

# Episode 24:

## Sobriety vs. Recovery

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Some of the concepts covered inside of the classroom include: what validation and vulnerability are and how to animate those principles your life; how to live in Truth rather than distortion; how to recognize your distraction and your controlling behavior in your relationships; and how to live a life of peace rather than pain. Powerful concepts that change lives, beginning with yours.

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## [00:02:47] Sobriety versus Recovery

Good morning, and welcome to ConneXions Classroom Podcast. It is Saturday morning on September 13<sup>th</sup> 2014. This morning, we're going to be talking about the different between living a life in sobriety versus living a lifestyle of recovery.

This could be about anything. Anything that you would like to change, or alter, or become more conscious of. Living a life of sobriety would suggest that you're making conscious choices and you're choosing to not engage in particular behaviors or introducing particular substances into your body.

However, there's not a focus on the center view—the issues that are actually causing you to move towards that substance, or experience, or attitude that you have used in a way to “manage”—or really it's been unmanageable—you've used this to eclipse your emotional state, or to cover up your emotions, or alter the way that you're feeling or the things that you're experiencing.

And so, you've brought this “thing” into your life, and again “thing” can be millions of different things. It can be things that you actually put into your body such as a drink, or a food, or any kind of ingestible item, to things that you actually secrete, so your body starts creating its own chemicals as a result of activities that you engage in or emotional states that you go into, such as becoming addicted to anger, or addicted to anxiety, or addicted to sadness, addicted to this position of victim – that's a popular one for people.

These positions that we pick up, as I'll call them, allow the body to respond neurochemically in such a way that it alters the way that I'm feeling or my experiences, so that I don't have to feel anything that I don't choose. And so, let's say that I'm in a situation that I don't like, and so if I go into victim, then instead of experiencing the situation that is uncomfortable, I now am eliciting sympathy or sorrow from other people, and they are placating me, they are stroking me, they feel badly for me, and I really play this position. And sometimes, I play it in a way that's very, very unconscious, all the way up to very deliberate acts of being in a victim position.

So, living a lifestyle of recovery means that you address those very deep emotions in you. Again, you're in life, because life doesn't stop for any of us, we're going to continually have experiences show up in life and none of us are exempt from having things “go awry” in our life, and there's no way to control that. And so, what addiction does (or the ability to alter the way that I feel) is, I have learned to either put something in my body or I've learned to call on my neurochemistry to change my experience.

Whether I want to change it from happy to more neutral, so that it's not so excitable—you know, some people don't like feelings of happiness or joy, not that they don't like them, but it scares them. It's like, “Oh my goodness, if I'm too happy, then maybe something bad is going to happen,” and so they try to alter that.

And so, any emotion we can learn to alter through manipulating the neurochemistry in our system or by putting something into our system.

So, let's talk about the principles, the lifestyle of principles, that associate living in recovery —learning to live a lifestyle of recovery. So, creating a lifestyle of recovery from any and all addictive thinking and behavior means I learn to live without shame. It means I live with personal and rigorous responsibility, and with responsibility comes learning to live impeccably honest, and with that naturally comes humility; if I'm going to be responsible for things, I'm going to have to look at myself, and humble myself and be teachable.

It also means accepting the principle of unmanageability, and what that means is, when I'm unmanageable—which is true for every person who has ever lived—it means that I cannot control anything that is external to me, and therefore I choose to live in a state of surrender.

We're going to talk about the things that you can “control,” and everything else is outside of your purview.

Unmanageability means that I choose to live with honesty and manage my feelings, not control them, but manage them. So, the difference between control and manage for me is, control is that you just stop them. You make them do certain things, or you make yourself not experience them. Manage means that you are aware they're there and you take responsibility for the fact that they're there and you understand them, you manage them. So, you manage your feelings, your thoughts, your choices and your behaviors. So, you are responsible for those, everybody is, no matter who you are, what you've been through, what will you go through, you are responsible for your thoughts, your feelings, your choices and your behaviors that accompany and are associated with all of your life experiences. And that is the good and the bad. And when I say good and bad, I don't intend to be so black and white. However, there are good and bad experiences. I think all of us would say, “That was a good experience” versus “That was a bad one or a not pleasurable one.”

Unmanageability means that you're willing to be humble and recognize that you need to acknowledge your mistakes and also mistakes of others, and apologize and forgive. You get to learn to forgive. Not only forgive others but more importantly, forgives oneself. And make things right with yourself, make things right with others, and with God if you believe in a god. If not, then make things right with anything that you would consider a Higher Power to you. So, it's kind of like, make things right with the universe.

