

Day 4: Relief



5 Day Reset

with

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Hey everybody, welcome to day four. Day four of the challenge. Congratulations. So today, we are talking all about the concept of relief. I say this a lot, but alcohol is a quick and easy way to change how you feel, and so when you're trying to understand how to change the habit, how to drink less, trying to understand why it seems difficult to change, you have to understand the piece about relief.

And what I most often hear from people is the idea of needing a drink to take the edge off. And I think it's really important to understand this question, to really, really understand for yourself what this means. So I'll always ask people, "Well, what are you taking the edge off of? What is it?" And the answers that I usually get are, "Well, I'm taking the edge off my day, I'm taking the edge off work, I'm taking the edge off the fact that there's always something to do, everything needs to be done and I can never catch up with it. I don't have time to do it."

But here's the thing. It's not your work, it's not your day, it's not that never-ending to-do list that you're taking the edge off of. It's how you feel about those things, and how you feel about those things is connected with what you think about those things. So what you are taking the edge off of when you pour yourself a drink is taking the edge off feeling stressed, feeling anxious, feeling annoyed, whatever it is? And that is such an important distinction for you to really know and really understand?

You're never taking the edge off of your day, or work, or relationships, or your to-do list. You're always taking the edge off of how you feel and how you feel about these things is created by what you think about these things. Now, notice that what you're taking the edge off of is normally a negative emotion. Nobody ever says, "I really have to take the edge off of feeling so great. I really have to take the edge off of being so happy, being so joyful, being so calm, I have to take the edge off of that."

No. What we want to take the edge off are negative emotions, how negative emotions feel, and so pouring a drink becomes this really easy way to kind of turn down the volume on how we feel because it numbs how you feel. It kind of dulls what you're feeling in the moment. I mean, a lot of

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people talk about how alcohol actually can anesthetize you. It has a numbing effect.

So, what this means for you is that you have to pay attention to how you feel before you have a drink, or before you have the urge to drink. This piece is huge because most of us don't realize that you are solving an emotion, a negative emotion with a drink. Now, if you're one of those people who says, "That's not really me, it's not an end of the day take the edge off of how I feel type of thing. My drinking is really much more about socializing, it's more about being out with people."

All you need to do is ask yourself how would you feel being at a bar, being at a friend's party, going to a restaurant, and not having a drink. How would that situation feel for you and if you say, "Well, I'd feel a little awkward, maybe a little shy or insecure or bored", then that is what you are taking the edge off. You are taking the edge off those feelings.

The question that you really need to consider and that I will tell you most people never do, is why. Why do you need to take the edge off of how you feel? Most people never ever consider this because there's just an assumption that negative emotions are terrible, so of course you don't want to feel them. But what I want you to really start to ask yourself is what is so terrible about a negative emotion that you need to not feel it?

And if you're going to start to understand this question for yourself, you need to understand in the beginning, okay, so what's an emotion? Now, you know what emotions are, and we've been talking about them through this challenge. An emotion is a feeling state, and they are one-word feelings. Happy, sad, angry, bored, lonely, joyful, grateful. Whatever it is, it's a feeling state.

Now, everybody knows this. We know what our emotions are. We know that they're a feeling state, but here's where people get tripped up. People get tripped up when I pose this question. Okay, so you know that an emotion is a feeling state. Now, how do you know when you're

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experiencing an emotion? Have you thought about this before? How do you know when you are experiencing an emotion?

Now, be really careful. Your brain may want to just say, "Well, I just know. I just know. It's obvious." Don't stop there. You need to question this. I hope if one thing that you have started to pick up during this challenge is how much you need to question everything. So how do you know when you're experiencing an emotion? I'll tell you. The answer is that you feel an emotion in your body.

So, understand this: different emotions create different physical sensations in your body, and that is how you know when you are experiencing an emotion. Think about it this way: when you have different emotions, your muscles may tense or relax. Your heart rate and your breathing may change. You may have temperature changes, you may feel pressure, or tension. You may feel different sensations in your digestive system, or your head, or your feet, or your hands, or your jaw.

There are just lots of different physical sensations connected with different emotions. It's just that most of us really never think about that. We don't really pay attention to these sensations. Now, here's the thing: intuitively, everyone already understands that the way we know when we're experiencing a different emotion is that we feel it in our body. And the way that I can show you how you already know this is think about the metaphors that you use to convey how you are feeling; the metaphors that you use to convey an emotional state.

So you may say something like, "I have butterflies in my stomach when I'm feeling nervous" or "There's just a storm brewing inside of me I was so angry" or "My heart just melted with compassion." Now, think about this. What are those metaphors trying to convey? They are trying to convey something that most of you have almost no practice with, and that is the practice of describing how different emotions feel differently in your body.

And I think the reason that we use metaphors is because most people actually find it incredibly difficult to describe exactly what they're

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experiencing when they feel an emotion, but only because no one ever taught you how to do this. It's not because it's actually a hard thing to do or a difficult thing to learn. It's just that no one gives us this instruction, no one ever sits us down and really explains to us that ever emotion manifests itself differently in our body with different physical sensations.

But once you know that, and once you start practicing this, you'll see that it really is not as difficult as you might think. So I want you to really go back and think about why you need to take the edge off of a negative emotion, why do you need to feel less what anxiety, or annoyance, or insecurity, or boredom, feels like in your body? What specifically about what is happening in your body, what specific sensations are unbearable or intolerable that you feel like you have to take the edge off of it?

