



DISTILLNESS

WISDOM THROUGH EXPERIENCE

DIANA SLACK

DISTILLNESS.COM

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LIVING ON AUTOPILOT SUCKS

How Stress and Adrenaline Kept Me in Survival Mode — and How Alcohol Kept Me from Seeing It.

Waking up with stress waves shooting up and down my body at 3am was my norm. That was my cue to start rehearsing my day in my head - practicing presentations, predicting responses, scripting my performance in advance.

I was exhausted before I even stepped out of bed.

OPENING REFLECTION



*By Diana Slack,
5 Minute Read*

I was anxious, shaky and on fire from the inside out - the lingering effect of the night before. Heavy drinking had become my reward and my relief, another routine I mistook for normal. The wine & spirits industry I worked in only reinforced it - *work hard, play hard right?* Stress and alcohol were currency. We called it “FAMILY” but really, it was survival dressed up as belonging.



THE STORY

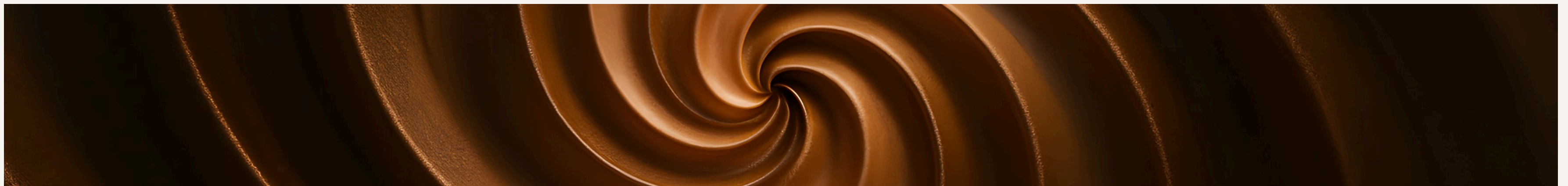
Each day would repeat the same.

Wake up, consume copious amounts of coffee, power through work and meetings until brunch time when it was “appropriate” to drink. By afternoon, I’d keep the momentum going with a few more. By dinner, I could appear “normal” again, just long enough to do it all over that night.

It was a cycle that kept gaining speed and draining my energy, even as I tried to convince myself I was fine.

I used to joke that I was saving my calories for champagne. Most of my diet came in liquid form. I knew it wasn’t sustainable, but I believed I could manage it. I thought my intelligence and performance were enough to mask the truth. I knew I had a problem, but I thought I could find a way to manage it.

At work, being the “good girl” and high achiever was my armor. Drinking became my rebellion and my release. It felt like freedom, but it was really a cage disguised as confidence.



THE STORY

CONTINUED

At the same time my addiction was spiraling, my career was taking off.

I entered the alcohol industry in 2013 — a novice in wine and spirits but already a bottle-a-night drinker. The irony wasn't lost on me. Still, I told myself it was fine . After all, drinking was part of the job.

When I tried selling to some of Seattle's best restaurants, I felt out of my depth. I hated feeling incompetent, so I numbed it. My role in on-premise sales made it easy to justify — the more I drank, the more I “fit in.”

Having a drink or two at lunch wasn't unusual. Meeting up with the team for happy hour that lasted until bar close was a regular occurrence. We called it “supporting our accounts” and “working on depletions.”

Honestly these were some of the most fun times I've had in my career. I spent the next several years exceeding expectations at work until I found myself in a corporate talent development role. My dream job.

It should have all felt different. Instead it felt hollow and empty.



THE SHIFT

When she asked if we were going to the gas station for beer I knew I had to stop. Picking up a 12-pack on the way home had become part of our daily routine, an activity my 3-year-old had already memorized.

