

## Episode: I Quit Drinking Alcohol



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Full Episode Transcript

## Episode: I Quit Drinking Alcohol

Welcome to the Design Your Dream Life podcast, where it's all about designing your life on your terms and now your host Natalie Bacon.

Hello my lovely friend. I am so glad to be with you this morning. This episode is meant to inspire you to create a life of growth so you are living exactly how you want to be living. And the best news ever is that there is no right or wrong way to live. There is just going to be your way. And my purpose in my life I've decided is to be an amazing example of being a human. And I can take that purpose with me everywhere, in my relationships, in my business, in my health, in my community, all of it. My purpose is to be an amazing example of being human and I'm always trying to uplevel my life in order to do this better. And it's not because it makes me more worthy, it's just because that is what I have decided to do with my life.

And most recently I've decided to quit drinking. So I'm doing this episode not only to share my experience with you, but most importantly it's because I want to teach you how to drink consciously. My goal here is not to get you to stop drinking. My goal is not to tell you how much to drink, like there's no agenda here other than to teach you how to drink consciously if you're going to drink and then I may give you steps to do that, but they're at the end. There's like a lot of background ahead of time that's going to lead up to that. So that's what we're doing here. I just want to get that out of the way. No one knows whether and to what extent you should be drinking other than you. And that is just the truth. That is why I love causal life coaching, which is what I do and what we do in Grow You. It's having a coach who helps you realize the answers for yourself so that you're designing your life exactly how you want it consciously, of course.

So my story starts with me writing letters from my future self to my present self. And I'm going to do an episode on this next week actually, and it's something we're going to talk about. And I've been doing this for years and for a few years my future self letters always came from my future self as a non-drinker. This just planted the seed that I wanted to take a break from drinking, but I wasn't really ready at the time and there was no real reason other than that, it wasn't like I felt I was drinking too much or that it was negatively affecting my life. I mean everyone has different reasons for either taking a break or stopping drinking alcohol, whatever the case may be. My reason was just that my letters from my future self always came from me as a nondrinker. So that kind of my curiosity about it.

And then one day I saw a Daniel Amen post about marijuana and if you don't know Daniel Amen, he is a psychiatrist and he is amazing and does great work on brain scanning and has a lot of books and he's just awesome. He's a really good marketer as well. So anyways, Daniel Amen had, I think it was an Instagram post about brain scans and it was about marijuana and I was reading the post, and especially right now because marijuana is in the news so much with the legalization of it. And as a side note, I just think everything should be illegal and it should be survival of the fittest. You just can do whatever you want. So that's not what this episode is about, right. But this is probably why he posted about it. It's very present right now in my own state, they're legalizing it, whatever.

So it was reading the post and I found myself agreeing with everything in the post. But then for whatever reason it triggered the thought that everything that he had said about marijuana could have been applied as well to alcohol. But I wasn't agreeing with it with respect to alcohol. Right. So I was saying that I didn't want to smoke weed or do all these other drugs because of the

## Episode: I Quit Drinking Alcohol

negative effects it would have on my life. But I was okay with alcohol even though it also, you know, affects your brain in certain ways. And I just found myself a little bit out of integrity and I didn't really like that with myself. So it's like on the one hand I don't, you know, use marijuana because of how it affects my body and my brain, but I'm willing to do it with alcohol and I was just really curious about that. Like I wasn't, I didn't go to a place of blame, but I also didn't dismiss it like, Oh well everyone just drinks and that's just where what I'm going to do. I leaned into it and was really curious about it.

Then about the same time, and just to give you some context, this is December of 2019 and I stopped drinking in October of 2019 so a few months ago I decided to invest in a one-to-one life coach and spend a lot of money doing that and I'm telling you there is something about exchanging value for value. There's something about paying a lot of money and getting a lot of value in return that makes you level up. This is why I don't give any one of my courses or programs for free because there really is something about what happens when you exchange the value. So I gave thousands of dollars to this one-to-one life coach to invest in myself and I just decided that it was time.

So I was on my way home from work one day I was out working and in the middle of the day and I decided to do some thinking time. If you haven't listened to that episode, you can listen to an episode on thinking time. So it was doing thinking time when it was locking home and I just decided in that moment that I was done, that it was time that I wanted to take this opportunity of investing in myself and this life coach and just be done with it so that you know I could manifest that future that I kept seeing myself create from these letters and I was just ready.

