

Episode 25:

Sobriety vs. Recovery

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[00:02:48]

Good morning and welcome to the week of May 2nd, 2015. This podcast is number 53 and it marks the beginning of our second year recording these podcasts for ConneXions Classroom. I'm very happy that you've chosen to join me this morning.

Today, we are going to discuss the difference between sobriety and recovery. It is a question that I get asked often—what is the difference between those two? Or people will just say "I have so many years sober," and then I'll question them, I'll say, "Are you sober or are you in recovery?" And they'll look at me like, *I'm not quite sure there's a difference there for me.* And so, I usually have

this conversation with them because sobriety and recovery are two very, very different things and hopefully by the end of this podcast, you will have an opportunity to understand the difference between those two. It's kind of like the difference between shame and guilt. Oftentimes, we'll use those two words interchangeably and they actually are **not** the same thing.

So, here's the difference between sobriety and recovery. Sobriety—being sober from an addiction—is the illusion of controlling the body. Let me say that again. When I am sober from my substance or my activity, when I have stopped engaging with my drug of choice, my DOC, and that means I am sober, it is an *illusion only* that I am controlling the body for a time.

Now, when I am not engaging in my drug of choice, I don't see myself as having an illusion of control. I really feel like what I'm doing is sufficient and it's working because I have not engaged my drug of choice, whatever it may be. It could be exercise, it could be work, it could be sex, it could be money, food, texting, video games, drugs, alcohol, on, and on, and on—that I have not engaged my drug of choice for a period of time. However, if that is all I am doing, is just not engaging my drug of choice, I am not going to be able to maintain that. What I'm engaging is called [white-knuckling](#), and you probably have heard that.

So, white-knuckling is an expression that many of us recognize, perhaps you've seen someone grip a podium as they've given a speech, they're hanging on so tightly that their knuckles turn white, they're probably nervous and trying to will themselves to finish their speech or presentation. Or maybe you've had the experience of riding some kind of a rollercoaster or some kind of theme park ride, and you've white-knuckled trying to not react to your feelings of fear by using your physical strength to keep yourself from falling out or becoming out of control, feeling out of control while you're on that ride.

So, in the context of addiction recovery, white-knuckling means I'm barely holding on by force or by willpower to not slip into my addictive behavior. Now, when I am sober, I am engaged in willpower only. And again, it does not feel like I am in danger. It feels like I have this thing “under control.” The issue is, is that being sober by not engaging in my drug of choice, I actually have not even addressed the actual addiction that's in my head.

The addiction acts itself out by me first not being willing to understand or not knowing how—it's usually more not knowing how—to understand that I have faulty core beliefs that I believe in, which those faulty core beliefs create emotions, and my emotions are uncomfortable to me, at some level they are uncomfortable. And so as an addict, I have learned to not feel. I just turn those emotions off. And so, as I continue to do that, where I have thoughts and then I don't feel the consequences of those thoughts, like I have a thought of *I'm not worthy* and then I have a feeling that coincides with my thought of unworthiness. I feel bad about myself or I feel not enough, and because that feeling's really uncomfortable, I just choose not to have it. So, my addiction is actually going on in my head, my addictive thinking is really the issue, and my acting out with the drugs, or the sex, or the spending money, or the video games, or the gambling—that is only a **symptom** of the addiction that's alive and well in my head.

So, if I only stop engaging the substance or the behavior, that's all I've done, I've cut off the weed at ground level or maybe I've cut a few branches off of the weed. But the root system is still in place, my thinking is still in place, my feelings are worthlessness and unworthiness are still in place, and the addictive thinking hasn't stopped at all. I will just wait or bide my time till I can go back to the drug that I enjoy, or I'll just pick up a new drug; I'll cross-addict. And when I do that, I can have

secondary, tertiary addictions going on all at the same time, or pick one up right after another in this illusion of sobriety.

