

SO

STOP OVERDRINKING

Okay, so let's get started with part one. Part one of stop overdrinking is all about your desire and where does that desire come from. As a society, we drink, okay? When you go to a restaurant, you're asked if you want a cocktail. When you watch TV, you're going to see lots of beer commercials. You're going to see wine commercials. You're going to be asked if you want wine. When you go to a wedding, they're going to say, "Red or white." A lot of people are going to have very glamorous glasses. There's wine tasting everywhere and there's alcohol and booze and options at all sporting events, right.

We drink as a culture. The question is, why? What is it about alcohol that we have come to embrace in our society and enjoy as individuals? We have grown up with the idea that alcohol is something that we do, right. Young kids, very young kids go to parties, drink alcohol. It's part of the deal. The question we have to ask is why we desire it? Before I begin to answer that question, one of the things that I want to address is desire in and of itself. If you've listened to some of my other programs, this may be a review for you but it's worth really paying attention to. What is desire? Thinking about what desire is, is really important when it comes to thinking about the things you desire and if they're serving you.

Desire is something that we learn. Now I think this is so interesting that most of us think about desire as something that's an innate. When I do a lot of coaching with clients and we talk about desire and we talk about desire for mates and we talk about desire for food, people feel like it's not a choice, that desire isn't a choice, that desire is something that we either have or we don't. We either desire our husband or we don't. Nothing we can do about it. We either desire

peaches or we don't desire peaches. We think that it's innate and something that we don't have control over.

The reason why we believe that is because desire is one of those unconscious programmed things that we seem to do involuntarily. It's because of the way that the brain works. When we learn something and we repeat it many, many times, the brain recognizes that it's a pattern and then takes it out of the prefrontal cortex where it takes a lot of energy to think about and puts it back in that midbrain, in that lower brain so it can just be automatic. If you think about any habit that you have in your life, anything that you repeat regularly, it's not something that you have to consciously think about. Picking up a glass, brushing your teeth, driving your car, right, it's all very learned, and in the beginning, it took a lot of energy to learn it.

Then once you repeated it several times, it became automatic and then became something that went on in the background. Desire is the same thing. Desire is something that we learn and repeat. It's something like, if you think about learning a language. Learning a language is by repetition, repetition, repetition, right? You practice over and over and over that same language and then you become natural at it and you can just speak that language without even thinking about what you're trying to say.

It's the same with desire. It's the same with how you want something. You practice it enough times and you get rewarded enough times for practicing it that it becomes natural and habitual and something that's going on in your involuntary brain. When you see a glass of chardonnay or you see a whiskey or you see a drink or a beer or something, you feel that desire and it feels like it's coming from something unconscious. It seems involuntary and it is because it's something that you've programmed in your mind. Just as if someone were to ask you a question in Spanish, you would involuntarily, if you knew Spanish, answer in Spanish instead of in English.

That's how the whole process goes when you learn something involuntarily. I think this knowledge in and of itself is life-altering because I think it can be scary for someone like you and me who feel this kind of involuntary unconscious type of craving for alcohol. It can be scary if we don't understand where it's coming from. We can be

like, "Oh my gosh. Am I an alcoholic? Oh my gosh. Where is this coming from? Why do I feel so out of control? Why did I drink so much more than I wanted to drink? Why did I drink when I told myself I wasn't going to drink?" Right? It can seem like, "Oh my God. Something's taking me over."

When you understand that nothing is taking you over, the only thing that's happened is that you have programmed your brain unconsciously to desire automatically. You've trained your brain to desire something automatically and so you're feeling that desire. You're the one that trained your brain to do that. You're the one that practiced that desire enough that that's why you're feeling it. If you're the one that created it, you're the one that can 'uncreate' it if you don't want that desire to be there. Just because you've practiced it and you're so good at it doesn't mean you have to keep doing it even if it feels intense. Now, the reason why it feels intense is because of the reward associated with it, okay?

Our desire to brush our teeth is something that we've programmed. It's something that we've practiced. It's something with enough repetition that it's something that we automatically do but we aren't compelled to do it. We don't have a compulsion to do it, most of us, because we don't have a strong enough reward associated with it. The reward hasn't perpetuated it. It's really important that we know that when you learn something, if there's a reward associated with it, it becomes even more intense as an involuntary desire. There's two pieces to this. The first piece is we desire something because we have automatically practiced enough repetition to have it be unconscious.