So just to give you a little bit of context with my own personal experience with drinking. Prior to this decision, I drank socially. I don't really identify as ever having problems with it. Like I've never been arrested. I've never just like woke up and not knowing where I was, you know? I've just been drinking socially since, take a guess what age? The ripe old age of 15 yes. So it's funny side note, when I tell people this now they're like, they look at me like very confused. Like did you have parents? Yes, I had a wonderful parents. I grew up, you know, very middle class and just, you know, in a football town in Ohio and we just all drank. I don't know, I realized the more people I tell this, the more I learned that it was not as common in other areas of the country. But for me it's not like I was, you know, drinking alone. I just socially was with my friends and a lot of friends and we were just drinking. So I have been drinking for 18 years.

I'm 33 years old and that's kind of been my individual experience. Now, as you know, I've talked about, I grew up with an alcoholic father and it's just the timing of this is so interesting, right? So he actually passed away last month from cirrhosis of the liver. So I'm very familiar with a AA and Al-Anon and alcoholics. And that was never a reason for me not to drink because I just decided I could make my own decisions from my future and if I wanted to drink socially, like using him as a reason not to just, it didn't feel right. So, but I'm very familiar with alcoholics and all of that. And so just kind of as an, as an another point I'm talking about in this episode, drinking socially and it's for people who are curious about alcohol. If you identify as an addict or an alcoholic, this is probably not for you. There are programs out there for people who identify in that way, but this is just for people who like me, are curious about alcohol in your own life and just want to bring more consciousness to it.

## Episode: I Quit Drinking Alcohol

So that's kind of my history with alcohol. Really, the biggest reason was that I'm all about manifesting my future for my future and creating it that way intentionally instead of from my past and being an example of what it means to be an amazing human. And so I decided it was time, it was time to quit drinking. So on the walk home during my thinking time, that was that I just decided I was done. I did not do a 30 day cleanse or something like that because I find that when you know something's going to be over and it's temporary, you don't go deep enough with it. You know the end is coming and there's a lot of chatter about it ending. I've actually never done a 30 day cleanse. It's funny, the more people I tell about me not drinking, they, the more people I hear share stories about how they took a break for a month or so. So I just didn't want to do that because I didn't really find that I would go deep enough into it and get the most growth and I really wanted to do that. So I decided I'm just done with the drinking. I'm not like counting days. I don't identify as sober. I just say I prefer not to drink and I'm going all in with this. I think it will be forever, but I'm also not making it this thing where I have all this pressure on myself. If I decide to drink again in the future, then that's what I'm going to do, but I'm going to do it very intentionally and consciously.

I stopped eating meat and dairy three years ago and when I moved to Chicago I incorporated dairy back into my eating and I just kind of eat dairy socially. So that's an example of how I stopped eating dairy and then I decided to reintroduce it, but I still don't eat meat. Like with alcohol. I decided I am done drinking alcohol. I'm just closing that chapter. But I'm saying if I want to drink again in the future, it's totally available to me if I want to. And the way that I am framing this is something that I highly recommend you do anytime something ends. So when something ends, I choose to think of it as a completion. I do this for every area of my life, not just alcohol, and I think you can really use this as a tool.

So let's take a relationship, for example, let's say a relationship ends instead of thinking that it's over and that there's something wrong and that you're longing for this person. I like to think of it as this relationship is now complete and it kind of lessons that tension and that resistance to it ending. It doesn't mean that you're not sad. Completions, you know, you can decide to make mean that you're sad, but it just reduces that longing. Same thing when someone dies. Actually, I've been doing this a little bit with my father's passing instead of thinking of the longing and the missing, I think of it as his life is now complete and what a joy and a privilege it was to be his daughter. Right? It's just a different, it's a reframe.

So this is what I'm doing with alcohol. I think that I'm so glad that I drank for 18 years and I think my life is richer and fuller because I had so many experiences with drinking and I had a life that was very different than it is now and now it's just complete. My time drinking is done. I've had enough that is a completed chapter. There's no longing. It's just completed and I think that this is something you can use in your life for whatever is ending, not just alcohol, but for anything else. It just will reduce that longing and open up a new way of thinking and feeling. That's a little bit steadier and more future focused. Instead of that wanting and thinking that you can't have. I frequently remind myself, Oh yeah, I can drink if I want to. Okay. All right. I'm in charge here. Right? I don't like avoid alcohol. There's still wine that I had from before in my house. I still have some spritzers in my fridge that I never got rid of. I still go out with my friends. I just say I prefer not to drink and my drink of choice is a sparkling water with lime and I

## Episode: I Quit Drinking Alcohol

often have to ask for that to be served in grown up glass or a wine glass instead of the, you know, tall water glass that they want to pour the sparkling water in.

