

# The Addict's Perilous Bargain

March 11, 2014

## *The Huffington Post:*

I've spent a fair amount of time around addicts over the years, and this I know. Addicts are great bargainers. Addicts will promise to forego the pleasures of booze or drugs or food in exchange for future happiness, career success, marital bliss — you name it. And as often as not, they renege on the deal.

This is not a criticism — just the gritty reality of addiction. Addicts mostly bargain with themselves — their future selves — and they don't welch because they are scoundrels. They lack the self-control to honor their promises. They truly want to give up their drugs today for a better life in the future, but well, tomorrow is so far away, and here's today — right now.

Psychological scientists have a name for the cognitive gymnastics underlying these failures of self-control. They call it “temporal discounting” — which basically means the tendency to devalue rewards that are far away, in the distant future. Most of us are capable of bargaining for a distant payoff — a college diploma, for example — but addicts are bad at this calculation.

Read the whole story: [The Huffington Post](#)

**Wray Herbert** is an author and award-winning journalist who writes two popular blogs for APS, [We're Only Human](#) and [Full Frontal Psychology](#). Follow Wray on Twitter [@wrayherbert](#).