And so, sobriety is the illusion that I'm controlling my body for a time. Recovery is the mastering of both your body—which is your brain—and your soul; being aligned with your soul. And what that means is, I'm aligned with who I am as a being. So my brain says “*you're not enough,*” and my soul says, “*Wait a minute, hold on, I'm divine, not only am I enough, I was never not enough, I could not do anything that would connect to me losing value or enoughness. My choices are not connected to my value.*”

And so, when you live in recovery, you are mastering both your body which incorporates your brain, and your soul, so you're being aligned with the Truth, your soul's being aligned with the Truth, and your brain is being aligned with the Truth, and that is what's called living in recovery. And when you live in recovery, you live with these three principles:

- You live impeccably honest. Your honesty, your emotionally honesty, is impeccable—it's absolute.
- The second thing that you do when you live a life of recovery is that you take personal responsibility for your thoughts, for your feelings, and your choices.
- The third principle is that you live a humble, vulnerable, teachable, open, transparent life.

So, you live impeccable honesty and then you live responsible. And as you're doing those things, you live a humble, and teachable, and open lifestyle.

So, recovery is not a destination. Recovery is an every day, every hour, sometimes every minute, of awareness and consciousness of those three principles that I just talked about—honesty, responsibility, and humility. Everything that I teach centers around those three principles—learning how to be impeccably honest, *rigorously* personally responsible, and living humble, being teachable, being open, being willing to be vulnerable and validating.

So, hopefully, you can see that there is a stark contrast between sober and recovery.

[00:11:42] Living a Lifestyle of Recovery

Few people who want to heal their addiction are willing to live a lifestyle of recovery. Why? Because they don't appreciate the rigor it takes to live there. So, lots of people want to have recovery, like *I want to be healed from this addiction*, I'm like great, that is awesome, I know how to walk you into health, I can walk you into healing this thing. And I cannot do it for you, but I'm a really good coach, I'm a really good mentor, and I know what works, and I know what doesn't work. And even though I may not know your birth date, your social security number, and all those intimate things about you, all I need to know is that you have struggled or you have been addicted to something or another, and that's all I need to know about you, because addiction shows up the exact same way for everyone—**everyone**.

It's kind of like if you were to go to a doctor and you had the chicken pox. He or she who has studied medicine would be able to diagnose chicken pox anywhere. And so, once they saw those wounds on your skin, they'd say, “Oh, you have chicken pox.” They wouldn't need to know your name, and your birth date, and where you've been, and who your grandma is, or any of that—it is not relevant. Your socioeconomic background, your culture, your gender, none of that is relevant if you have the physical evidence of chicken pox, right? And I think we'd all agree with that.

It is the same thing with addiction. It is not personal to you. There are certain behaviors which I'm going to go over in a minute, and when those behaviors are present, that means the person has an addiction.

And so, to get out of the addiction, to heal the addiction, means they have to be willing to live a rigorous lifestyle—a lifestyle. Now, with chicken pox, you don't have to live a lifestyle, you rest, and you take certain medicine, and you put certain salve on the wounds, and then it goes away, and then you don't have to do that anymore. But to heal an addiction, you must change your lifestyle, which means you must change the way you think. You must learn to live in impeccable honesty and learn how to be rigorously responsible and humble. You must learn how to do that or you will never be able to heal the addiction. You might be sober for a period of time, but you will never be able to claim one day, one moment of recovery if you're just doing sober, because sober does not address the thinking, sober just means I stop acting out with the substance or activity.

Here's what you don't get to do any longer if you're going to get well.

You do not get to blame anyone else. What addiction does is it loves to blame. Addiction does not take responsibility for itself. When I have an addiction, I blame everyone and everything and/or I blame myself, so I'm in a process of either attacking myself or attacking you and I go back and forth. And I either blame myself or I blame you. And I do both of them, I don't just blame one, I blame both—myself and you.

I don't get to make choices out of fear reactions. So, my choices have to be based in the Reality and in Truth. And Reality and Truth are based in being able to be impeccably honest with yourself.

I get to become curious about myself, and others, and about my perceptions, and my choices, and my expectations, and my reactions. If I'm going to live in recovery, I must become curious about those things.

And if I'm choosing to live in recovery, I do not get to be in denial, or codependency, or try to control people or other things.

I don't get to go into any place that keeps me in an illusion. I don't get to fantasize any longer.