But it's just a way for me to adjust and you kind of figure this stuff out as you go. I will say that the first week or two was really, really weird and different and challenging. But then after that it's been shockingly easy. I just feel now that I am someone who doesn't prefer to drink and that's it. Now there are little things that come up that I didn't think about. Right? So New Year's Eve will be coming up and that was something that I had to rethink about because when I made the decision to stop drinking, I wasn't really thinking about New Year's Eve. Right. I was just thinking about my future self. So there are a little instances that I'm still navigating, but I'm not questioning my decision. I still identify as someone who just prefers not to drink. And I'm really proud of myself and excited.

So I just think about me being 33 and really changing the trajectory of my entire life. Like I'm done with drinking. And imagine how much richer and fuller my life is going to be because of that. Because I'm going to go in a new direction and because so many different things are going to open up for me that aren't going to be filled with alcohol.

So that's kind of my story and my background. And now I want to talk with you about why we as the humans drink and I want to talk a little bit about desire and dopamine. So first I want you to just think about what's happening when you drink alcohol. So you're putting liquid in your body, right? You put liquid in your mouth and you drink it. That's physically what you do. And when you do this, alcohol inhibits brain activity. It's a depressant of your central nervous system. And you know this, right? It causes, you know, impaired body movements and slurred speech. If I said that to you, you would not be surprised. However, we don't think about this consciously. Have you ever thought about the fact that you're just putting liquid in your body to impair your brain? Right? It's really weird. I'm like, oh, why did I do that, it's because it's cultural for us. The second thing that you do when you put alcohol in your body is you increase dopamine and this is the pleasure part. That is why you create the habit and the desire. So if you haven't listened to increasing your happiness with brain chemicals, I recommend listening to that episode as well because you'll get a full kind of episode, at least a quarter of it on dopamine, but it's basically a neurotransmitter and it feels really good. You feel pleasure and then you train your brain to do it again and again to get that pleasure hit.

Now, dopamine is great, right? But you can do this with goal setting. You can do this in really productive ways, but you can also do it in nonproductive ways like spending money and shopping. You can get a dopamine hit or eating a lot of food or sugar, right? And also with the drinking alcohol. Now, nothing is wrong with you. I just want to point that out. I think that it's just interesting how we've culturally created this habit of drinking where everyone is supposed to, "normally drink", but that if you can't normally drink, there's a problem with you. And that's just not true at all, right? We all have a human brain and it's wired for addiction. So if you keep doing this over and over, you will increase your need for it over and over. And then the more you do that, the more you want it. And it's just like a cycle that's perpetuated and that's how how it does lead to addiction.

So your brain, I'm going to talk about two parts of the brain here. So we have your primitive brain and that is your survival brain and it is wired to seek pleasure, avoid pain, and be as

## Episode: I Quit Drinking Alcohol

efficient as quick as possible. This is the most primal animal part of your brain, okay? That's the one part. And then you have your prefrontal cortex. It is the most human part of your brain. It is very future focused and it's where you make your plans and it's where you make your rational decisions and this is where you are listening to this podcast and increasing your consciousness and this is where you can change.

So every single human has this, right? The primitive brain, it's your survival brain and then you have your prefrontal cortex. Well, your primitive brain always wants to seek pleasure and avoid pain. It's just been wired for survival in this way, which was great because back in the day, you know, we wanted to avoid the bear chasing after us and have a blueberry to feed us and nourish us and keep us safe and not eaten. Okay. In simplest terms, but in modern society, we still have this primitive brain, but we are using it in ways that we don't need to. Alcohol is one of those ways. If you're feeling down or bored or any negative emotion, your brain is going to pull from the past to get that dopamine hit the best way it knows how. And if you've conditioned yourself to drink, it's going to tell you that you need a drink. It's that desire.

We as humans actually have no purpose for alcohol. We don't need it for survival at all. It's just something that we've normalized and we've conditioned ourselves. So I've talked a little bit about the Pavlov's dog experiment. If you don't know anything about this, you should definitely look it up. But psychologists often refer to this as classical conditioning. And basically the experiment was Pavlov would ring a bell and his team would ring a bell and then they would feed the dogs and eventually the dog started salivating when they heard the bell by itself. And this is really, really significant because the dogs were conditioned to salivate when they heard a bell, which is neutral, okay? There is nothing that the dog will get that's beneficial from a bell, right? But it conditioned itself to know that after the bell ringing, they got food. So if they heard the bell ringing, they would salivate.

