

# THIS NAKED MIND

CONTROL ALCOHOL



Find  
Freedom,  
Discover  
Happiness  
& Change  
Your Life

ANNIE GRACE

## What Readers Are Saying

“The most selfless and amazing book I have ever read. Thank you Annie Grace for your wisdom, intelligence, sense of humor, and love. I do believe you have saved my life. Today my youngest child got her final exam results and the next phase of her life begins. She will not be alone. Thank you, Annie Grace, for this gift.”

—Bernie M., Dublin, Ireland

“What an amazing book! *This Naked Mind* has been an eye-opener for me. I thought I could consciously decide to give up alcohol, and now I understand the necessity of informing the subconscious mind of the evils of drinking and then the cravings just disappear! I have also read and applied the work of Dr. John Sarno and knew the power of the subconscious mind but cannot believe how effective the book and method was for me. Thank you!”

—Theresa G., Chapel Hill, North Carolina

“I loved this gentle, down-to-earth explanation of problems with alcohol use, and the clear, structured way to challenge your thinking and behaviors around drinking. It helped me pass from shame and guilt into real and positive action.”

—Elizabeth R., Australia

“Without sounding too extreme, this book has significantly—and I think permanently—changed me and my attitude toward drinking. I have used Annie’s wisdom and done some things alcohol-free that I would never have thought I could do. I can’t say enough good about it and advise those who are ambivalent about drinking and not drinking to read it. Thanks again, Annie Grace, you’ve given me my life back, seriously.”

—Katy F., Albuquerque, New Mexico

“As a huge fan of Jason Vale, I was really interested to read *This Naked Mind*. It was so interesting to read more about the science behind addiction and the unconscious mind. It added a new level to my understanding of why I want to live a sober and happy life! I highly recommend this book to anyone, whether they are interested in cutting down or staying alcohol-free; there are so many practical tips and suggestions. I loved it!”

—Sarah L., London, United Kingdom

“Genuinely hopeful and realistic philosophy and practice. Thanks, Annie Grace.”

—Louise P., Des Moines, Iowa

“*This Naked Mind* brought clarity and focus on my drinking and ten-year struggle with sobriety that I had never paused to examine. Annie methodically brings the reader along a logical path of discovery. I felt she was speaking directly to me and that she knows exactly where I am mentally and physically. I continue to return to certain passages for

reaffirmation. I highly recommend the excellent book to anyone seeking a refreshing approach to seeing alcohol in the full light of the day with eyes wide open.”

—Sam G., Sydney, Australia

“*This Naked Mind* delves into the psychology and physiology behind addiction and addresses these exceedingly well with thoughtfully structured chapters and memorable analogies. You will realize how alcohol truly has no place in your life and the myths we use to justify its consumption. Really, really cannot recommend this neat little book enough.”

—Cheryl W., Melbourne, Australia

“Reading *This Naked Mind* has been nothing short of a miracle. It has helped me to see alcohol for what it is and ended a twenty-five-year cycle of binge drinking and ‘trying’ to stop or moderate alcohol. I have not had a single craving since reading it, which is unheard of for me. I’m totally comfortable in situations where other people are drinking, and I don’t feel the need to avoid temptation, because there isn’t any! I feel happier, I’m regaining confidence, and my health is getting better every day. A must-read for anyone who wants to take control of their drinking but doesn’t want a lifetime of struggle.”

—Kay W., The Lake District, United Kingdom

“Annie’s book offers readers a unique and refreshing perspective on our relationship with alcohol and how that relationship can be changed. It exposes the false notion that alcohol is an essential feature of an interesting and happy life. The real gem in Annie’s book is the idea that changing your relationship with alcohol need not be a life of endless suffering and deprivation, that a decision to change can in fact be quite simple and liberating. This book forces us to confront society’s relationship with alcohol and will change lives.”

—Tony S., Sydney, Australia

“I never realized how powerless I was against alcohol until I got my power back. A moderate to heavy drinker in my twenties, I desired to drink less as I got older. To my surprise, the desire was not enough, and I struggled to stay in control of my cravings. After reading *This Naked Mind* I feel, for the first time in my life, an extraordinary sense of freedom and happiness about my relationship with alcohol. I am eternally grateful to Annie Grace for this amazing gift!”

—Mary P., Brooklyn, New York

“This is an honest book. It is genuine. It is told in a simple manner that is cogent and memorable. It helped me, and I will likely read it again sometime. Thank you, Annie Grace.”

