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BUILDING NEW BELIEFS

I learnt that to change my life, it is critical to change my story. To do this, I needed to change my beliefs. But how could I do this?

CREATING A NEW ID

YOUR identity is defined by who YOU believe YOU are and who YOU believe YOU are not!

YOUR decisions are controlled by YOUR identity.

YOUR best thinking has got YOU where YOU are.
The big question is could YOU be somewhere better? Yes, YOU can...



To make a shift in my identity I needed to redefine myself – I am not my behaviour – I am my beliefs. This one saying is so powerful because if you just stop drinking only using the will power method you really are still a drinker. It is only when you firmly believe you are a non-drinker that you free yourself.

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HOW TO CHANGE YOUR BELIEFS

Life is a gigantic self-fulfilling prophecy. We spend our whole life telling stories about ourselves. These stories become real and are often full of limiting beliefs.

Train the voice in your head (your ego) through mindfulness to behave like a scout and look objectively at facts about alcohol.

Relentlessly read new information from Quit Lit, supporting the new you and the story that alcohol is poison and kills you. It is not fun or a relaxant.

Create new pathways in your mind by thinking your new story over and over again just like Thoreau tells us in Pathways of the Mind. ‘One more won’t hurt’ becomes ‘One will hurt you’.

The new you does not react to events – it responds. This is a key difference.

To make a shift in your identity you need to redefine yourself. You are not your behaviour. You are your beliefs.

Create a compelling future for yourself and live it.

OLD & NEW IDENTITY

Write down your old identity and the new identity you want. Here are some of the items in my lists:

OLD TRAITS/VALUES TO BANISH FROM MY ID	TRAITS I WANTED TO KEEP/AM PROUD OF	NEW TRAITS/VALUES TO BUILD ON/ADD TO MY ID
I am a drinker/boozer	I am successful	I am sober
I am short tempered	I am an entrepreneur	I am fit
I am angry	I am an expert in	I am healthy
I am fat/overweight	marketing/PR/sponsorship	I am a great dad
I am unhealthy	I am creative	I am a great husband
I am unfit	I am Welsh	I am caring
	I am from Cardiff	I am compassionate
	I am an LSE graduate	I am present
	I am a good father, husband,	I am grateful
	son, brother, friend	I am unstoppable

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CREATE A COMPELLING FUTURE

I created a compelling future for myself. Every day, I told myself who I am through incantations. ‘I am a non-drinker; I am healthy’.

This reinforced my new story. Compelling future statements can be incredibly powerful.

Just look at what President John F Kennedy told the American people in 1960. He said the USA would put a man on the moon by the end of that decade. That was a compelling future. And they did it.



I had to see everything as real: ‘I am sober’; ‘I am a great dad’. This is how I shifted my identity.

To make a shift in my identity I needed to redefine myself. I am not my behaviour – I am my beliefs. This one saying is so powerful because if you just stop drinking using only the willpower method, you really are still a drinker. It is only when you firmly believe you are a non-drinker that you free yourself.

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CREATE NEW WAYS OF THINKING

I had to create new pathways in my mind.

A quote written over 170 years ago by US philosopher Henry David Thoreau was at the heart of my success.

‘As a single footstep will not make a path on the earth, so a single thought will not make a pathway in the mind. To make a deep physical path, we walk again and again. To make a deep mental path, we must think over and over the kind of thoughts we wish to dominate our lives.’ This is supported by the Buddhist teaching: ‘Whatever you think about regularly becomes the inclination of your mind.’ This is the basis of what is today called neuroplasticity.



To make a pathway in the forest, we walk again and again. Similarly, to make a deep mental path, we must think again and again the thoughts that we want to dominate our lives. I told myself many times each day that I was a non-drinker and supported it with hard evidence on how bad alcohol was for my well-being. I made alcohol the enemy. I saw it for what it really was – poison.

In the early days of going AF, I had to fight myself, my ego. I had to un-brainwash myself. For 35 years, I had sung the same song.

The way I successfully changed my belief about alcohol was to wage a war on my belief that alcohol was part of my life; it was too hard to live my life and be happy without it. I would be boring if I did not drink. I would be an outcast – a social pariah.

