NIGEL JONES

ALCOHOL-FREE & SELF DEVELOPMENT COACH

HABIT LOOPS

COACHING
CHALLENGE YOURSELF

One of the best ways to break your alcohol habit is to understand the habit loop. Once you understand it you can hatch a plan to break it and to stop it from playing on repeat.

THE THREE PARTS OF THE HABIT LOOP

TRIGGER: The first part is the trigger - the cue that kicks off the habitual behaviour. They can take a lot of different forms and fall into several categories. Time, Location, Emotional State, Last Thing You Did, People Around You.

ROUTINE: The second part is the routine, the repeated behaviour or the habit. E.g. Drinking alcohol.

REWARD: The third and final part is the reward. The reward is what makes doing the routine worthwhile. Rewards reinforce routines and help keep habits alive.

LOOP EXAMPLES

Taking a shower...
Trigger - wake up
Habit - take a shower
Rewards - feel refreshed, clean, feel awake

Drinking alcohol...
Trigger - 6pm just finished work
Habit - pour glass of wine
Rewards - belief that it will relax me. NB I will show you that this is FALSE

BREAKING HABIT LOOPS

You can disrupt a habit by replacing the routine in the habit loop, while keeping the same cue and reward. That is how you 'break' habits. You keep the cue and the reward essentially the same; all you have to do is replace the routine.

Understanding that your beliefs about alcohol could be wrong and need to be questioned is a critical part of the escape plan and the secret to becoming alcohol-free.

WHAT HAPPENS TO YOU WHEN YOU DRINK ALCOHOL?

It is really only the first drink or the first few seconds that is making you feel 'good'. It's only the first sip of the first drink that gives you the 'whoosh' feeling.

When you drink alcohol, your brain releases dopamine, which makes you feel good. Your brain, therefore, assumes this is a reward and encourages you to repeat this behaviour, even though the alcohol may not be the healthiest choice for your body.

Though alcohol use is harmful, the brain only recognises it as a source of pleasure and does not seek to stop the behaviour. The person's mind now sees alcohol use as a pleasurable experience, even if this is an irrational choice for their overall health.

OTHER WAYS TO GET DOPAMINE

The good news is that there are many ways you can naturally increase your dopamine levels without drinking alcohol. When you stop drinking and break your alcohol habit it does not mean you can never again get that initial 'high' feeling alcohol gives you.

You can naturally boost dopamine levels from lots of different activities, including listening to music, engaging in healthy lifestyle practices, maintaining a healthy diet and spending more time outdoors.

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STEPS YOU CAN TAKE...

STEP 1 – GET TRIGGER HAPPY

Write down all the triggers and cues that made you crave that first drink?

STEP 2 – LIST YOUR REWARDS / WHAT ARE YOUR EXISTING BELIEFS ABOUT ALCOHOL?

Make a list of what you think are the rewards, e.g. I feel relaxed, happy. You might find out that the rewards you think you get from drinking are not rewards at all!

STEP 3 – CREATE A LIST OF NEW HABITS

Create your own list of 'new habits' to replace the act of drinking and to break the alcohol habit loop, for example, have a hot bath, go for a walk, read a book, play a musical instrument.

STEP 4 – START TRIGGERING DOPAMINE FROM OTHER SOURCES

You can naturally boost dopamine levels by:

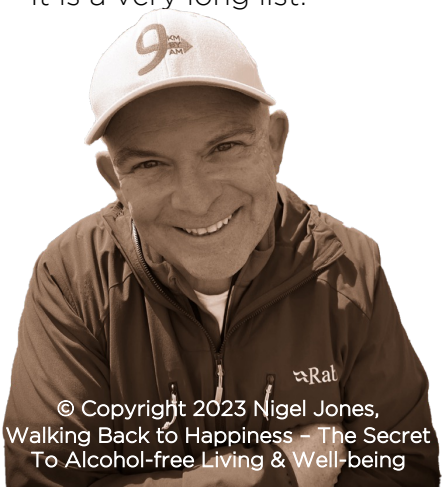
- Spending more time outdoors. Science shows that increased sunlight exposure can help raise levels.
- Exercise, meditation, gardening, reading or playing with a pet. Eating foods rich in tyrosine, like almonds, eggs and fish.

STEP 5 – GET CURIOUS

Get curious about alcohol. Read as much alcohol 'Quit Lit' as possible and see both sides of the argument. Don't believe that the drinks industry, which spends billions annually promoting the 'benefits' of alcohol, is telling you the truth!

Start seeing alcohol for what it really is. Alcohol Change UK has some great facts and figures and is a great start point.

Return to the list you created in STEP 2 and write down in column two your beliefs about alcohol now you have become curious. e.g. sleepless nights, anxiety, bad tempers, hangovers. It is a very long list!



YES YOU CAN

www.9kmby9am.com/coaching