—Steve G., Toronto, Ontario

“It was unfathomable to consider moderating my alcohol intake that has been a daily habit for the last twenty-eight years. Unfathomable, that is, until I read Annie’s book. In one week, I went from entrenched regular drinker to fully and happily alcohol-free—bypassing the moderation route entirely. I am so grateful to Annie Grace for her frank, compelling, and scientifically sound exposé on the insidious nature of alcohol. If you’re considering freeing the hold that alcohol has over you, this is an inspiring and groundbreaking must-read. I am forever inspired and changed.”

—Kate S., Los Angeles, California

“There is nothing but truth in your words. *This Naked Mind* is an awesome book that has filled my life with hope for the future.”

—Jacob K., Springvale, Minnesota

“Awesome book. I’ve come to terms and it’s time to end this destructive ride, but it came home this weekend . . . literally. While I digested your excellent book, my one and only child announced a weekend visit. This alcohol sickness slapped me senseless as I immediately felt panic at the idea of interrupting my drinking path. This book made me open my eyes, my heart and my soul to the grip this monster had on me when I was weighing my ability to drink vs. the few precious visits where I get to see my son who is my reason for living. Thank you, Annie. Simple words, but I am not able to express otherwise. Your words are a worthy sword, just the elixir I needed. Humbly yours.”

—Victor L., Austin, Texas

“Your voice in the book is clear as a bell and brings amazing clarity to the situation of drinking and drinkers and addiction, and the circularity of the substance itself causing the discomfort that we think the imbibing fixes. Skeptic that I am, your little book holds a big universe of hope.”

—Heidi M., Plymouth, Massachusetts

“*This Naked Mind* has allowed me to view my drinking habits from a new perspective. Now I know the science behind my addictive tendencies, sobriety has become less of a struggle and more of a celebration because I am finally free to live life on my own terms rather than under the control of alcohol. The message in *This Naked Mind* is truly liberating.

—Marcus J., London, United Kingdom

“As a wife, parent, and counselor, I was increasingly distressed by my pattern of daily drinking and increasing dependence on alcohol. However, *This Naked Mind* gave me the critical insights into my own mind that I needed in order to overcome my problems. Now I have my energy, vitality, and health back. I highly recommend *This Naked Mind* for anyone concerned about their drinking.”

—Rhiana N., Sydney, Australia

“I stumbled upon *This Naked Mind* after another heavy relapse into alcohol misery, four weeks of nonstop boozing leading me near suicide. I have been a heavy drinker since eighteen and a severe alcoholic for the past ten years. With the one shred of myself left within me, I risked delirium tremens and instead of going to another detox facility (which never worked for me) or submitting to another higher power A.A. meeting (which also led to nothing), I came across a new, groundbreaking approach called *This Naked Mind*. I was three days into my severe withdrawals when I placed those headphones on and began listening to the audio version of Annie’s book. I felt an instant connection with the words and experiences that Annie had gone through. Through the next three days and nights I furiously listened to the program, her words, backed by fact, and found myself coming to the realization that alcohol is poison, and all I needed was for this to be explained to me with facts and an understanding and compassionate heart. As of today, I still haven’t had a drink, and I can only highly recommend this program to anyone who has a serious problem with alcohol. It just works.”

—Wilder D., Melbourne, Australia

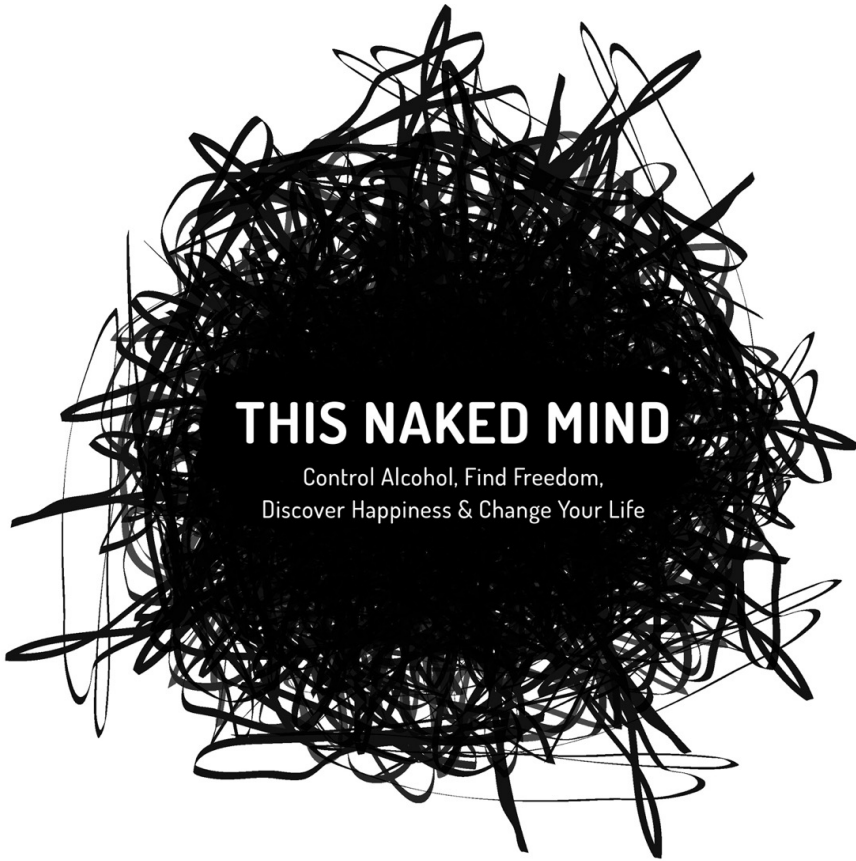
“Prior to reading *This Naked Mind*, I was a moderate drinker with what I considered a very healthy relationship with alcohol. I figured that this probably wasn’t targeted at me, but I decided to give it a try anyway. How wrong I was! By the time I was done reading the book, I had come to believe that there is no such thing as a healthy relationship with alcohol. The author’s examples, analogies, and personal stories are incredibly compelling. My perspective changed entirely. I questioned why I drank at all, realizing that I received little if any value