Here is a significant piece of Truth that I want to share with you, and this is going to be hard for some people to hear, but it is the Truth. And if you will stand back far enough and get a large enough angle, you will see that what I'm telling you is the Truth.

So, for many people who have addictions there's been incredible trauma that has happened to them. Incredible trauma. And the trauma is very real. Someone or something has harmed you. Maybe you've had a disaster happen in your life, or a tragedy, or there's been loss, or grief. All those things are real, they did happen in Reality, *and* the shame that you have inside your system, inside your brain, is telling you that there's something innately wrong with you, that at the center of you, there's something wrong, or you're unworthy, or you're not enough, or you're bad, or it's your fault, or if you would have done this then this wouldn't have happened, or a hundred thousand more things that shame tells you that are lies—which drives addictive behavior.

And so, the Truth is that anything or anyone who has affected you has only *affected* you; they did not **make** you the way that you are. They have affected your body, they may have abused your body, or traumatized you, or lied to you, or done something that was betraying. **And** they could not

access your soul. Your spirit is still very safe tucked inside your body. And the only person who actually can access your soul is you.

So, this understanding that your soul is intact and that no one has the authority or power to touch your spirit except for you. And if you're struggling with that, I hope that you will stop and you will think about what I'm saying because I am not at all saying that the things that have happened to you did not actually happen, because they have and they do. People's lives have been taken from them. That's how much someone can affect you, but they could never access you spiritually.

And for a lot of people, when they think about this, it liberates them. Men and women, it liberates them, it frees them and invites them out of this illusion that they **are** betrayed, that they **are** ruined, or they **are** bad, or they **are** to blame, or they **are** responsible for all their own choices and someone else's choices, or they're not enough. And all that is, is a bunch of lies and distortions called shame. And if you believe that, then shame has trapped you. And you can't get out of shame if you believe that. You will be a victim of shame.

So, the Truth is that you can be victimized, which is an occurrence, it's something that can be done unto you. And so when you are victimized, yes, you are affected, and for some people, significantly affected. Yet you can heal from those effects. And the person who has affected you only has a small role in supporting your healing. The remainder is going to be up to you. And the reason it's up to you is because you will be able, if you choose, to reframe the trauma, to reframe the wounds, and reframe the mental effects of the betrayal—the feelings of betrayal. It's not that you **were** betrayed, because that's an absolute; it's that it **felt** betraying.

The one betrayed is the person who did the trauma, who created the wounds, they betrayed themselves. You unfortunately were the one that was in the way or had that taken out on them. But they did not have the power to betray you. You're the only one that can do that to yourself.

That's a huge concept and if that's something that is scary for you—what I just said—then stop this podcast and just sit and think about what I just said to you because I'm trying to offer you an avenue to get out of addiction. I meet so many people who are either in the throes of addiction or they're in the throes of addiction on the codependency side because addict behavior and codependent behavior are the same coin, they're just two different sides of the same coin.

And for people who are in codependency, they're just as trapped as somebody who's in a drug addiction, or a sex addiction, or a gambling addiction, or a food addiction, because they're in codependency as well. If I'm in a secondary addiction such as drugs, or sex, or Facebooking, or video games, I am also in a codependent dynamic as well. And it feels like I'm stuck and I'm trapped, and the more that I engage my addictive behavior, the more shame I feel. And the more shame I feel, the more “evidence” I have that I am bad and unworthy. I just look at how many times I've acted out and how many people I've hurt, and it's like wow, there's my evidence, I really am this way. And the Truth is, you're not because of what I just said: **you cannot be unworthy**. Your shame is telling you lies about who you are. Your soul is not unworthy.

And so, whether someone has traumatized, whether someone has abused you, or whether you've done it to yourself—abused yourself through choices—you can heal, because your soul has never been touched. It's not possible for someone else to touch your soul. Now, do you affect your soul? Yes, you do. And you can choose to treat it in a very loving manner by stopping acting out behaviors, which means you'd have to get out of living a life of sobriety and getting into recovery.

[00:24:03] Characteristics of Addiction

Let's talk about characteristics of addiction really quickly so you know what that means. Here's a handful of characteristics of addiction.