Living a lifestyle of recovery means I know when I need help, and I know how to ask for help. This lifestyle of recovery means I live a life of personal integrity and character.

Recovery does not mean I make choices once in a while that resonate with recovery. Or that I pick and choose the principles of recovery that are convenient or easy for me to make. That is not living a lifestyle of recovery, that is more about sobriety. Sobriety is, like

I said, it is a temporary “fix.” There are behavioral choices that choose only to not induce a chemical or secrete a chemical into your body, but it’s not lasting. It’s temporary because it depends on how I feel. If I don’t like something, then I’ll go use my strategies of controlling my emotions and I go right back into addictive thinking.

Now, I may not have acted out addictively yet but I’m starting to think addictively. Let’s say I get a knock on the door and I get some bad news. If I’m living in recovery I manage that “bad news” that I just received. When I’m living in sobriety, I don’t manage it. Maybe this time I don’t. maybe the other four or five times I was managing my emotions, but this time it’s like, “What the heck? This is really bad news and I have a right to be angry and I have a right to be vindictive, and I’m going to get let those people know that that’s not okay, what they told me.” And I start reacting to it.

Well, I haven’t drank, I haven’t gone and acted out sexually, or I haven’t engaged my normal addictive behavior, however I am absolutely beginning to think addictively because I go into this place of shame. Shame tells me I am entitled. Shame also tells me that I don’t matter. And so, any time I go into that, I am setting myself up to start thinking addictively, which can and often does lead right back into my addictive behaviors.

When I live a lifestyle of recovery, I am cognizant and aware of my choices and I run those choices by someone, whether it be myself or someone else, who can be further along the path than I am. So that could be a second person. And I check those choices out with them, so I don’t choose inadvertently a choice that would lead me back into shame, dishonesty, irresponsibility, pride, selfishness. And this is a way that I start living in recovery.

So, I first think in recovery terms, so it starts in my mind, and then I start choosing things that will keep me in recovery which means I choose to manage my emotional states every time. I manage myself. Now, does that mean perfection? No, it doesn’t. It means that I pay attention and when I have people around me who say, “Hey, I know you’ve just got some news on the doorstep and you’re really upset about it and you don’t get to retaliate. You get to feel that, you get to go talk to them, you get to be reasonable, you get to be empathic. You do not get to react and blame and go into drama just because you feel that this particular piece of feedback was more than you could manage.”

So, you think in recovery first, then you start making choices in recovery, which leads you right into living in recovery, and as you live in recovery through making these choices, and there’s going to be millions of them that you’re going to need to make, you, over a period of time—years—you will learn how to be in recovery. You will language yourself as I am in recovery because the consciousness in you will be at such a vibration, such an altitude, that you will feel extremely different than how you were experiencing life when you were caught in addictions.

So, there are principles or tools of recovery that you need to engage in, that support you to heal these addictive thoughts and behaviors. So, one is learning about your unmanage-

ability. Another one is bottom lines. The third is slips. Fourth is what relapse is. Fifth is powerlessness and any kind of cross-addictions. Living in recovery means that you learn how to not white-knuckle, you learn how to surrender, and you understand withdrawals.

## **[00:14:35] Unmanageability**

So, let's go to unmanageability and talk about what it is. So, unmanageability defined in American Heritage Dictionary, means not able to direct, control or handle. So, not able to direct, control or handle what? Well, anything, so feelings, experiences, people, substances, your bodily functions, you're not able to control or direct those or handle those as far as make them do what you want. Not able to direct, control or handle particular outcomes. And when I say handle, it doesn't mean that you're not able to manage them, but you cannot control them. So, handle would be associated with trying to control.

Disease, you're not able to control disease, or sickness, or disasters, or weather, or other's expectations, experiences and situations.

So, the only three things that you are responsible for are the things I just mentioned. Let me go over them again. These are things you can manage and are responsible for. Your feelings.

Number two, your thoughts and perceptions. And that's super important. We have a book of perceptions. And so, I would encourage you to get this book on perceptions because what I think will create my reality, and I need to make sure that my reality is aligned with The Reality, and not just my perception of reality.

And then, the third are my choices and my behaviors.

So, I am responsible for those three things: my feelings, my thoughts, my perceptions, my choices and behavior.

So, everything else in the world is external to me, and therefore I cannot control it. When I can't control something, I call that thing, or experience, or person, or external—unmanageable. And so, here's the problem: we as humans really like or desire to be in control. I like thinking and believing that I have power to do all sorts of things, like make you like, or make you love me, or create safety for you, making you feel beautiful or making you trust me, forcing you to heal from addiction, trying to save you from your fears or insecurities, and on and on.

