

Alcoholic No More

by Holly Stokes, Master NLP Coach, Hypnotherapist

In the old method of changing a habit, we would identify what we want, “I want to stop drinking,” and then try to stick to it. We find we may be good for a few days, but then after a week or so, give into the old cravings, and fall off the wagon. We experience it as a struggle with ourselves. It’s as if a part of us wants to change and a part of us doesn’t. But, that’s not all, we then beat ourselves up for it, thinking, if only I was more disciplined, I could make myself do it.

In working with clients, especially around addictions, or changing habits, the principles are the same. Rather than setting a goal and just trying to stick to it, I use my NLP background (Neuro-Linguistic Programming) for shining the light of awareness onto these parts of ourselves that are in charge of the behavior. Once we understand the nature of the behavior, then, we can get to re-educating the parts of ourselves, creating internal alignment with what we really want, and get the results we are looking for without the difficulty and struggle we’ve experienced in the past. We can evolve the parts of ourselves in charge of negative behaviors, and move our lives forward through awareness.

Courage in Drinking

Let me introduce Roger. Roger wanted to be using his time more effectively, he would typically come home after a day of work, and then start drinking, 4 or 5 beers a night was common. Roger said that he didn’t have a drinking problem, he didn’t feel addicted. I asked would it be okay to go a week without a drink, a grimace passed over his face, and he said I could do it, but he just wouldn’t choose to, and it certainly wouldn’t be comfortable.

He said, “if I could drink less, maybe I could be more motivated to pursue other things that would improve my life, such as better health and more motivated to work on my home business.”

We set up an NLP process called hands polarity. Holding your hands out in front of you, one hand represents the parts of you that hold the problem (drinking), and the other hand represents the change you want (stop drinking).

I turned his attention to the hand that was responsible for drinking and asked the golden question, “What’s the positive intention behind drinking? What does this hand want for you?”

He thought for a moment, introspecting, and then said, “Courage.”

Drinking was a method for connecting with Courage. Courage can be very positive, but in the impaired state of inebriation, courage can become misdirected and inappropriate, unbridled, even destructive.

So, we asked the part in charge of drinking, if it would be okay to connect with courage in other ways in his life, rather than only through drinking. The answer was yes.

Roger, what activities do you find a connection with courage?

He thought a moment, and then realized, "When I workout, I tend to have that feeling of confidence, and courage. "

I continued, "Turning your attention back to the hand that represents drinking, would it be okay if this part were in charge of getting you to go to the gym and workout as a method of connecting with courage?"

Roger introspected a moment, feeling for the answer, and then said, "yes comes to mind."

"Great, turning back to the hand that wants to quit drinking, what does it want for you?" I asked.

"More motivation to work on my home business, use my time better, " he said.

"Great, now having both these parts look over and appreciate each of them wants for you, and notice, how does each of these parts feel to be acknowledged and appreciated?" I asked.

"Good, it feels like they are recognized and heard," he said.

"Now, looking to the future you are even now creating, how can both of these parts work together to create what you really want? That healthy life that is working for you, full of motivation, moving your life forward, health, happiness, and success?" I asked.

"Well, instead of going home and drinking, I can read books to better myself, I can go to the gym and workout, and I can focus on building my business," he said.

"Now, as these two parts of you are now working together, what do you see for yourself?" I asked.

" I see more motivation, more focus, more energy from going to the gym, I can use my time for improving my life, moving my life forward and living better," he said.

We finished with the parts integration process. As his hands were starting to move together, he said, "Well, if I give up drinking completely, I will miss out on some good parties, I don't want to miss out. "

"So, if courage were integrated into your life, you wouldn't need to drink to connect with courage, and then what would drinking be about for you then?" I asked.

He thought a moment, "I guess relaxing, and enjoying the social scene."

"Great, so if you can still enjoy social drinking, not as a way of expressing courage, because you already have that, but as a way of relaxing and enjoying social scene, would that be okay?" I asked.

He thought a moment as he was feeling for the answer, "Well yes. "

The next week, when Roger came in, he was flabbergasted. He said, you know, I only had one day that I went home, and I started a beer, but I didn't even want to finish it, it just didn't appeal to me. This is amazing!

So, in one hour session, Roger no longer had a drinking problem. By asking the part of his mind in charge of drinking to redirect it's focus, he created internal alignment, rather than fighting against himself, or trying to suppress cravings, or deny, or avoid the situation. Now, it just didn't have a pull on his focus. He was then free to focus on moving his life forward in other ways.

As we begin to open our awareness to the layers of ourselves, we can address our challenges, habits, even cravings with understanding and wisdom. Every part of ourselves is trying to get something positive for us, although at times those strategies are misguided, or even get in the way of what we consciously want.

Our current paradigm is that we are at war with ourselves. Rather than engaging our deeper awareness, we try to ignore, or avoid the problem, or even label it as a disease. Once we've labeled something as a disease, we release our ability to affect it, we feel its out of our control, and we place it in the hands of the medical community. There must be a pill to "fix" it.

The problem in labeling things is that we assume a whole set of problems that may not even be ours. Along with a label comes all the baggage that has been associated with the problem for other people. Once we've labeled something, the problem becomes much bigger than just the behavior, or a mental strategy. Once we call something a disease, there is a sense that it is out of our hands, and there is nothing we can do about it.

A different view is to see even "medical conditions" as simply internal behaviors of the mind and body. If we address the higher need, and re-educate those parts of us, we can adopt new internal behaviors and strategies, and the problems transform. In NLP terms, we see the unwanted behavior as just that, a behavior. By "resourcing" the part in charge of the behavior, ie helping it find what it is really looking for in the behavior, we can align ourselves with what we really want. Change becomes much easier than if we release power (by calling it a disease), or fight against ourselves by focusing on the behavior.

By addressing these challenges with insight, and wisdom, we can embrace our whole selves in moving forward on the journey of life. Change can be easy, and fun, as we pay attention to these deeper levels of who we are, "resource" the negatives, and create the life we really want.

Note: This brief example of one person's experience in no way means that other people struggling with alcohol are seeking courage, but rather illustrates that each individual has their own associations, meanings and history behind what is represented through a specific behavior. If you would like more information, please visit the website: www.ExpandingPotentials.net

About the Author: Holly Stokes, Master NLP Practitioner, Life Coach and Hypnotherapist, is passionate about helping clients create positive life change and bring their dreams to life. She offers private sessions, by phone and in-person in the Portland/Vancouver area. She offers Coaching, classes, & retreats that empower people to create lives of health, vitality, and success. visit: www.ExpandingPotentials.Net for more information, or call 360-837-3209.