from drinking. Immediately upon reading this book, I lost the desire for my evening drinks, and I found the strength to have dinner with friends without drinking a couple of beers. Don't get me wrong—I haven't completely stopped drinking. I still have a drink or two occasionally. But it is far less frequent, and it is on my terms rather than out of habit or social pressure. If this book can have such a strong impact on somebody who didn't want to change, I can only imagine how powerful it can be for people who are truly looking for a change in their life."

*—John D., New Jersey*

"Drinking levels that we once considered alcoholism are now the norm. Gourmet wines and boutique beers are marketed to us as an almost essential daily luxury. If you, like me, have found that alcohol has become more of a burden than a pleasure, Annie Grace's book is the key to regaining control. It's an honest, eloquent look at the dangerous realities of our drinking culture, which gives you all of the tools you need to take back control of your life and unlock the door to a new, happier life."

*—Victory W., Perth, Australia*



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Annie Grace

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Some names have been changed.

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Version\_3

**To He Who Is:**

Because you loved me before I knew your name and taught me there  
is always room at the bottom.

**Husband:**

Thank you for your incredible strength and amazing grace.

**Be in touch:**

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*“Here’s to . . . The ones who see things differently. They’re not fond of rules. And they have no respect for the status quo. You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify or vilify them. About the only thing you can’t do is ignore them. Because they change things. They push the human race forward. And while some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius. Because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who do.”*

*—Apple Inc.*

Above all others, I take great pleasure in acknowledging Dr. John Sarno and Mr. Allen Carr (1934–2006). Dr. Sarno is the father of The Mindbody Syndrome (TMS). He opened my mind to the power of the unconscious, and this book is my adaptation of his methods to the brain disease of addiction. Without Dr. Sarno’s groundbreaking work this book would not have been possible.

Allen Carr is the author of *The Easy Way to Stop Smoking*, *Stop Drinking Now*, and many other Easyway™ books. Mr. Carr was an incredible source of inspiration and influence on the subject of drug addiction. I, and many other influential authors, learned from Allen’s revolutionary ideas, discoveries, and understanding of addiction.

Dr. Sarno and Mr. Carr will forever have my sincerest admiration and gratitude.

I would like to also thank these brilliant minds whose ideas contributed extensively to this work:

- Thad A. Polk, professor of psychology and EECS at the University of Michigan and creator of the program *The Addictive Brain*, for his neurological insight into the reward circuit and the cycle of addiction;
- Dave Gray, author of *Liminal Thinking*, for his unique and methodical approach in changing beliefs we hold that may be

based on flawed reality;

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- Malcolm Gladwell, bestselling author, speaker, and journalist, for encouraging us all to challenge known ways of thinking;
- Charles Duhigg, *New York Times* staff writer and author of *The Power of Habit*, for his groundbreaking work on habit and willpower;
- Johann Hari, bestselling author of *Chasing the Scream*, for his new look at addiction and deep passion for changing the way society views and treats addicts;
- Carl Jung, founder of analytical psychology, for his insight into "the shadow" and his contribution to Bill Wilson's journey to sobriety;
- Bill Wilson, founder of Alcoholics Anonymous, not a doctor or psychologist, but a man who saved himself from addiction through seemingly unconventional methods. He changed the lives of millions by looking at the same old things in a different way.