Now another part of this experiment, which is really, really relevant here, is deconditioning. So after the bell ringing for so long, they did the same thing, but they deconditioned. So they would ring and ring and ring and not feed the dogs. And eventually the dog stopped salivating. So this is so important. What it shows is that you can learn and condition yourself to desire certain things, including alcohol, but you can also decondition yourself.

So the desire for alcohol is learned. It is cultural. It's not innate. So a child doesn't come home from school and say, Oh man, I need a drink. That was a tough day. But we do this with a glass of wine, you know, after we've had a hard day of work. And that's because we've conditioned ourselves to desire that wine, right? To seek that pleasure, to reduce the emotional pain we're feeling, or the boredom or the distress from work. And there's no problem here. I just want you to be aware of it. So you innately want to eat food from birth, but that is a biological desire. You don't from birth, have the desire to drink alcohol. You're conditioned to drink alcohol to get the dopamine hit, to increase the dopamine. To feel better. So you have this thought now that's I want that I want to drink. And the more you think it, the more you create it and then you create this feeling of desire. And I just want you to be aware of it so that you can decide for yourself if you want to keep doing that or if you want to unlearn and decondition yourself with respect to alcohol. Now when you do decondition yourself, you will go through what is like, for lack of a better terms, withdraw. And it's going to feel very powerful. And I'm going to teach you about

## Episode: I Quit Drinking Alcohol

urges at the end of this as well. But just know that just because it's hard doesn't mean that there's something wrong with you. It's just conditioning and deconditioning because you have a human brain. This is just the way of it for everyone. And the stronger that wiring is, you know, the harder it may be for you.

And I think it's so interesting that drinking alcohol is so culturally ingrained that we do it without deciding on purpose. So what I set out to do in this podcast is just to help you become more aware of your decision to drink so that you do it on purpose. So I want you to ask yourself, why do you drink at all? So alcohol doesn't actually make things better. It dulls your senses and it makes the experience seem better, right? It's like the person at the bar doesn't actually get better looking. They seem better looking because your senses are dulled. So when you stop drinking, you reveal the truth about what you think about your life or the truth about, you know, the event that you're at or the truth about your experience or who you think you are and what makes an event, you know, good is how you show up and how you interpret it. And if you need alcohol to do that, I want you to just lean into yourself and ask yourself why. Why do you need to impair your brain to have a good time?

So I have a list of questions for you to ask yourself and then I'm going to teach you how to become a conscious drinker. And there's just three simple steps. So the questions, first I want you to ask yourself are why do you drink at all? And kind of the, the sub questions to this are, are you drinking because of unconscious programming? Are you drinking because you're trying to escape some negative emotion that would be like, you know, I've had a hard day or something like that. Are you drinking out of habit and the desire just being there over time, kind of like I was. And then the next question is, do you like your reasons for drinking? You know, a lot of times people can't imagine being social and being fun and not drinking. And I want to offer to you that that's just a thought in your head. What I've found is that as long as you're not an a hole and you're still fun yourself, people don't really care if you're drinking, they just want to drink themselves. So I go out with all my friends all the time and they're drinking and I'm not. Now do I stay out as late? Not all the time, but I actually really like that because then I love my mornings even more. So just kind of notice if you're giving yourself a reasons that may or may not be legitimate and make sure you really like your reason for drinking.

Then I want you to ask yourself, do you want to plan when you drink and how much you drink? Right? I'm going to talk about planning your drinking when I talk about how to become a conscious drinker in the next thing I talk to you about, but just answer this question. Do you want to plan your drinking? The next question is do you want to over-drink ever and you can decide what overdrinking is. Of course you can look things up, but remember people are just making this stuff up. You can decide that you want a drink and you never want to drink more than two or four or 15 it's up to you. What you decide is true for you. I want you to ask yourself, what value does alcohol add to your life and what does your highest self think about you drinking? Lastly, what would your life be like without alcohol? Now, you may be tempted to answer that with, it will be boring. I won't be fun. Like what's the joy in that? And just notice yourself and be onto yourself because you've probably wired yourself to really enjoy drinking. So ask yourself what a really amazing fun life would be like without alcohol. Your brain might be confused, but just do it anyways.

## Episode: I Quit Drinking Alcohol

All right. Now for what you can do to become a conscious drinker, I want you to decide consciously what you believe and what you want to train your brain to desire, right? So right now you might just be drinking because you desire it. And this has been kind of ingrained in you culturally and unconsciously. And now I want you to bring consciousness to it. There's three stops and oh God, I'm just laughing because it is a little bit hard at first, but it will change your life and it's so worth it.