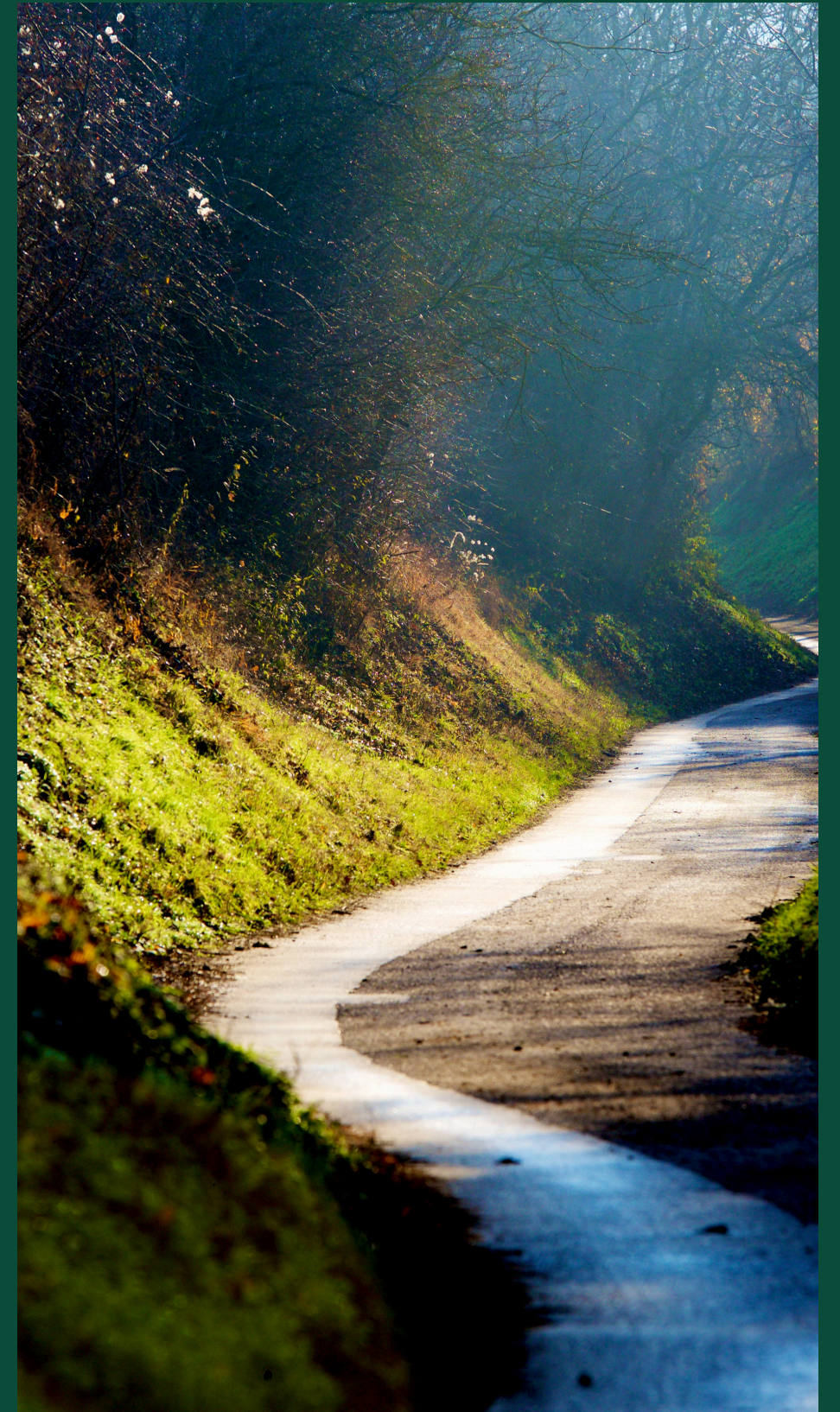
I didn't want her to grow up seeing her mom passed out on the couch. I couldn't hide who I was from her, and I wanted something different. I wanted to be present for her life. So I made the decision to quit and did just that on September 1, 2021.

“Everyone has two lives, and the second begins when you realize you only have one.”

– Confucius

I had no idea quitting alcohol would reveal so much more. It felt like going through the 7 stages of grief. I was grieving the loss of what I had used for so long to cope, have fun and unwind my overstimulated mind from the stressful day. I wasn't just losing a habit. I was losing my identity.

I started researching alcohol. I wanted to learn more about why I had gotten addicted to the stuff.



THE SHIFT

The deeper I looked, the angrier I became – at the industry for profiting off sickness, at the culture for normalizing it, but mostly at myself for falling for it and losing myself to addiction.

How could I let this happen to me?

What was wrong with me?

These questions were just the beginning of my discovery of self.

Years of unconscious living had left me feeling powerless and ashamed. When i finally took responsibility for my choices I took my power back.

My whole personality at work changed.

I started slowly telling people I quit drinking. They could already tell something had changed physically since I lost a ton of weight almost immediately.

I knew I didn't have long in an industry I was quickly growing out of, and yet it was hard to leave the dream job and reputation as a "rock star." I wanted to make it work.

I may have quit drinking, but I was still addicted to the image I had created. I had to keep performing, but without the alcohol to fuel me and help me unwind, the stress skyrocketed. That was my real addiction - I had to keep performing perfection to feel valued. I still felt trapped.





THE REVELATION

I took me about a year to realize alcohol was not my problem.

It was the solution to the problem of being myself. It was my shield, my disguise for being different. It was my normalizer and means of connection to other people. Losing it felt like surrendering to my defectiveness - giving in to my alien nature.

I finally let go and accepted that I would always be different. I learned that there was nothing wrong with me. I had to learn to love all the parts of me so that I could begin healing the wounds that led me to drink in the first place.

This is an ongoing journey and one that I focus on each day.



EMBODIMENT

Applying Life's Lessons Day to Day

BODY

I learned to listen to the messages my body sends throughout the day instead of suppressing or ignoring them. I eat when I'm hungry, rest when I'm tired, and step away when I need space — even in the middle of a meeting. I no longer wait for permission to care for myself.

MIND

After I stopped drinking, my tolerance for toxic BS evaporated. I could no longer ignore the absurdity of corporate life; the arbitrary deadlines, the false emergencies, and the insecure ego-driven behavior. I began slowing down, noticing when my thoughts spiraled, and bringing my focus back to the present moment.

SOUL

Without alcohol, I had to face the parts of myself I used to numb. Over time, I began pulling my energy back, forgiving myself, and moving with compassion toward myself and others. Learning to love myself changed everything; it opened the doorway to spiritual connection.