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## PREFACE

3:33 a.m. I wake up at the same time every night. I briefly wonder if that is supposed to mean something. Probably not, probably just a coincidence. I know what's coming, and I brace myself. The usual thoughts begin to surface. I try to piece the previous evening together, attempting to count my drinks. I count five glasses of wine, and then the memories grow fuzzy. I know I had a few more, but I've now lost count. I wonder how anyone can drink so much. I know I can't go on like this. I start to worry about my health, beginning the well-trodden road of fear and recrimination: What were you thinking? Don't you care about anything? Anyone? How will it feel if you end up with cancer? It will serve you right. What about the kids? Can't you stop for the kids? Or Brian? They love you. There's no good reason why, but they do. Why are you so weak? So stupid? If I can just make myself see the horror of how far I've fallen, maybe I can regain control. Next come the vows, my promises to myself to do things differently tomorrow. To fix this. Promises I never keep.

I'm awake for about an hour. Sometimes I cry. Other times I'm so disgusted that all I feel is anger. Lately I've been sneaking into the kitchen and drinking more. Just enough to shut down my brain, fall back asleep, and stop hurting.

These early mornings are the only time I'm honest with myself, admitting I drink too much and need to change. It's the worst part of my day, and it's always the same, night after night. The next day it's as if I have amnesia. I turn back into a generally happy person. I can't reconcile my misery, so I simply ignore it. If you ask me about drinking I'll tell you I love it; it relaxes me and makes life fun. In fact, I'll be shocked if you don't drink with me. I will wonder, "Why on earth not?" During the day I feel in control. I am successful and busy. The outward signs of how much I drink are practically nonexistent. I am so busy that I don't leave room for honesty, questioning, and

broken promises. The evening comes, the drinking starts, and the cycle continues. I am no longer in control, and the only time I am brave enough to admit it (even to myself) is alone, in the dark, at three in the morning.

The implications of what it could mean are terrifying. What if I have a problem? What if I am an alcoholic? What if I am not normal? Most terrifying, what if I have to give up drinking? I worry that my pride will kill me because I have no intention of labeling myself. I am afraid of the shame and stigma. If my choice is to live a life of misery in diseased abstinence or drink myself to an early grave, I choose the latter. Horrifying but true.

What I know about getting help, I know from my brother who spent time in prison. Prison in the U.S. often involves Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) meetings. He says you start every meeting admitting that you are an alcoholic, powerless against alcohol. He says they believe alcoholism is a fatal illness without a cure. And I personally know self-proclaimed alcoholics who, rather than finding peace, fight a daily battle for sobriety. It seems miserable in our culture to be sober. To live a life avoiding temptation. Recovering appears synonymous with accepting life as just OK and adjusting to a new reality of missing out.

The idea of recovering seems to give alcohol more power even, and, maybe especially, when I am abstaining from it. I want freedom. It's now clear that alcohol is taking more from me than it's giving. I want to make it small and irrelevant in my life rather than allowing it more power over me. I want change. I have to find another way. And I have.

I now have freedom. I am back in control and have regained my self-respect. I am not locked in a battle for sobriety. I drink as much as I want, whenever I want. The truth is I no longer want to drink. I see now that alcohol is addictive, and I had become addicted. Obvious, right? Not exactly. In fact, in today's drinking society, it's not obvious at all. Admitting that alcohol is a dangerous and addictive drug like nicotine, cocaine, or heroin has serious implications. So we confuse ourselves with all sorts of convoluted theories.

I've never been happier. I am having more fun than ever. It's as if I have woken up from the *Matrix* and realized that alcohol was only dulling my senses and keeping me trapped rather than adding to my

life. I know you may find this hard, if not impossible, to believe. That's OK. But I can give you the same freedom, the same joy, and the same control over alcohol in your life. I can take you on the same journey—a journey of facts, neuroscience, and logic. A journey that empowers you rather than rendering you powerless. A journey that does not involve the pain of deprivation.

I can put you back in control by removing your desire to drink, but be forewarned, getting rid of your desire for alcohol is the easy part. The hard part is going against groupthink, the herd mentality of our alcohol-saturated culture. After all, alcohol is the only drug on earth you have to justify *not* taking.

Experts imply that it takes months, even years, of hardship to stop drinking. A tough riddle can make you crazy, taking forever to solve. But if someone gives you the answer, solving the riddle becomes effortless. I hope this book will be the answer you are looking for.

I offer a perspective of education and enlightenment based on common sense and the most recent insights across psychology and neuroscience. A perspective that will empower and delight you, allowing you to forever change your relationship with alcohol. And remember, sometimes what you are searching for is in the journey rather than the destination.