And I'm telling you that I want you to do this no matter what. And here's what it is. Number one is to plan your drinking ahead of time by at least 24 hours. Number two is to follow your plan no matter what and number three is to allow the urges. Okay. Now I want to talk with you about each part. Number one, plan your drinking ahead of time by at least 24 hours. Why is this important? This is the secret to everything. You will use your prefrontal cortex, your most human part of your brain and you won't be answering your toddler brain. The brain that you know when you're in the grocery store wants the chocolate chip cookies right now. When you give in and you buy the chocolate chip cookies right now, you are strengthening that desire for it. You don't have control over it.

When you plan your drinking ahead of time from your future focused brain, you are in integrity with yourself and you're using your kind of most responsible, highest brain. So what I say is plan it ahead of time. If you want a plan, you know it's a bachelorette party this weekend and I am going to drink seven drinks, plan seven drinks. The key is to follow your plan no matter what. It's not to judge yourself, it's just to be in integrity with yourself. Do not plan to have one drink and then have four. You need to plan your drinking ahead of time so you're in integrity with yourself and follow your plan no matter what. So be really, really honest. Okay, there's a wedding Saturday night, how many drinks am I honestly going to have and do I want to have? And when you decide that using your prefrontal cortex, you are making the best decision for yourself for your future. And this is just true for everything. So if you plan your spending ahead of time, if you plan what you're going to eat ahead of time, all of it, right? Your future self will. Thank you.

So step one is you plan your drinking ahead of time by at least 24 hours and step two as you follow your plan, no matter what. Step three is that you allow urges. So when you plan it ahead of time, you might say, all right, my plan is to have two drinks and I'm going to go to this happy hour and that's it. And you go to the happy hour and you're with all of your friends and someone's celebrating that she just got engaged and everyone's having so much fun and you've been there for three and a half hours now and you had your two drinks and you're not even feeling buzzed and you feel fine and you're just going to have one more.

You will have the urge to drink, you will have the urge to have a third one and you have to follow your plan no matter what. And you never drink more in the moment than you plan because if you don't, if you kind of go off plan, you will condition yourself to give into false pleasures in the moment. And it takes you out of consciousness and you end up doing what you don't actually want to be doing. The problem is the urges. So what I want to teach you and what I coach a lot on in Grow You, is to allow urges.

So if you have this desire and this urge to drink, I want you to notice the urge and notice the negative emotion that is coming up for you. And don't try to make it go away. Just be with it. You can do what's called becoming the watcher. So as a human, we have this gift where you can

## Episode: I Quit Drinking Alcohol

watch yourself think and you can watch yourself feel without reacting. And this is unique to humans and you can find tremendous relief in this. You can become the witness to yourself having the urge.

And at first it might be really weird for you and it's a skill that you can get really good at. So I want you to practice this because if you notice the urge to drink and you've had the two when you really want the third, if you give into the urge, you will perpetuate it and you will want it again in the future. But if you resist it, you will create anxiety and you will increase that urge. So I don't want you to do either. I don't want you to give into it and I don't want you to resist it. I want you to allow it. Allow the urge. Notice that it doesn't feel good. Watch yourself. Name the feeling. If you're in Grow You you know this, like allow the emotion in your body, name it. Learn how to do this without reacting. It's really, really powerful and it gets so much easier the more you do it.

Like I said, when I stopped drinking the first week or two, it was really hard and then it was easy for you. It might take a lot longer or you might decide, okay, I'm going to be a conscious drinker now I am going to plan my drinks, I'm going to follow my plan no matter what and I'm going to allow the urges. Just do this for your future self. Don't do it for me. Don't do it for anyone else. Do it for you and practice the skill of allowing the urges because this will get easier.

And this applies to actually everything, right? Spending money, eating your food, all of it. And my hope is that you will bring awareness to your drinking so that you live intentionally and you create the exact future that you've always wanted, even bigger and better than you've ever imagined. And I want you to use alcohol in a way that adds to that. And that might mean drinking less. It might mean quitting, but that is up to you to decide. I just want you to bring consciousness to it because I know that you will grow from doing this. I know that I have, I know that my life is better and fuller and I've had so many benefits that I didn't really anticipate with quitting drinking. You know, just little things like going to the gym every Saturday and Sunday morning and going to bed earlier and producing more in my life and in my business and having better, stronger, more authentic relationships, just little side effects and byproducts of quitting drinking that I didn't really anticipate. And again, I don't think I'm like better than anyone else. I don't think that alcohol is evil. I just have decided that for my purpose in life for my future self, I want to give her the gift of not drinking. So for you, I want you to give yourself the gift of being a conscious drinker if you are going to drink. All right? That's all I have for you this week. I'll talk to you next week. Bye bye.

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