REFLECTION

NOW IT’S YOUR TURN. TAKE A MOMENT TO PAUSE AND REFLECT ON THE WAYS YOU MIGHT STILL BE RUNNING ON AUTOPILOT OR REACHING FOR DISTRACTION INSTEAD OF PRESENCE.

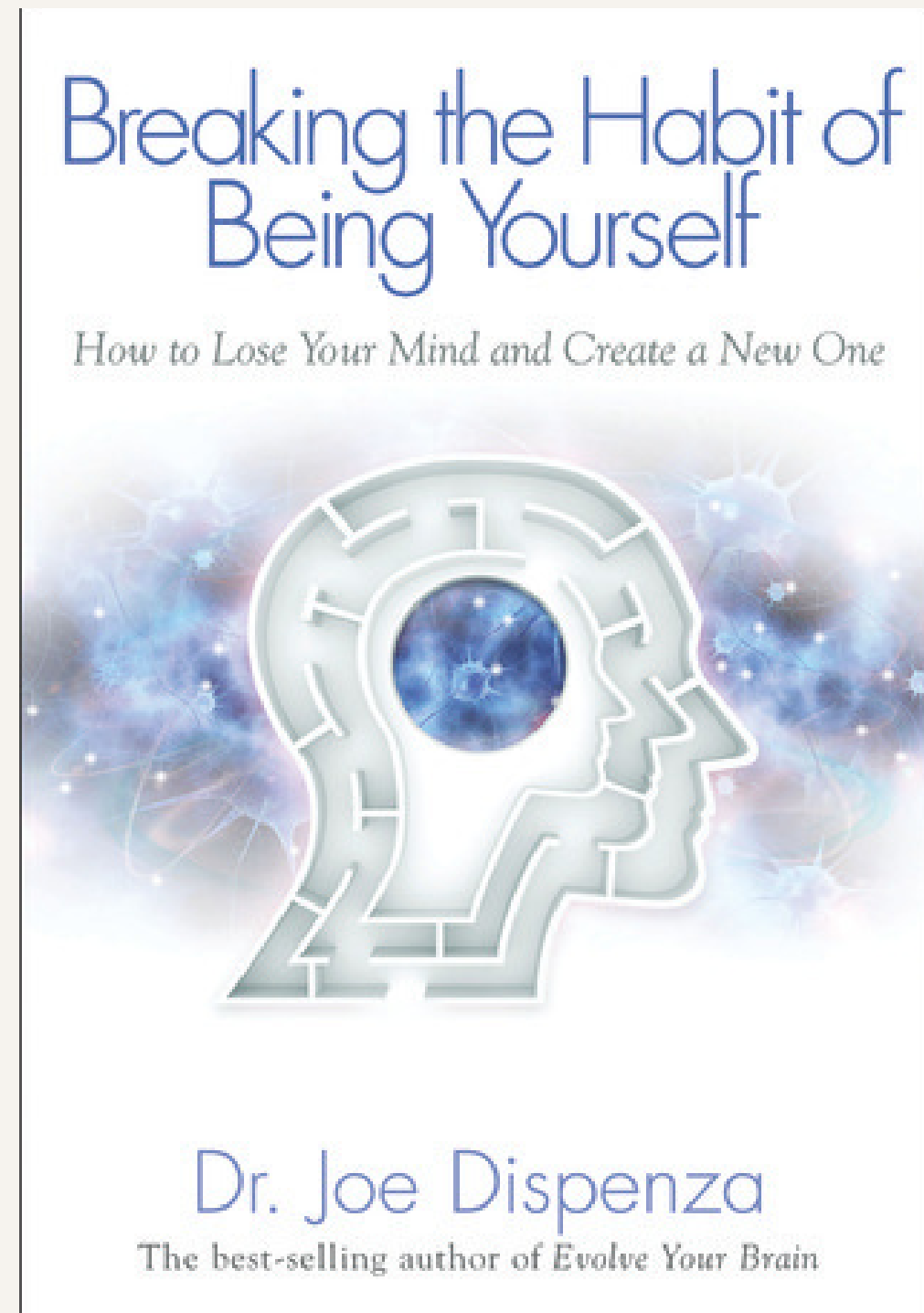
Question 1

When was the last time you noticed yourself “checking out” instead of showing up?



Question 2

What emotions or situations most often push you toward numbing instead of feeling?



*“To change is to think greater than how you feel.”
– Dr. Joe Dispenza*

FOR DEEPER *Exploration*

Breaking The Habit of Being Yourself: How to Lose Your Mind and Create a New One

by Dr. Joe Dispenza (Author)

What if your life could change simply by changing your mind?

This book bridges science and spirituality to show how our thoughts and emotions shape our reality. Dr. Joe Dispenza reveals how we can reprogram old patterns and consciously create a new version of ourselves through awareness and intention.

For anyone ready to break free from old identities and beliefs, this book offers a roadmap to consciously create a new one.



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*WRITER • CREATOR • FOUNDER OF **DISTILLNESS***

EXPLORING THE ART OF UNLEARNING AND REALIGNMENT.