All my best,  
Annie Grace

## INTRODUCTION

*“We can’t be afraid of change. You may feel very secure in the pond that you are in, but if you never venture out of it, you will never know that there is such a thing as an ocean, a sea.”*

*—C. JoyBell C.*

What if, by reversing years of unconscious conditioning, you could return to the perspective of a non-drinker? Not a recovering (sober) alcoholic but a person with the same desire, need, and craving for alcohol as someone who has never picked up a bottle—a true non-drinker. Well, you can. By the end of this book, you will be free to weigh the pros and cons of drinking and determine alcohol’s role in your life without emotional or illogical cravings. You can remain happy about your choice because it will be yours alone, decided from a place of freedom rather than out of obligation or coercion. Your desire to drink will be gone, so no matter what you choose you won’t feel like you are missing out. You won’t be pining for a drink or avoiding social situations because of temptation. Without desire there exists no temptation. Importantly, you won’t have to label yourself as diseased or powerless.

This book will change your perception by showing you why you drink, both psychologically and neurologically. You may believe you already understand why you drink—to relieve stress, engage socially, or liven up a party. These are your rationalizations for drinking, but you actually drink for subtler and less conscious reasons. Understanding these reasons will put you back in control. It will end your confusion and eliminate your misery. But first, we must undo years—decades—of unconscious conditioning about alcohol.

And don’t beat yourself up for anything you have struggled with in the past (including unsuccessful attempts to quit). It’s counterproductive. There is a powerful misconception that people



who can't control their drinking are weak-willed. In my experience it's often the strongest, smartest, and most successful people who drink more than they should. Drinking, or wanting to drink, does not make you weak. You may find it hard to believe, but an inability to control how much you drink is not a sign of weakness. So let's stop any self-loathing right now.

You may find it impossible to believe drinking less won't involve deprivation. The idea of drinking less fills you, as it did me, with dread. You worry that parties and social occasions will become tedious and difficult to attend. If you drink to relieve stress, the thought of losing the added support you believe alcohol provides can be terrifying. But it's true. With this approach you can effortlessly drink less and feel happy about it. What a euphoric, life-changing experience! You'll be excited to go out with friends, even to bars, knowing that not a drop of alcohol will cross your lips.

Does drinking less mean drinking nothing? Do you need to quit forever? That will be up to you. You will make your own decision based on information that empowers you, giving you back control rather than imposing rules on you. We will explore all aspects of the drinking cycle. Don't worry about making a decision about how much or how often you will drink now. What is important in this moment is that you have hope. You need to know this approach can and will work—that you will be released from the clutches of alcohol.

Maybe you think I don't grasp your situation, how dependent you've become on booze. Perhaps you've been drinking heavily for many years, and these claims seem absurd. That's OK. Skepticism won't impact the result.

No matter why you picked up this book, you'll find nothing but great news here. If you read, critically consider, and absorb the information in these pages, you will be inspired to sever or cut back on your relationship with alcohol without feeling deprived. In fact, you'll be happy, possibly euphoric, about your decision. You will feel in control and empowered to make conscious, logical, fact-based choices about the role alcohol will play in your life. I encourage you to read between one and two chapters a day, progressing with momentum, yet allowing sufficient time to absorb the content.

Don't change your day-to-day routine, even if it includes drinking. You heard correctly—feel free to continue to drink while reading the book. This may seem counterintuitive, but you will see that it is

important to the process. Of course, if you have already stopped drinking there is no reason to start, and I am absolutely not encouraging you to do so. What's important is that you continue your regular routines so you don't create stress and foster a sense of deprivation while trying to absorb this information. You will need to focus and critically consider what *This Naked Mind* presents to you. However, it is important, if possible, to read sober in order to fully grasp the material. And don't skip ahead. The concepts build on themselves. This book will challenge you, so please be willing to open your mind and question long-held beliefs.

Finally, be hopeful. You are about to accomplish something incredible—regaining control. I know it hasn't happened yet, but you can be excited about it now. So, throughout the book, do your best to maintain a positive state of mind. Change often occurs when the pain of the current situation becomes so great you become willing to change without fully understanding what the future holds. You probably imagine a life without alcohol as painful, even scary. This perception encourages you to put off change as long as possible. I will show you how altering your drinking habits will not cause pain, but instead allow you to enjoy your life more than you ever thought possible. With this approach, you are not clutching to the proverbial burning platform. You do not have to choose between the lesser of two evils (continuing to drink or living a life of deprivation). Rather, you will make the simple choice between your current state and a bright and exciting future. It's OK, even encouraged, to allow yourself to feel hopeful. This book contains a revolutionary approach. It will change your life for the better.