Yesterday, I was at a conference, a convention kind of thing, and there was this piece of exercise equipment, it was just this little piece of plastic and people were standing on it kind of rotating around. This little kid, he was probably four or five years old, he's probably two feet tall and he's really close to the ground, he's made of rubber, you know. He got on this little piece of plastic and he just took a step up, it was just tiny. So, he steps up on this piece of plastic and he's moving around, and he fell down. His mom's like, "Oh, be careful,

be careful. You're going to hurt yourself." And so, he gets back on it and he's full of energy, he's this little boy. He's just being like a little boy. He's moving his body around, twisting it back and forth and just having a good time, and mom is hovering over this child, ready to grab him at any sign that he could fall.

Well, first of all, he doesn't have very far to fall and I just thought wow, look at how controlling that mother is. Now, if I were to go up to her and say, "You are behaving in a very controlling manner. First of all, your son is having a good time on that thing. And, so he falls?" And when I say fall, it's not like he's falling. He would just like twist and hit the ground. It's not like he's falling off of something. There is only one little half-step up on this little piece of plastic. And so this kid, he falls all the time I'm sure, but his mom was so concerned about him getting hurt that she just stood there and hovered, and any sign that he was going to tip over she'd grab him off this little piece of plastic. It literally was a piece of plastic maybe three feet across and it was bowed up on both ends, and you put your feet on either side and you just kind of twist on it.

And so, there really is no way for this kid to get hurt. And she kept grabbing him off every time he'd act like he was going to tip over. And then, she'd get mad at him saying, "I told you, you're going to get hurt. You need to stay off of that thing." And it was just very interesting to watch her attempt to control him.

Now, if I would have gone up to her and said, "You're being very controlling," it would have blown her mind, because from her perception, she was attempting to keep him safe. It was an attempt to share love with him, but here's where our perceptions can be extremely skewed is that that little kid needs to learn, to be able to choose and make choices that are not going to elicit real negative consequences—and this one would not have. And he also needs to be able to fall, literally and figuratively. He needs to be able to have outcomes for the choices that he makes, so he can feel the sting, or the pinch, or the awakening of the power of his choice. And mom was just not going to let him do that. I saw a four-year-old boy yesterday, and then I saw a 24 or a 34-year-old man where mom is just hovering over him and not allowing him to really become who he's meant to become. And not that he can't do that on his own, he can absolutely hold boundaries with mom, but he's being taught right now that he needs to control any kind of external pain that could come his way, he needs to control that. And if he doesn't control it, mom's going to.

So, that is part of this unmanageability. Mom was in a position where she felt out of control and she couldn't manage him getting hurt.

So, what are the pay-offs when we do this?

Let me explain pay-offs first of all. Pay-offs allow me to alter my perceptions, my feelings and my experiences to escape Reality in order to avoid being uncomfortable in any way. So, mom was trying to avoid this Reality that he might fall, and so her perceptions of I love my son and so I'm not going to let him hit, was a payoff to her. So, she allowed herself to

escape Reality because reality was he wasn't going to get hurt. If he falls down and hits the ground and okay, no big deal. But she did not want that to happen for whatever reason.

And so, I get a hit, I get a hit, I get a neurochemical hit or a payoff when I change the Reality from what is uncomfortable to me, to what is comfortable to me. Now, listen to how many pronouns are talking about "I." There's I get a payoff of what's comfortable to me. It's not about the other person, my payoffs are for me. And so, my control is about me. However, it looks like it's about you, it looks like it's about my son so he doesn't hurt. But really it's about, I need to control the situation so that I feel comfortable.

Living in Reality means I recognize that I'm out of control and that I am powerless to make things the way that I want them. And this can be a very uncomfortable realization. She was out of control. She could not control that situation, and so she attempted to distort Reality—she wasn't conscious of it—but distort Reality in such a way that she gave herself the illusion that she can control the fact that her son could fall and get hurt because that would be uncomfortable for her.

So, my payoffs distort Reality of my experiences, my perceptions, my feelings, my vantage point, and therefore my interpretation of events if I deem them uncomfortable. And the way I do that is what I just described, and I also use addictive behaviors and addictive thinking to do this as well.

So, these kind of acting our behaviors include, I use substances, activities, events, lust. I can use religion, food, a person, any kind of compulsion. I can use anything that I choose to put in place of Reality because I choose to think that Reality's too uncomfortable and painful.

So, Reality is where I have to feel and engage in Truth. That's where things that are real happen, is in Reality. And so, I use these payoffs to produce a chemical hit—a drug inside my body—that either naturally secretes or that I physically ingest into my system, and that is the payoff that I'm getting. So, she walked away probably feeling like, "I'm such a good mom," which is great, I want her to feel like she's a good mom, but not through methods of control.

