

The Ludovico technique

Written by Bob Alexander

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We all remember the scene from *A Clockwork Orange*: Alex, bound in a straitjacket, strapped to a theatre seat, eyelids mechanically propped open, injected with extreme nausea-inducing drugs, and forced to watch horrific films of beatings, murder, rape, and gore. After his “treatments” he will be conditioned to become uncontrollably sick when he tries to return to his previous life of ultra-violence.

Now *that’s* Aversion Therapy in wide-screen Warnercolor.

Back in 1990, just up the street from the treatment center I was percolating in for 28 days, was a treatment facility that promised freedom from alcoholism in just 10 days (with a couple of 2-day follow-ups) using Aversion Therapies.

One of my fellow in-mates “graduated” from that place. The fact that he was sitting across from me at this treatment center didn’t speak highly of the other one. But then again a couple of months after we both got out of treatment he was back on the booze and drugs again. There are some people who can only stay sober if they’re locked up. The outside world is a vast mysterious and dangerous place for those who refuse to read the rule book.

But back when we sitting around the picnic table in our pajamas he told me all about the other treatment center just up the street. They alternated “Sleepy” days with “Duffy” days. A “Sleepy” was the day they drugged him into a twilight space and interviewed him for hours on end about who knows what. He couldn’t remember what they talked about. But he sure remembered the Duffy days. They gave him nausea-inducing drugs and then lined up 18 - 20 drinks for him to chug down. Beer, vodka, red wine, white rum, brandy, and more beer that made him puke, and puke, and puke some more. Ad nauseum. Then the next day was a “Sleepy” followed by another Duffy. A couple of times they put electrodes on his fingers and administered a nasty shock every time he took a drink. After 10 days of that they sent him back to Real Life.

The aversion therapy worked ... kind of. A huge image of a bottle of beer on a billboard would make him queasy. He couldn’t even *think* about drinking the alcohol he had been averted from. But he could drink the weird stuff. Liqueurs. When the cops pulled him over for weaving all over the road, he had a big ol’ bottle of Crème de menthe in his lap. Back he went for another bout of treatment and that’s when I met him.

An oft told “joke” the staff at the “home” told all us inmates went something like this:

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Does Aversion Therapy really work? You bet it does! When a highly paid medical professional attaches electrodes to the fingers of an alcoholic, and administers a painful shock every time the alcoholic takes a drink, the alcoholic very quickly learns not to drink with electrodes attached to his fingers.

That knee-slapper was more indicative of the intermural rivalry between the two treatment centers but overlooked the fact that Aversion Therapy works. It did on me anyway. And I didn't have to undergo any Sleepy or Duffy days. My instrument of torture was my television set.

During the run-up to the Iraq war, the Shock and Awe of the invasion, and after the 2004 presidential election theft, I couldn't watch George W. Bush, Dick Cheney, Condi Rice, the other scumbags in the Bush administration, or any of the haircuts on the Nightly News, without feeling physically ill. And let's not forget anyone in front of the camera on FOX News. Oops ... can't leave out Limbaugh and all the other right-wing blabber mouths. I kid you not. They all made me sick to my stomach. And it's gotten worse.

All Republicans (including Obama), Obama-supporting Democrats, and Lunatic Christians all trigger my gag reflex. It seems like everybody in Washington DC, and in way too many crazy hot pockets across the country, are single-mindedly trying to rip the country apart brick by brick, blow up the foundation, and make the gaping country-wide hole a sea to shining sea manure lagoon.

I'm witnessing all this from the relative safety of The Great Grey North. If I had to still live down there I'd be ordering up equal amounts of Valium and Dramamine in 50 gallon barrels. As Woody Allen wrote, "*If Jesus came back today, and saw what was going on in his name, he'd never stop throwing up.*" I'm not sayin' I'm Jesus by any means, I'm just sayin' Aversion Therapy worked on me and news accounts from the country of my birth makes me sick.

The only truly "safe" TV I can watch is the Cartoon Network and the Food Channel so I've been reading a lot of James Lee Burke recently. Here are some quotes from his books *The Glass Rainbow* and *Creole Belle* that stay with me:

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“... there are groups of people in our midst who steal elections, commit war crimes, pollute the water we drink and the air we breathe, and get away with all of it.

If you have met the very rich, and by the very rich, I mean those who own and live in several palatial homes and have amounts of money that people of average means cannot conceive of, you have probably come away from the experience feeling that you have been taken, somehow diminished and cheapened in terms of self-worth. It's not unlike getting too close to theatrical people or celebrity ministers or politicians who have convinced us that it is their mandate to lead us away from ourselves

You just have the feeling when you are in their midst that all of them fear they are about to be found out, unmasked somehow, revealing God only knows what, because I am convinced their psychological makeup is a mystery even unto themselves.

Corporate villains are loathsome. Almost all of them avoid media exposure because they come across as corrupt, arrogant, and tone-deaf. We stare at their testimony before a congressional committee and ask ourselves how this or that gnome of a man was allowed to do so much damage to the rest of us. None of these men can function without sanction. Nations, like individuals, give up an addiction or a vice when they're ready and not until then. In the meantime, you can join Candide in his garden or drive yourself crazy proselytizing those who have no interest in your crusade.”

And the one that inexplicably gives me the most comfort:

“We don't care what people say, rock and roll is here to stay,” he said. “That's from Danny and the Juniors, the greatest single line in the history of music.”