# 1.

## THIS NAKED MIND: HOW AND WHY IT WORKS

**unconscious:** un·con·scious | /ən'känSHəs/ *noun*.

*The part of the mind that a person is not aware of but that is a powerful force in controlling behavior.*

**conscious:** con·scious | /'känSHəs/ *adjective*.

*Aware of something (such as a fact or feeling), knowing that something exists or is happening.*

**consciousness:** con·scious·ness | /'känSHəs-nəss/ *noun*.

*The condition of being conscious*

*: the quality or state of being aware especially of something within oneself*

*: the upper level of mental life which the person is aware of as contrasted with unconscious processes.*

*Definitions sourced from Merriam-Webster's.*

### Conscious or Unconscious Thought?

Did you know your unconscious mind is responsible for your desires? Most of us don't think about the distinction between our conscious and unconscious thoughts, but that distinction forms a vital piece of the alcohol puzzle. Studies confirm we have two separate cognitive (thinking) systems—the conscious and the unconscious.<sup>1</sup> The give-and-take between unconscious choices and our rational, conscious goals can help explain the mystifying realities of alcohol.<sup>2</sup>

We are all fairly familiar with the conscious (or explicit) mind. Conscious learning requires the aware, intellectual grasp of specific knowledge or procedures, which you can memorize and articulate.<sup>3</sup> When we want to change something in our lives, we usually start with a conscious decision. However, drinking is no longer a fully conscious choice in your life. Therefore, when you make a conscious decision to drink less, it's almost impossible to adhere to that decision because your larger, more powerful unconscious mind missed the memo.

Unconscious learning happens automatically and unintentionally through experiences, observations, conditioning, and practice.<sup>4</sup> We've been conditioned to believe we enjoy drinking. We think it enhances our social life and relieves boredom and stress. We believe these things below our conscious awareness. This is why, even after we consciously acknowledge that alcohol takes more than it gives, we retain the desire to drink.

The neurological changes that occur in your brain as a result of alcohol compound this unconscious desire. Thad A. Polk, neuroscientist, professor, and author of *The Addictive Brain* (a 2015 course on the newest science of addiction), says viewing addiction through the eyes of neuroscience allows us to “look beyond the seemingly bizarre behavior of addicts and see what is going on inside their brain.”<sup>5</sup> In my early days on this journey, the undermining of my desire to drink less by a strange desire to drink more seemed nothing if not bizarre.

The mind, specifically the unconscious mind, is a powerful force in controlling our behavior. Information suggesting the benefits of alcohol surrounds us, yet we rarely become conscious of it. According to the Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) communication model, we are assaulted with over two million bits of data every second, but we are only consciously aware of seven bits of that information.<sup>6</sup> Television, movies, advertising, and social gatherings all influence our beliefs. From childhood we've observed, with few exceptions, our parents, friends, and acquaintances appearing to enjoy moderate, “responsible” drinking. These images teach our unconscious minds that alcohol is pleasurable, relaxing, and sophisticated.

Your opinions about alcohol and your desire to drink spring from the lifelong mental conditioning of your unconscious mind. This

desire has likely been compounded by specific neurological changes in the brain. The goal of *This Naked Mind* is to reverse the conditioning in your unconscious mind by educating your conscious mind. By changing your unconscious mind, we eliminate your desire to drink. Without desire, there is no temptation. Without temptation, there is no addiction.

Like most things that have been ingrained in us since childhood, we believe in alcohol without question, like we believe the sky is blue. Through this book, you will think critically about your deeply-held beliefs about alcohol and strip away those that are false. This will convince the all-powerful unconscious mind and allow harmony and agreement between your conscious and unconscious minds.

### When the Brain Causes Pain

I cannot overstate the importance of your unconscious mind. I learned this lesson from Dr. John Sarno, a renowned physician who investigates the connection between physical pain and emotions. A *Forbes* article calls Dr. Sarno “America’s Best Doctor,”<sup>7</sup> and his methodology has successfully healed all sorts of people, including controversial radio personality Howard Stern. Sarno coined the term The Mindbody Syndrome, the theory that your mind, below your conscious awareness, rather than any physical injury or ailment, may be responsible for your pain. After the birth of my second son, I experienced crippling back pain. Incapacitated for weeks at a time, I spent thousands of dollars on treatment. I tried chiropractic care, acupuncture, traditional doctors, muscle relaxants, and painkillers. I attended weekly physical therapy, including traction and massage. For three years I was unable to pick up my kids, and no type of treatment helped.