I will tell you, starting to understand your emotions in this way really can shift everything. And now, if it feels a little mind-bending right now, that's okay. It's supposed to be, because what I am asking you to do is to think in a totally different way about your emotions. But if you want to change your drinking, and because drinking is so connected to relief from how you feel, you have to understand this piece. You have to understand how your emotions feel in your body, what physical sensations are connected with them.

Now, here's why. The habit of using a drink to take the edge off of how you feel, the habit of using a drink so you'll feel less anxious, less stressed, less annoyed, less insecure, this habit does something very important. It teaches your brain that a negative emotion is a problem that needs to be solved immediately.

Now, remember that work we did a couple days ago with cues. We were paying attention to the signs that our brain uses to start the habit, and one of those signs is an emotion. Now, if every time you start to feel a little bored or a little anxious, or a little stressed out, you immediately pour yourself a drink to change that emotion, to numb how you feel, guess what - your brain is learning that not only is that emotion a sign to start the habit,

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your brain is also learning that a negative emotion must be immediately solved.

So your brain goes into high gear like, "I got to fix this. This is a problem." But negative emotions are not a problem. We're supposed to have them. Humans are supposed to have the entire spectrum of emotions, both positive and negative. All emotions are part of the human experience and not only that, not only are they part of the human experience, but when you understand how you are feeling, you can start to use that to understand what you are thinking, because your thoughts create your emotions.

But the more you drink to take the edge off of how you feel, the more you are teaching your brain that certain emotions aren't tolerable. And guess what, just like with the habit cycle, the more that you say yes to that desire, the more you say yes to that urge, the stronger the habit becomes, the more that you move away from anxiety and stress and boredom by having a drink, the less tolerable anxiety and stress and boredom will be.

But here's the thing: all emotions, including negative ones, are just a fact of life. They are part of the human experience. We're supposed to have them. So teaching our brain that some emotions are wrong, or a problem, or intolerable, is actually a problem for you.

So you really want to start to think about what is it about the physical sensations, what specifically is happening in your body that is too much to bear, that you don't want to deal with, that you can't handle? Because if you don't start to understand this, even if you continue your break but you do not learn this piece, you will find other ways to cover up how you are feeling, to resist how you are feeling, and to hide from how you are feeling. And none of these things are sustainable.

So I really want you to even if this is mind-bending, even if this is the first time that you're thinking about how certain emotions create different physical sensations in your body, I want you to really stick with this,

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because I will tell you, this is a crucial piece of unwinding the habit, is learning and teaching your brain that you can handle any emotion.

No emotion is a problem, no emotion needs to be fixed. And the truth is, that as soon as you stop always covering it up, always resisting it, always hiding it, and just actually allowing the emotion to be there, you will see that every emotion will pass. No emotion can last forever. But most of us don't give ourselves time to actually see it pass because we're so busy covering it up. We're so busy trying to solve it and change it with a drink or something else in our environment.

So here's what I want you to do. Your challenge today is to really pay attention the next time you feel a negative emotion, and sit down and ask yourself what specifically is happening in your body. When this happens, I want you to have a pen and paper ready so that you can write about it, so that you can just look at your body from head to toe, really scan and see what's happening, and notice what is happening.

Does your jaw tense? Do you feel pressure on your chest? Is your breathing shallow? Is your heart racing? Does your stomach kind of fluttering, or feel twisted in knots? Are you cold? Are you hot? Do you have a tingy sensation anywhere? Do you feel pressure in your face? Do you feel sensations around your forehead, or your nose, or your eyes, or your throat?

Really be curious. That is the key. But start understanding, start the practice of seeing your emotion as a set of physical sensations in your body, and once you have written them down, then you can start to ask yourself, "Okay, can I tolerate this? Is this something that I can handle? Can I handle a little pressure in my chest? Can I handle an increased heart rate? Can I handle a funny sensation in my throat?"

What this will do, not only will it give you amazing connection really, with what actually you are experiencing, but it will also really help you learn. It will also help teach your brain that whatever you have been telling yourself is a terrible emotion that you can't stand is actually not as bad as

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you think. Because when you reduce an emotion to its physical sensations in your body, it kind of takes the sting away.

So most people will think about it like this: if you were to say, "I'm feeling so anxious." You might have others be like, "This is terrible, I'm so sorry." But if you were to say, "I have this kind of fluttery sensation in my stomach and my chest feels a little heavy and my palms are sweaty", it doesn't seem as bad. It takes some of the sting away because you're able to look at it as that set of physical sensations.

So the next time you feel a negative emotion, I really want you to do this exercise. Really write down specifically what you are feeling. Do not write down judgments, do not write down, "This feels terrible, I feel out of control, this is never going to stop, I hate the way I feel." These are not physical sensations. You want to stick to the physical sensations, and then start to ask yourself, "Okay, what's so intolerable about this? Why am I telling myself that I can't handle it?"

This piece, I promise, it is so transformative. If it seems a little mind-bending right now, I get it. It's only because no one's ever really shown you how to do this or talked to you about your emotions in this way. But I promise that this piece in particular is so transformative, so try it out, see what happens, and come back to it. This is really a tool that you can always have by your side.

Alright, I'll see you tomorrow for day five.