Addiction and the Hijacking of Tau-Flow

How Addictive Substances and Behaviours Capture the Tau-Mirror

Author: Stephen Daubney · The Daubney Foundation · thedaubneyfoundation@gmail.com · 2026 · P-ADD-1 to P-ADD-6

Abstract

Addiction is one of the most destructive and poorly understood phenomena in human psychology. The Force of Time (FOT) provides a precise account: addiction is the hijacking of the Tau-flow prioritisation system by an artificial Tau-signal that generates disproportionate Tau-reward and then suppresses the Tau-flow available for all other self-referential modelling. Recovery is the restoration of authentic Tau-flow prioritisation.

P-ADD-1 · The Reward System as Tau-Flow Prioritiser

The brain's reward system (dopaminergic pathways) prioritises Tau-flow towards survival-relevant activities: food, sex, social connection. In evolutionary terms, this is Tau-flow allocation serving Tau-address survival and reproduction.

P-ADD-1	The reward system is the Tau-flow prioritiser: it directs the Tau-address's attention and motivation towards activities that historically served Tau-address survival. Dopamine is not a pleasure signal but a Tau-flow redirection signal: "prioritise this activity". Reward is the Tau-mirror's signal to increase Tau-flow to a domain.

Natural rewards (food, sex, achievement) generate proportionate Tau-flow redirection signals — they direct Tau-flow appropriately and then the signal fades. The Tau-mirror can maintain balanced self-referential modelling across multiple domains.

P-ADD-2 · Addictive Substances as Tau-Flow Hijackers

Addictive substances generate Tau-flow redirection signals far in excess of any natural reward — they hijack the Tau-flow prioritisation system.

P-ADD-2	Addictive substances are Tau-flow hijackers: they generate disproportionate Tau-flow redirection signals (dopamine surges 2-10x natural rewards) that overwhelm the Tau-mirror's balanced prioritisation. The Tau-address learns that the substance is the highest-priority Tau-flow target — above food, relationships, and self-preservation.

This is why addiction feels compulsive rather than chosen: the Tau-flow prioritisation system has been captured. The addict's Tau-mirror is not broken — it is functioning correctly on corrupted Tau-signals. The substance has become the dominant Tau-flow target in the hierarchy.

P-ADD-3 · Tolerance and Tau-Flow Depletion

With continued substance use, tolerance develops: more substance is needed for the same effect. FOT explains this as Tau-flow depletion.

P-ADD-3	Tolerance is Tau-flow depletion: the Tau-mirror downregulates its response to the hijacked Tau-signal because sustained artificial prioritisation depletes the Tau-flow available for normal modelling. Withdrawal is Tau-flow deficit: the artificial signal removed, the depleted Tau-flow base generates inadequate prioritisation signals for all activities — the Tau-mirror cannot function without the hijacker.

This accounts for the dysphoria of early recovery: the Tau-flow prioritisation system has been calibrated to artificial signal levels. Natural Tau-flow signals — food, social connection, sunlight — feel insufficient until the system recalibrates over weeks and months of abstinence.

P-ADD-4 · Behavioural Addictions as Tau-Loop Capture

Gambling, pornography, social media, and gaming can produce addiction-like patterns without chemical substances. FOT explains these as Tau-loop captures.

P-ADD-4	Behavioural addictions are Tau-loop captures: activities designed to generate variable-ratio Tau-reward signals (the most addictive schedule) that capture the Tau-flow prioritisation system without chemical hijacking. The slot machine, the social media feed, and the loot box all exploit the same Tau-flow redirection mechanism as chemical addiction — without the molecule.

This predicts that behavioural addictions will produce similar neurological and psychological patterns to chemical addictions — which they do. The same brain regions activate; the same Tau-flow prioritisation capture occurs; the same recovery processes apply. The mechanism is Tau-loop capture, not chemical dependency per se.

P-ADD-5 · The Role of Tau-Deprivation in Vulnerability

Not all people who use addictive substances become addicted. FOT identifies Tau-deprivation as the key vulnerability factor.

P-ADD-5	Tau-deprivation — the absence of sufficient natural Tau-flow sources (meaningful relationships, purposeful activity, adequate safety) — leaves the Tau-flow prioritisation system searching for high-signal Tau-flow targets. Addictive substances and behaviours offer an artificial high-signal target that fills the Tau-deprivation gap. Addiction is often the Tau-address's solution to Tau-flow starvation.

Rat Park studies (Alexander et al., 1978) demonstrated that rats in enriched social environments with natural Tau-flow sources (play, bonding, exploration) largely refused addictive substances even when freely available — while isolated rats consistently self-administered. Tau-deprivation, not substance exposure, is the primary risk factor.

P-ADD-6 · Recovery as Tau-Flow Restoration

Effective addiction recovery addresses not just the substance or behaviour but the Tau-flow ecosystem of the recovering person.

P-ADD-6	Recovery is Tau-flow restoration: rebuilding the natural Tau-flow sources that the addiction had displaced or was masking. The three pillars of Tau-flow restoration are: Tau-bond reconnection (rebuilding meaningful relationships), Tau-purpose restoration (meaningful activity and contribution), and Tau-mirror healing (addressing underlying trauma or Tau-deprivation that created vulnerability).

The most effective addiction treatments — 12-step programmes, therapeutic communities, family therapy — work by rebuilding natural Tau-flow sources: the sponsor provides Tau-bond resonance; the community provides belonging and purpose; the therapeutic work addresses Tau-mirror fragmentation. The abstinence is necessary but not sufficient — Tau-flow restoration is what makes it sustainable.