Now the second part that I want to talk about is what creates an emotion. If you've been with me and studying my work, what you realize is that all of our emotions, all of our feelings come from our thinking, okay? When we think about something, we create that emotion. We think about something, we create that emotion. What are the thoughts that we are having that are creating this desire for alcohol? One of the most powerful thoughts that many of us don't even acknowledge that we're having that can be the trigger, that can be the clue as to how we're creating our own desire is, "I want that." "I want a glass of chardonnay." "I want a beer." "I want a cocktail." "I

want a drink." Seems like such an innocent little thought, but even just a thought like that perpetuates that feeling of desire. It creates that desire within us and we don't even notice that we're thinking that thought.

Why? Because we've programmed it into our brain and repeated it so many times that it's going on underneath our conscious awareness, underneath the supervision of the prefrontal cortex. The prefrontal cortex is the part of your brain that makes you human. It's the part of your brain that's right in the front that can plan something. It can think about what it's thinking about, right. It can think about the future in relation to the past, in relation to the present. It's something that animals cannot do. We like to use our lower brain still, the same brain that animals have because it's efficient and our brain wants to be efficient so we still, we delegate to that part of our brain.

The example that I like to use a lot is that we delegate, we kind of ... The prefrontal cortex is where we learn everything new and the brain is what manufactures it. It's like R&D and then manufacturing, and manufacturing is very efficient. It doesn't question anything. It doesn't argue. It doesn't think logically. All it does is produce a repeating program that you've programmed it to do. The repeating program that you've created in your lower brain is, "I want to drink. Desire, drinking. I want to drink. Desire, drinking. I want to drink. Desire, drinking."

Now here are some other thoughts that I wrote down that I think are important to remember when you think about drinking. There's a lot of associated thoughts. "It provides relief. I want to drink because it provides relief. It's relaxing. It's sophisticated. Normal people who are in control can drink. It's fun. It's celebratory. It relieves stress. It turns off my brain." Those are the kind of thoughts that keep us drinking. We have them programmed so deeply in our unconscious. Now, the other thing that's so interesting is we've thought these thoughts. We've learned these thoughts from all the people around us, from the environment around us, from the commercials that we've watched, from all of our associations to drinking, all of these thoughts have come up for us.

We're constantly thinking them and then drinking, and then thinking them and then drinking. We've created this programmed repeatable

thought process. On top of that, we've associated a huge brain reward with it, and that's what makes it so intense. I'm going to talk about that reward. Basically, it's a flood of dopamine into your brain. You have the thought, you have the desire, you drink and then you're rewarded. You have the thought, you have the desire, you have the drink and then you're rewarded. There is no other powerful combination than that, right. If you look at all the psychological research on learning and you associate reward to learning, it perpetuates the speed and the intensity of that activity. That is the perfect storm when it comes to alcohol.

Now, it does not mean that there is something wrong with your brain. In fact, it's the exact opposite. Here's the example I like to use. If you're walking down a hallway and your sibling or someone in your life jumps out and scares you, you're going to have an intense reaction to that. You're going to be terrified, right? Now, it doesn't make sense. It's someone you know. They've just jumped out from behind. They're laughing hysterically and you are still filled with fear because your brain is functioning normally. Now it hasn't evolved to the point where it can anticipate that happening. It hasn't repeated enough this person jumping out and scaring you enough. If they do it enough, your brain will catch on to it, but in that moment, it is terrified illogically.

Nobody's going to hurt us and it takes us a minute to calm down. That means your brain is functioning. Because you're having that reaction doesn't mean, "Oh my God, there must be something wrong with your brain," right? Your brain is like that because of the way that we've evolved. Now there's very few things that scare us or that go boo in the night. It used to be much more. We needed to be more alert and be terrified and ready to have that adrenaline and now we don't. One of the things that I like to say is that all of the things that got us here, all of the brain processes that have got us to this point are the exact same brain processes that we're going to have to overcome to evolve to the next level.

All the primitive brain stuff is now causing us tremendous amounts of problems. Before, being afraid all the time served us. Now, being afraid all the time, stressed all the time, worried all the time is killing us, so we need to evolve past those survival mechanisms that got us

here. The same is true when it comes to desire. I'm going to explain this to you because it's so important the way that our brain was rigged for survival. The way that our brain evolved is that it provided us reward when we did things that perpetuated our survival. The things that we do that make us live are eating, are warmth, is sex, is accomplishment, is connection.