Through Sarno’s work I learned the true source of my affliction, and through reading his book I was cured. I know this is hard to believe. Yet here I sit—I’ve remained pain-free for years. Many thousands of people have been forever cured of chronic pain through Dr. Sarno’s work. There is even a website set up by individuals Dr. Sarno has cured. The purpose? To provide a place for people to write thank-you letters to Dr. Sarno to express their gratitude for giving them their lives back. It’s truly amazing and can be found at [thankyoudrsarno.org](http://thankyoudrsarno.org). Dr. Sarno’s approach of targeting and

speaking to your unconscious mind is the same approach I employ for regaining control over alcohol.

Dr. Sarno methodically proved to me that the back pain I felt—pain that no medical professional could diagnose—was related to suppressed stress and anger.<sup>8</sup> How do we accumulate all this suppressed stress and anger? Imagine a young father. His wife (who no longer has time for him) hands him their screaming baby. She is exhausted and needs a break. He takes the child and tries everything to comfort him. Forty minutes later the baby is still screaming. The father is frustrated and angry. How can he not be? His needs are not being met, the baby's actions are illogical, and he feels useless. In his mind, it is unacceptable to feel angry at a helpless baby, so these emotions remain buried in his subconscious, or as psychiatrist Carl Jung calls it, “the shadow.”<sup>9</sup>

We hide emotions that we feel to be abhorrent in “the shadow.” We are unwilling to accept this part of us. So, we assert, “I am a good person; there is no way I want to harm this helpless baby,” and we unconsciously repress our negative emotions. In order to deeply bury reprehensible emotions, your brain can cause physical pain to distract you. The pain is real. Laboratory tests demonstrate that the pain is caused when your brain cuts off oxygen to the afflicted area. Epidemiologists call this transfer of symptoms *amplification*.<sup>10</sup> Amplification prevents unacceptable ideas from surfacing.

### Your Unconscious Mind at Work

*“Anything unconscious dissolves when you shine the light of consciousness on it.”*

*—Eckhart Tolle*

Why am I telling you all this? Drinking and back pain seem like two very different problems. So what do “the shadow” and amplification have to do with drinking? It's hard to believe that reading a book cured my back pain, but perhaps you can see how physical pain could originate in your emotions. Your conscious mind may now be willing to entertain this theory. But if I only needed to consciously accept the fact that the pain stemmed from my emotions rather than a physical injury, the cure would have been instant. Simply hearing the theory

and accepting it consciously would have been enough to heal my back. But while my consciousness could grasp the concepts relatively easily, the pain remained. This is because it was my unconscious, rather than conscious, mind that needed to understand, to grasp the reality of the situation. And that process, the process of Dr. Sarno speaking to my unconscious mind, took me reading a 300-page book.

The unconscious mind is not logical; it's all about feelings. It is the source of love, desire, fear, jealousy, sadness, joy, anger, and more. The unconscious mind drives your emotions and desires. When you make a conscious decision to quit or cut back on alcohol, your unconscious desires remain unchanged. You have unknowingly created an internal conflict. You want to cut back or quit, but you still desire a drink and feel deprived when you do not allow yourself one.

Also, the unconscious mind often works without the knowledge or control of the conscious mind.<sup>11</sup> Studies from as far back as 1970 prove our brains actually prepare for action 1/3 of a second before we consciously decide to act. This means that even when we think we are making conscious decisions, our unconscious mind actually makes the decision for us.<sup>12</sup>

You can easily test this and reveal the extent to which your unconscious mind controls your conscious decisions. Remember a day when you were in a bad mood for no reason. You couldn't pinpoint what was wrong; you just felt grumpy. If your conscious mind controlled your emotions, you could simply think, "I am going to be happy," and your mood would change from grumpy to sunny. Have you tried that? Did it work?

When I am in a bad mood, a conscious thought to try to be happier—or, worse, someone telling me to just be happy—does nothing to improve my mood. It does the opposite. Why? Because your conscious mind doesn't control your emotions. Granted, you can train your conscious mind in more positive or negative thought patterns, which ultimately alters how you feel. These repeated conscious thoughts eventually influence your unconscious and therefore your feelings.

So how does your unconscious mind feel about alcohol? Today's society has conditioned your unconscious mind to believe alcohol provides pleasure, enjoyment, and support—that it is vital to social situations and stressful situations alike. This book reverses that conditioning by stripping away your false beliefs about alcohol. We

will do this with the help of Liminal Thinking, a method developed by author Dave Gray. Liminal Thinking defines how, through the conscious exploration and acceptance of new ideas and truths, you can influence your unconscious mind. This gives you back your ability to make rational and logical decisions about alcohol, no longer influenced by illogical, emotional, or irrational desires. It will give you control and freedom by changing your understanding of and therefore your relationship with alcohol. While tradition, advertising, and societal norms condition our unconscious to believe that alcohol is beneficial, Liminal Thinking and the material in this book will expose that unconscious conditioning and recondition your unconscious, exposing alcohol and giving you freedom.

