp in changing from ruts to grooves, just refocusing on the desired targets, and clarifying the best strategies.

Using the other amazing abilities we have, willfully thinking, choosing and acting, we can then learn new paths, training good behavior patterns selected to get better results. It isn't easy, but it's likely easier than it might seem.