When I'm in an addiction, here's the way that I respond. And again, codependency is an addiction, so if you're in a codependent dynamic with something or someone, you are in an addictive pattern. So, characteristics of addiction are: isolation, fears, being irrational, blaming, having anger, you're unconscious, compulsive lying, denial, closed to your emotions, you're retaliatory, you like to control, live in fantasy, you compartmentalize, you're unwilling to feel uncomfortable emotions—those can be any emotions, even happiness—reactionary, you have no boundaries, you're looking for someone to rescue you, you'll hold secrets, you'll engage in lustful behavior—and that's not just sexual, lustful is about selfishness—you use distractions, you live in drama, you're impulsive, you have a lot of pride or ego, you distort perceptions of what's going on around you, you have expectations that you feel others should meet, you live in entitlement, you exaggerate, and oftentimes you're very unwilling to seek help.

Those are characteristics of addiction.

Living a life of recovery looks like: you're honest, you're responsible, you're engaged, you're open, you're transparent, willing, you have boundaries, you learn how to have compassion, you respond instead of react, you learn what drama is and you don't go into it, you learn how to love yourself, you show up in a very self-less way, which means that you understand who you are and the importance of who you are and you care for yourself, you learn how to validate, and be vulnerable, and you manage your emotions.

So, if you're living sobriety, that attempts to stop only ingesting the substances or the activities into your body, which means white-knuckling, and it just doesn't work.

Sobriety is something that is pretty easy to do. Most people know how to be sober. Few people, few, I don't have a statistic but I think about five years ago when I was looking at the statistics of people that lived in recovery, like had a year more of recovery, it was like one half of one percent of the people who actually said they had addictions. So, in order to live in recovery, people have to make conscious choices to live those characteristics which are honesty, responsibility, and humility.

So, let's talk about addiction and codependency. Like I said, if you have a coin, you've got addiction on one side of the coin and codependency on the other. And so, in order to have the coin, you must have both of those things present. If someone is not enabling the addiction, if the codependent is not engaged in codependency, the addiction will stop. So, people who have addictions are also codependent, and people who are codependent are living in addiction as well, but they may not have a secondary addiction. They usually do but not all the time; their primary addiction is their codependency. And a way to get out of their addiction, whether it's addiction or codependency, is through living a life of recovery, which means I start choosing to become aware and conscious. I become curious and educated. I learn about emotional honesty and how to be responsible. If I don't do that, then I will only be sober, which means I just control the behavior. So, that's simple.

Staying sober becomes easier when it's not a chore because as you learn to live just by white-knuckling, for the first little while it's kind of easy to white-knuckle, it's like *oh, I can do this*. The problem is, is that when life hits you and you start feeling emotion, you come home and you've got

a notice on your door saying that your car has just been impounded and you get upset, thinking “*Oh my goodness, I loaned that to my son and now my car’s impounded, what in the world just happened?*” So, when you live in recovery and you get that note on your door, you stop and you say, “Okay, I gave that car to my son, thank goodness I put it in his name and he’s responsible for it now. I am a co-signer, that’s probably why I got the notice, but he’s ultimately going to be responsible for whatever happens to it.”

And so, in recovery I stay calm, and I don't react, and call my son up and I say, “I just want you to know I got a notice on my door this afternoon that your car’s been impounded.” And he’s like, “Oh, yeah, you know, things like this always happen to me. It really wasn’t my fault, I left it on the street and they kept giving me parking tickets. And I didn’t know what to do because there was no place else to park the car, so I just kept getting all these parking tickets. And then, I got up one day and the car was gone, they’ve towed it. Can you believe that? They towed it and they’ve impounded it and I can't get it out, it’s going to be like \$600, do you have \$600 that I could use to get the car out?”