### Experience and the Unconscious Mind<sup>13</sup>

In order to influence the unconscious mind, we need to first talk about the way in which personal experience ties to the unconscious. Perhaps you've heard the ancient story about the blind men and the elephant. Three blind men are brought into a room with an elephant, and each man touches a different part. One touches the tail, one the trunk, and one the side. When asked what they are touching they begin to argue. The one touching the trunk believes he is touching a snake; the one touching the body, a wall; and the one touching the tail, a rope.

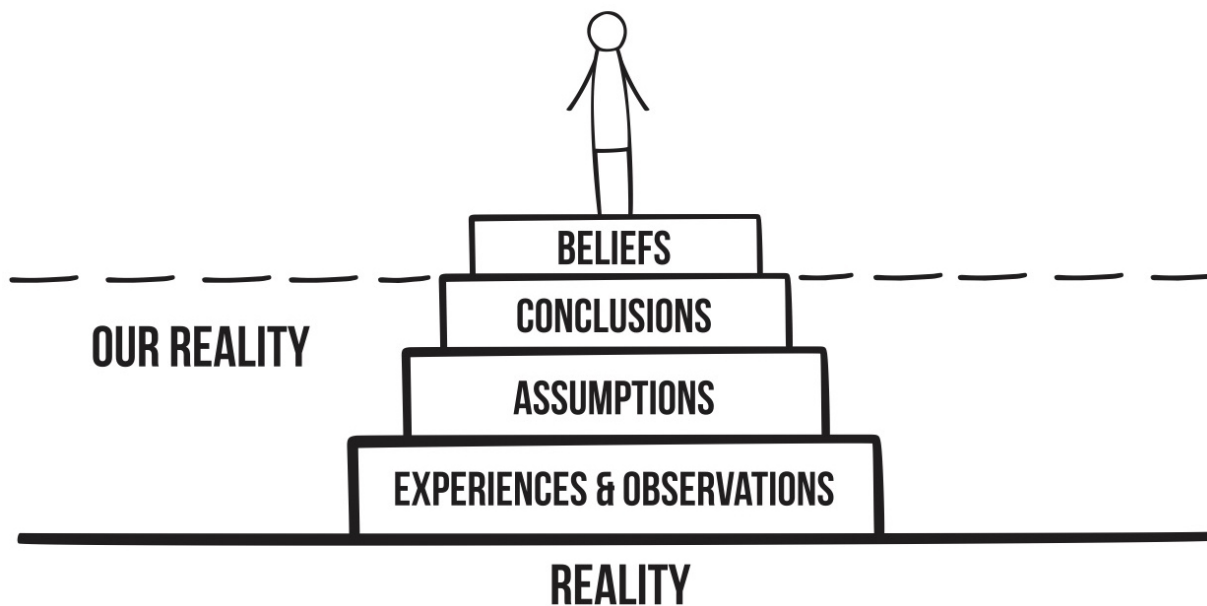
Each blind man is saying what he believes to be true. And their experience proves it. Since we tend to trust our experiences implicitly, we understand how the argument started. Of course, the truth is that none of them are correct. They are all experiencing a piece of reality and forming their own, very different, opinions.





Gray explains that we only see and experience part of reality, and no matter how many experiences we have had, our brains are not powerful enough to experience and observe everything. Gray makes the point that we are limited by what we pay attention to: “In any given moment, the more you focus on one aspect of your experience, the less you notice everything else.”<sup>14</sup> We usually notice only the things specific to our immediate reality: the society we grew up in, the media, the influencers in our lives, and our actual life experiences.

Gray states that upon those relevant experiences and observations we make assumptions, from those assumptions we draw conclusions, and from those conclusions we form beliefs.<sup>15</sup> Gray defines belief as everything we “know” to be true.<sup>16</sup>



This illustration demonstrates that the things we “know” to be true are not actually formed by reality, but by reality as we have interpreted it from our experiences, observations, assumptions, and conclusions. Consider how this applies to alcohol. Collectively held beliefs are not built directly on the foundation of reality.

These beliefs can include statements like:

- Alcohol provides enjoyment.
- Alcohol provides relief.
- Alcohol is the key to social situations.
- A party can’t really be a party without booze.
- Alcohol makes us funnier or more creative.
- Alcohol can relieve our stress or boredom.
- For some it can be hard, if not impossible, to stop drinking.
- The very definition of alcoholic and alcoholism.

These beliefs can be particularly difficult to change for several reasons. One reason is that we unconsciously self-seal them by seeking out things that are congruent with them. This is called