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CHANGE YOUR STORY, CHANGE YOUR LIFE

I had to relabel myself. I had to get rid of those old Post-it notes that were stuck on me. I was not dependent on alcohol. I did not need alcohol to be successful in my job entertaining my clients. I did not need alcohol to relax. I did not need alcohol to have fun.

STEP OUTSIDE YOUR SELF (YOUR EGO)

To truly understand yourself and the beliefs you hold, you need to step outside yourself and observe who you are. A great way to do this is through meditation.

Through meditation, you can find spaces between the hundreds of thousands of thoughts that continually ring around your head. It is in these spaces that you can start to see what you believe and question whether those beliefs are right.

By doing this regularly you learn to control your thoughts, slow them down, dismiss them. This allows you to become calmer and nurtures your ability to build a time gap in how you react to events. The New You does not react to events. It responds to them, and this is a key difference.

BELIEFS ARE LIKE TABLES

The way to build beliefs is through small, daily actions. This creates reference points for you to gather evidence that this belief holds true.

Every day that you remain alcohol-free, you are building a firm belief that you can thrive without alcohol. You are taking apart those limiting beliefs around alcohol and building a new empowering belief that you no longer need it.

We build beliefs like we would a table. The belief starts out as the table top and we use references to create the legs. The stronger the references, the stronger the leg which creates a solid belief. You can also apply this idea to breaking up limiting beliefs.



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STEPS YOU CAN TAKE...

STEP 1 – LIMITING BELIEFS

Write down on a sticky note all the beliefs you have about alcohol that are holding you back. Put them around your computer screen so you can see them throughout the day. Continually challenge them.

STEP 2 – ONE YEAR FROM NOW

Pretend it's one year from now. You have just lived the greatest year of your life. Write down what happened in that year and sell yourself on it every day.

STEP 3 – OLD & NEW IDENTITY

Write down the person you want to become by listing:

The old traits and values to banish from your identity. For example, 'I am a drinker'.

The traits that you want to keep. For example, 'I am hard working'.

The new traits and values to build on or add to your identity. For example, 'I am sober.'

Write down your compelling future.

STEP 4 – QUIT LIT

Submerge yourself in Quit Lit. There are endless streams of Quit Lit out there, including WALKING BACK TO HAPPINESS THE SECRET TO ALCOHOL-FREE LIVING & WELL-BEING. Possibly one of the best books ever written, which also had a huge influence on me from an 'I can do this' perspective, was Victor Frankl's Man's Search for Meaning. I should also mention Anthony Robbins' Awaken the Giant Within.

The podcasts that made a difference are: The Daily Stoic; The 5AM Miracle; Rich Roll; and Tara Brach.

STEP 5 – QUOTES THAT RESONATE

If a quote resonates with you, write it down. Put it somewhere you can see it. Read it every day. There were many quotes that helped me 'change my mind'. Here are two of my favourites:

'Two roads diverged in a wood, and I, I took the one less travelled by, and that has made all the difference.' Robert Frost

'I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul.' William Ernest Henley

MAKE IT RAIN

One of the foremost mindfulness and meditation experts in the world is Tara Brach.

Tara teaches the RAIN method – a series of four stages to accepting negative feelings or something you would like to overcome, whether it be anxiety, depression, guilt, death or, in this case, alcohol.

So, if my ego was telling me to drink alcohol because it was good and would relax me, I acknowledged this and accepted it. I did not deny it was not happening. I did not run away from it.

RAIN is an acronym:

Recognise that you think drinking alcohol is good for you. Then...

Allow this feeling/thought to exist. Next...

Investigate its effects and what it does to you. This is where you can feed in the new data from the Quit Lit. Finally...

Nurture the thoughts and start to separate yourself from this way of thinking through the practice of non-identification.

By non-identification, I told myself that the facts just don't add up. Alcohol can't be good for me. I'm only thinking this because I have been brainwashed. I am not stupid. I just need to ride it out and soon it will go away because I know the truth is that alcohol is bad for me.

By doing this, I was able to separate myself from my emotions and beliefs. I created new beliefs in my unconscious mind by repeatedly telling myself alcohol was bad for me, supported by facts and figures from the Quit Lit and, thereby, conquered my ego.