All of those things, every time we did it, we'll get a little dopamine in our brain. We'd get rewarded. Our brain used that as a feedback loop. Oh, when we ate, that was good for us. When we had sex, that was good for us, perpetuated our species. When we were warm, that was good for us. We didn't die, freezing to death, right? All of those pleasures provided a little bit of dopamine in our brain. Basically, the whole motivation pathway for neural desire for reward kept us alive. I want you to think about how, if, when you eat, let's say, a piece of meat or when you eat plants, there is a satisfaction it's associated with. A little bit of dopamine goes in your brain and so you associate and learn to repeat it.

"I've had a thought I should eat that. I ate it. I got a little dopamine. Now it's perpetuating, right, and I want to keep doing it and I want to keep doing it." The same with sex. "I get that dopamine release. I want to do it again." I had warmth. I want to do that again," right, so I'm learning how to survive. If I don't do these things, my brain gets a little bit upset with me. It's like, "Yo, we got to go eat. Yo, we should have some sex. Yo, we should get warm." It's an alarm factor. You could call it even a craving. "Go get this done."

Now, what we've done that is a huge problem because of the way that we've evolved, all of those little rewards that kept us alive have now become a problem because what we've done is taken those little rewards and concentrated them. For example, we could eat something that would give us a little bit of dopamine reward and that would motivate us to want to do it again. Now what we've done is we have taken things that occur naturally in nature to provide us with that little bit of dopamine reward and we've completely concentrated them. If you think about cocaine, heroin, alcohol, sugar, porn, shopping.

All of those things that we have now in modern day have taken the

things that would have given us a subtle dopamine reward and completely concentrated that pleasure. Instead of having sex with one person one time and getting a dopamine release, now we can watch an hour's worth of porn and get a huge dopamine release. Or we can eat, instead of eating something like a beet that has a little bit of sugar in it, or a berry, and getting a little bit of dopamine reward, now we can have a spoonful of table sugar and get a complete domination of dopamine rewards. Now, this is a problem, right, because the brain now associates that, "Hey, if that little bit of that berry kept us alive back in the day, this intense sugar is probably even more important than that. We got to get more of that. We'd better get way more of that, so let's go do that."

It all of a sudden starts prioritizing having that over anything else, right. If a little is good, then a lot must be better. The brain doesn't understand the difference, and so every time we reward ourselves with that much intensity, the desire is completely intensified. Now this doesn't mean there's something wrong with your brain. In fact, that means that your brain is healthy. It's responding to reward. That's how it's evolved. That's what's up for it. What isn't healthy, what it hasn't evolved to accommodate yet is the intense and the concentrated dopamine release that happens in the brain.

What the brain does, for example, when you drink a lot of alcohol is it's giving such an influx of dopamine that it starts trying to accommodate itself so it doesn't get completely overloaded all the time and so it down-regulates those receptors but it doesn't down-regulate the desire. It takes even more to get the same effect. Now it doesn't mean that you're a disease, doesn't mean there's something wrong with your brain. All it means is that you have taught your brain that these substances are super-important and your brain wants to remind you that it's learned that we need to do this for survival. The more you do it and the more you repeat it, the stronger it gets until it becomes the only thing that matters. It prioritizes that above everything and that's when you're into complete addiction.

Now, I'm not going to address complete addiction. That's beyond the scope of what I'm going to teach in this class. What I do want to teach you is that when you have this seemingly uncontrollable desire for a second glass of wine or a third glass of wine, that is what's going on.

Your brain has learned that this is something that we repeat and we get rewarded for. It must be associated with our survival because it has dopamine involved so we need to do more of it. That is why you have created what seems to be an involuntary desire. I want to remind you of two things. It's not involuntary. It's just learned and you taught yourself, maybe unknowingly, to repeat it and to want it and to repeat it and to want it and you've increased that desire so much that it seems involuntary.

Now what most of you may be feeling if you are like me is a competing desire, so what happens is your prefrontal cortex says, "I want to drink less. I don't like feeling foggy. I don't like feeling hungover." Then you have this primitive desire that literally is thinking, "We have to do this or we're going to die," right? You have this human brain that's newly evolved and then we have this primitive brain that's very efficient. Now, what happens is what the lower brain is very good at is being quick, and it's very good at acting in the moment and creating a ton of desire in the moment. What the prefrontal cortex is very good at is planning and making decisions for the long-term. In that moment, when somebody has placed alcohol in front of you, the lower brain will win that race every single time.