And if I were *sober*, then I probably would react and I’d say, “You ungrateful little thing. After all I’ve done for you, and how dare you treat me this way?” Do you hear the shame? It’s all personal. How dare you treat *me* this way. And I get off the phone and I’m angry, and I’m upset, and I feel like he’s ungrateful, and I’m triggered, and I want to go engage my drug of choice. Versus living a life of recovery where I get told that story and I say, “Huh, well it sounds like you’ve got some earning of money to do if you're going to get that car out.” And my son says, “I have to have it out, you’ve got to help me out here. I’ve got to get it out.” And I say, “Well, no, I don't need to do any of that,” because when you live in recovery, you don't have to react to that kind of stuff. You won't need your drug when you live in recovery, because of your willingness to stay in the present and call your Reality what it is. So I'm staying in the present—this is not my problem. And I'm going to call Reality what it is, which is I gave my son that car and put it in his name, and these are the consequences from his choices, that’s the Reality. And I can be impeccably honest with him and live in responsibility and say *this is not mine*. When you live like that, it will eclipse the drive or the compulsion to alter your experience physically or emotionally. Does that make sense to you?

When you live in recovery, you will not need your drug of choice because you will be willing to stay in Reality, and in Reality, you stay honest and responsible for you and no one else. And when you do that, you will not feel the compulsion to cover anything up. You might be sad for him, you might feel bad that he’s made those kinds of choices and he’s going to have the kind of outcome he is, but you will not feel a drive or a need to fix it for him. It’s not yours, it’s not your responsibility.

So, living in recovery is a conscious process that’s comprised of choices—choices to react impulsively or irresponsibly to people, situations, circumstances, expectations that weren’t met, and so forth. Choices to slip past bottom lines or not.

Recovery living creates peace and joy. And when you choose to follow the principles that govern it, which are again:

1. Living in emotional Truth and being impeccably honest with yourself.
2. Maintaining personal accountability in all things, for your choices, your feelings, and your thoughts.
3. Living a humble lifestyle.

4. Do not alter or deny the Reality of your life. See life for what it is. Tell yourself the Truth about what's going on.
5. Experience and feel all your emotions as they are connected to every experience, so grief, sadness, boredom, loneliness, tired, joy, happiness, excitement, etc.
6. Share with another person how you feel and ask them to validate and have empathy for you. You need someone to understand where you're at and be validating to you so that you can be vulnerable.
7. Let go or surrender what you cannot control. Don't judge feelings or experiences as bad—they're only experiences, they're not good or bad, they're just experience. Learn to live in the Reality of life and don't distort your perception of Reality.

So, as you do that, you will live a lifestyle of recovery and you will recognize that you are in recovery, you are powerless. People don't like that word, they get all jumpy around, "*I'm not powerless, I'm powerful.*" Well, when you realize that the drug that you have taken into your body, once you've taken it into your system, whether it's tangible like you ingest it into your system, or whether you take it in through your eyes or your ears, once it's inside your system, you are then *powerless* over how it's going to affect you.

It's sometimes really frightening to realize how powerless you are around your addiction, around your drug of choice. You need to recognize and be humble about the fact that you're powerless, or you can't manage those externals if you will, your drug or your lust, and humble yourself. You need not be afraid of your life. You can choose to embrace it, you don't need to bring a substance into your life to control your life, because your life is okay just the way it is. It may be challenging and uncomfortable, but you don't have to live in fear of your life, you just have to accept it. If you choose not to accept it, you will try to control it and that's where addiction comes in. That's where you start living really out of control, in your efforts to control the uncomfortability of your life.

If you have pain or trauma from experiences you've had, go get some help. Let someone witness your pain and validate it so you can move on. Don't use your addictive behaviors to trick yourself into believing that addictive behaviors are helping you cope, because that is not the Truth. If you are not willing to embrace the emotions bound up in your experiences that come your way, addiction **will** own you and it **will** control your life.

So, my hope is that you're willing to interface with the emotions that are present in all of your experiences. Don't run and hide from those experiences, they're here to refine, and to teach, and to sculpt you into Divine material. They're here to connect you back to yourself.

So, back to the beginning of this podcast where we were describing the difference between sobriety and recovery: if you are caught in addictive behavior, and again that includes codependency, please see if you are only being sober or if you are living a life of recovery. And I've just gone into great detail about what sober looks like versus what recovery looks like, because if you want to be free from your addictive behaviors, you **must** choose to live in recovery.

Alright, thank you for listening. I was going to make another comment but I think I will end right there. Thank you for listening and we will talk to each other soon. So, between now and then, stay connected. Bye bye.

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