So, when I start controlling, I will engage in an addictive cycle and I'm not going to go into addiction on this section but if you are interested in learning about addiction, then please listen to the podcasts that we have recorded previously about addictive behavior and addictive thinking.

So when you think about it, we really cannot "control" many things in our life, just those three things we talked about previously. We're not in charge of our own heartrate, not even our own breath. All of these things that are outside of our control are really a gift to us that we get to enjoy and get to learn how to manage. And so, part of the human expe-

rience is about learning to manage the things that are unmanageable. That's kind of a brain tease, how do I manage things that are unmanageable?

Well, I learn how to stop controlling. I learn how to surrender. I learn how to live in Reality and not be frightened of Reality because Reality is an amazing experience. Anything that gets presented to you, learning how to not put labels or judgements on it as good or bad, or right or wrong, or things that are happy or sad; learning to just experience whatever comes and take out the gems from those experiences. And that's really challenging, especially when things come and get presented in such a way that create or induce sadness or pain of some sort. We as humans do not like to feel uncomfortable in any way, shape or form, emotionally, physically, spiritually, financially. We do not like that.

So, learning to manage our own emotions, our own choices, behaviors and thoughts, while everything else is unmanageable or is outside of our control—it is a difficult paradox for people to appreciate and to understand, yet it positions us for a beautiful experience called surrender. And if you want to learn more about surrender, we have a book on surrender and control that I would recommend that you get for yourself and start working in that.

And so, I get to learn how to do this thing that says, "Let go, you cannot control this, and if you attempt to control it, you're going to create suffering for yourself."

Another way that that life teaches us about unmanageability is that we cannot control our external, so this term of unmanageability can have two different meanings, and these meanings move in into different directions. One direction of unmanageability can refer to the Reality that we are not in control of our external environments. So, unmanageability can refer to Teality that we're not in control of. Or in the other direction, it can refer to our own unmanageability to externals—addictions±which we use to alter our emotional states.

So, I am not able to control or I'm unmanageable around the Reality that happens around me, and I'm also unable to manage any kind of addiction that I engage in. So, once I start engaging in addictive behavior, those chemicals start getting secreted. Or once I put chemicals inside my body, I am no longer in control of how those things affect me. So when I behave in my addiction—not just addictively thinking, that's something I can manage because it's still in a thought state, it's not in a chemical state—but once I introduce either something either into my body, a chemical into my body, or I start behaving in ways that trigger those chemicals to be secreted, then I am unmanageable, then I'm out of control again.

I can get back into control or I can start managing again depending on my choices. But in that moment, once I put the chemical inside, I am out of control. I am not managing myself.

So, when we feel emotions—here are a handful that we don't like to feel—when we feel fear, anger, sadness, loneliness, or boredom, anything that feels out of control or some emotion that we deem is uncomfortable or bad, we attempt to use some kind of external to alter our internal experience.

For example, I might feel isolated and afraid of social interactions, and when I feel those uncomfortable emotions I can drown out the feelings by eating, by exercising, by engaging in drugs or pornography, or any other activity or thing that I introduce inside myself, like I bring in and say, “I want to distract myself with that.”

So, when I bring these externals into myself, which I cannot control and which are unmanageable, inside my spiritual, emotional and physical system, they begin to have power over me. As soon as the external enters my system, I am powerless over how it affects me, so I become unmanageable right there. As the external beings to alter and affect me, I become “out of control.”

So, I'm using these words control and unmanageable kind of interchangeably, I'm hoping that you're following me as I'm doing that. So, as that external begins to affect me, it alters me and I become out of control.

So, out of control of what? Well, out of control to the chemicals, I can't control my brain to only secrete certain chemicals and to give me the “right amount” so that I don't become addicted, I can't do that. And so, I need to be willing to manage or control prior to my choices of introducing things towards me, so not putting the drug inside my body. I can choose that and I can stay managed. But the minute that thing comes into my body, I am then unmanageable. I'm out of control.

In addiction, at any time I start behaving addictively, I will be out of control. And so, that's why addiction renders me so completely powerless and why one of the principles of recovery is about unmanageability.

The first thing you're going to learn when you're learning about addictive behavior is how out of control you really are inside of addictive behavior.

I'm going to stop there and actually record another podcast later on today about bottom lines, about white knuckling, about relapse, slips, and how to live a life a recovery as opposed to living a life of sobriety.

I hope you've enjoyed this section on how to live principles of recovery, which mainly focused on what unmanageability looks like.

I encourage you to stay connected this day and for the weeks to come, and we will talk to you in a couple of hours. Good bye.

[ENDS]