You may have thought, "Oh, I don't think I'll drink this week," and then you are presented with that. That desire will be so much stronger from that lower brain than it is from that prefrontal cortex that you will drink every single time. It seems like it's against your own will because your prefrontal's like, "Wait, we don't want this." It's like this weak desire compared to this strong desire. That's what feels so out of control. The truth is, you're never out of control. You're always making the decision to pick up the alcohol. You're always making the decision to drink it, but you're doing it because that desire is so strong.

If you don't honor that desire, if you don't fulfill that loop, there will be some level of suffering. There will be some level of deprivation. You don't want to experience that. You'd rather just have the glass of chardonnay. Of course, it makes sense. We're going to talk more in the subsequent sessions about this, but what I want you to understand here is that the reason why you're drinking the alcohol in that moment is because of that learned desire. That's not something

that's permanent. It's not something that's wrong with you. It's something that you created and it's something that you can 'uncreate'. You probably created it unconsciously. It's probably been repeated your entire life from whenever you started drinking. It isn't hard to 'uncreate' it. It isn't hard to change it. I'm going to show you exactly how to do it.

Now, I just want to let you know that all of those thoughts that you have, those positive thoughts you have that are associated with wanting to drink, you also have thoughts that support those desires with your thoughts that are associated with not wanting to stop drinking, which you may not even be aware of. So many of us have them. A lot of times when I would think about not drinking, I would think, "It's boring not to drink. It'll be dull. It's unsophisticated. What am I going to order, a Diet Coke or a juice, cranberry juice?"

I used to think, "It's not as fun. It's hard. It's not fair that I don't get to drink. It must mean I have a problem. It must mean I'm an alcoholic. It's a struggle that requires willpower and I just don't have the energy to do it. It's awkward, tedious, annoying, embarrassing not to drink. Without it, I will feel deprived. I'll be stigmatized and have to justify why I'm not drinking and I will always feel like I want it, and I will always have to fight against that desire."

If you are like that, if you have those types of feelings towards drinking and towards not drinking and you feel that desire really strong inside of you, you are absolutely normal. It means your brain is healthy. It means that it is functioning. It means that you're a good learner. It means that you've associated a reward and that your brain is responding to that reward really, really well. I don't want any of you who have been hiding in shame, not wanting to talk about this, feeling embarrassed about it to know that I completely understand where you're coming from.

I want to share with you that there are techniques that I can teach you that will absolutely help you unlearn this, what is a seemingly irrational desire for this substance. There have been so many studies that they have done on those poor little rats, right, where a rat, where they stimulate a certain part of their brain that is the part that is the reward center, that those little rats will sit there and hit that lever at

the expense of everything else in their life. They won't take care of their babies. They won't take care of their health. They won't drink water and they won't eat because that part of the brain has evolved to let you know what's important.

Dopamine is important. Doing activities, accomplishments that create dopamine are important. If we didn't have those rewards, we may just sit around and not try and go get food and not procreate and not try and build a house to make us, or go find a cave and a fire to make us warm. We may not have that motivation to do that. Our motivation comes from the desire to seek pleasure and to avoid pain and to expend as least energy as possible in doing that. That is the perfect combination for creating an over-illogical desire for substances that are concentrated pleasure in now, our environment.

If you feel this way towards alcohol, please know that it's because of the way you've evolved, because of the way your brain is. Here's the magic, and this is what I'm going to leave you with on this one, is you have a prefrontal cortex, so no matter how efficient your mid lower brain is, no matter how well it has practiced that, no matter how much reward it has, it is nothing compared to your human brain. It is powerless compared to your ability to change what you believe and change what you think and change how you respond, right. There is nothing that that lower brain can do without the consent of the prefrontal cortex.

You may not have learned the skill of how to use that prefrontal cortex, but it doesn't mean you can't. I am going to teach you that in the third part. In the second part, we're going to talk about why it's so hard to quit. We're going to go into the actual science behind that and we're going to talk about why many, many, many of those attempts have left you feeling less than completely unnecessarily. I hope that you'll join me in part two. I'll talk to you then. Take care.