

Annie Grace: This is Annie Grace, and you're listening to This Naked Mind Podcast, where without judgment, pain or rules, we explore the role of alcohol in our lives and culture.

Hi, this is Annie Grace and I am answering reader's questions. I have a question today from a reader, and the question is, "Does alcohol really make you more creative?" The question is from, A, we'll call her, to keep privacy. My question is this, "Does alcohol really make you more creative? I am now 80 days into alcohol free, thanks to you and your 30 day alcohol experiment. I love it. The lies I believed about alcohol turned out to be just that, lies. Alcohol didn't make me more relaxed, calmer, sleep better, or anything else I believed, instead it was the opposite. I'm loving my alcohol free life and I'm so happy to no longer feel trapped as a drinker.

The one struggle I still have is creativity. I'm a published writer/novelist, and I got into drinking because it felt like one or two glasses of wine helped me open up and be more creative. However, as we all know, that one or two ended up being three and more as my tolerance grew and it stopped being as effective. The negative impact of drinking piled up. However, part of me still believes that alcohol will help me write better. I'm not sure if that's true or that's the wine witch lying to me again. There's a long history of romanticizing drinking among writers to the point where a lot of people believe artists are more creative if they drink. I'd like to know the facts, is it true that alcohol makes us more creative, and how can I get back into writing without drinking? Many thanks."

Hi, Amy. So, this question is such a good question. First of all, let's look at it from the perspective of, I always wanted to be a writer. The irony that I had this vision of myself in some cabin, somewhere with my laptop and my glass of wine, and I was going to write novels, and it was going to be beautiful and glorious and all sorts of stuff. And so, the irony of the fact that I am now a published author of almost two books, one and the second one coming, and they are about giving up alcohol is very, very funny. But the truth is that, what happens inside the brain is certainly not that alcohol makes you more creative, there's absolutely no scientific basis for that. What alcohol does neurologically, is it slows down your ability for your brain cells to talk to each other.

So, it slows down your ability to receive information from your senses, and it slows down your ability to receive information from neurons inside your brain. So, it slows down your thinking ability, both internally inside your brain, and anything that your senses are receiving externally to get inside your brain. Those things slow down as you drink. But what also happens, is your prefrontal cortex, which is the judgment part of your brain, the part of your brain that's saying, do this, do that, this is a good idea, this is a bad idea, is impaired. Okay? Now, the judgment part of your brain, a lot of the judgment is good, it's keeping you making good decisions, but a lot of the judgment can also be based on fear. And one of the things we have as writers is fear. And fear can disguise itself as

writer's block, we sit down and we feel like, "Ugh, these ideas aren't good enough."

And this judgment, this fear, that this isn't going to be good enough, if that is impaired a little bit or turned off, all of a sudden the words start flowing because we feel more empowered and less inhibited around our writing. Our writing isn't better, but we write more because that judgment is turned off. And so, that's where that whole link and correlation, and yes, the massively long history of being romanticized comes from. Here's the thing, you can absolutely turn off that judgmental voice, the voice that's telling you, it's not good enough, or maybe you shouldn't, or maybe you need alcohol to write, you can turn that off in other ways. And by changing your mindset, and changing your thinking, and looking at that judgmental voice and saying, "Okay, thank you very much, but I'm going to write this."

One of my favorite ways to do it, from a writing perspective, is to write for nobody but me. Promise myself that nobody's ever going to read what I write, I'm just going to get it out on paper. And then, I go back and I read it, I'm like, "You know what? I think I'm going to share that with somebody." And it's always the case. But when I go into it, if I ever, ever think, when I'm writing that I'm trying to write for someone else, boom, writer's block. But if I think, you know what? I'm not going to care at all. So, I just very actively, very consciously turn off that judgment. And sometimes I would do it like, I'm going to write this down, and then I'm going to tear it up and then throw it in the fire. And that's going to be okay with me. And I wouldn't end up tearing it up and throwing it in the fire. But if you are thinking that you're writing for an outcome or for someone else, it will really, really, really get difficult to write.

And the thing is that, all of that creativity is actually within you. There was a study done, and it's not specifically about writing, but I think it's really relevant, but it was about humor. And so, it took people's reactions to jokes and the jokes that they were creating themselves, and it was done on comedians, and it went through and said, okay, are comedians funnier, and do they write better jokes? So, it is actually about writing. Do they write better jokes after they have been drinking? And across the board, the drinks that the comedians wrote when they were sober were funnier than the drinks that the comedians wrote after they'd been drinking. And the delivery of them without drinking was funnier than the delivery of them after alcohol. And the audience found them funnier, the sober audience than the non sober audience, because again, we can get ruckus and we can get in the moment, but really truly funny stuff is really, truly funny, sober.

And sometimes it's fun enough that you actually have to have all your wits about it to get it, because smart humor is really funny. And so, this is really interesting and just goes to show that actually it's not that alcohol has anything, any ability to make you more creative. There's certain plants or whatever that actually increase neurons and brain cells and activity in the brain and stuff like

that. And so, you could maybe make an argument for something like, I believe, psychedelic mushrooms. And I've seen a study that says that they actually increased, and I would not go writing on psychedelic mushrooms. You're not actually physically probably going to be able to write if you're just totally tripping and high, but there is some scientific evidence that they increase neural activity. Alcohol decreases neural activity. In fact, drinking of alcohol literally kills brain cells and shrinks brain cells.

So, there's nothing in alcohol that makes you more creative. Again, it's just the fact that what alcohol does, is it turns off the judgmental fearful voice in your head that allows you to start writing. And so, all you need to do is just get over that, and you can do that by just promising that you're never going to read it to anybody else but yourself. And so, I think it's just such a good question. Another thing about writing just that I feel really pretty strongly about, is the dedication to write as frequently and as often as possible even when you have nothing to say. I was told when I was in high school, and I really wanted to be a writer even at that time, get a journal and write in it every day. And just write.

And if you started out your writing like, I have nothing to say today. This is really boring. But I'm writing for the sake of it because I have to be writing every day. Yes. Some of my journal entries said that. But sometimes when you just make the time to write in just 10 minutes a day, 20 minutes a day, you get ideas and they start going somewhere. So, half of writer's block is actually just discipline. And I think it is hard to let go of some of these romantic ideas that we've had around alcohol. The Hemingway, the boozy writing writers for umpteenth number of years. But the truth is that that is absolutely a myth, and alcohol is not going to inherently make your writing better or make you more creative. So, it is such a good question. A, thank you so much for asking it, and absolutely thank you very, very much for being here. And it's a really good question. I hope you found that helpful.

I'm so excited you guys, because we are just about to start another live alcohol experiment. If you do not know about the alcohol experiment, you need to literally drop everything right now and go to [thisnakedmind.com/lae](http://thisnakedmind.com/lae). That's L-A-E for Live Alcohol Experiment. And here's the thing, this 30 day challenge is designed to interrupt your patterns and put you back in touch with the best version of you. You'll know it's that version that's living the most joyful life. That version that doesn't need alcohol to relax or have a good time. And that version that's having more fun and is more peaceful than ever. Again, it's a 30 day challenge. It's live. It's starting on the 1st so hurry up, go to [thisnakedmind.com/lae](http://thisnakedmind.com/lae).

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