



EPISODE NO. 355

# How to be a Responsible Hedonist

Hedonism is a philosophy that's been embraced by great minds throughout history, from Epicurus to today's advocates of positive psychology. Hedonism reminds us to prioritize pleasure and happiness as a goal of life. It's about seeking joy, savoring life's pleasures, and doing it with a smile.

But it's not just about indulgence. It's about finding your unique balance. being ethical, and making choices that have a positive impact on the world. So in today's podcast episode, I am talking about how to be a responsible hedonist, where pleasure isn't just a pursuit. It's a path to a better, brighter and more fulfilling life. So let's dive in.

Welcome to the School of Self-Image, where personal development meets style. Here's your hostess, Master Life Coach, Tonya Leigh.

Hello, my dear friends. Welcome to another exciting episode of the School of Self-Image podcast. A little side note before we dive in, I have been losing my voice for the last three days. And I kept putting off this episode thinking that my voice was going to come back, and it's not. So if my voice is a little raspy, if it sounds a little different, it's because it is. And hopefully, fingers crossed, it will be back before next week's episode. So

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without further ado, let's dive into today's exciting topic, which is all about a philosophy that's about maximizing life's pleasures while keeping things ethical and balanced.

Yes, I'm talking about hedonism. I've been accused of being a hedonist for a long, long time. And I take it as a huge compliment, especially considering where and how I grew up. I grew up in a very puritanical culture where anything that felt good was considered a sin, and anything that felt terrible would be what got you into heaven. So, as you can imagine, it's taken a lot of work for me to not only be comfortable with pleasure, but to embrace it as a lifestyle. And not only to embrace it as a lifestyle, to use hedonism, the pursuit of pleasure and happiness, as a gauge, as a guide to my destiny, to my North Star, to where I want to go and to what I want to do. But I also consider myself a responsible hedonist.

In fact, if you ever study hedonism, where it originated from and the original purpose of it, it has always been rooted in responsibility. because it's about pursuing pleasure, and it's about avoiding pain. If you study Epicurus, who is I would say the grandfather of hedonism, his philosophy was that pleasure is the highest good. And for him, it was not just about the pursuit of what we often think is pleasurable, maybe overeating or overindulging. But for him, pleasure was the pursuit of not only some sensual pleasures, but the enjoyment of intellectual and emotional pursuits. He also believed in the absence of pain. He considered that to be a fundamental component of well-being. When we are doing things that don't bring us pain, and he argued that pain should be minimized or eliminated whenever possible to achieve a tranquil and contented life. Think about that, you all.

We create a lot of unnecessary pain for ourselves. And so many people have confused true pleasure, which is what I teach within the School of Self-Image, with escaping their lives. getting a temporary relief, which can happen when you are overindulging when you are shopping, or eating, or doing any activity. Because you're trying to escape this moment that is not pleasurable. That is an escape that ultimately leads to more pain down the road. And if you just think about how our brains are wired, we are wired as humans to pursue pleasure and to avoid pain. But what happens is when you associate pleasure with things that hurt you, they become painful down the road. So therefore it is not true pleasure. It's actually pain disguised as pleasure.

But you will know true pleasure because of the fruits that it bears. When you're engaging in true pleasure, when you are a responsible hedonist, what you do on a daily basis

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makes your life better over time. There is a harmony in which you exist. There is a feeling of well-being in your life. Being a responsible hedonist will make your life enjoyable, beautiful, and the kind of life that at the end, you're going to say, well done. That was a well lived life.

Now, you might be wondering, what exactly is responsible hedonism? Well, it's not just about wild parties and indulgence, although every once in a while, those are fun. Responsible hedonism lives in the gray, not in the black and white. It's about finding that sweet spot between pleasure and responsibility that can truly transform your life for the better. So let's kick off things with our very first point. And that is around self-awareness for ultimate bliss. I want you to imagine a world where you know exactly what makes you happy and what doesn't. Responsible hedonism starts with self-awareness. It's about understanding your own desires, your own values and your own motivations. And when you're in tune with yourself, you can make choices that lead to genuine happiness and genuine pleasure. So how do you tap into the self-awareness?

Well, it's about exploring your passions. It's about you understanding what's going on in your head. It's about you being bold enough to be honest about what you want. Because I believe everybody knows. But sometimes it's scary to know what you want. Because it's going to require that you do some really uncomfortable things. By the way, there's a difference in pain and discomfort. We're talking about responsible hedonism is the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain. Do you know what's painful, my friends? In fact, I think it could be the ultimate hell that we're so afraid of. And that is at the end of your life, on your deathbed, looking back and realizing that you lived maybe 5% or maybe even less of what your potential held. realizing that you didn't show up and give it your all, realizing and seeing the life that you could have lived. but you were too afraid to. To me, that is the ultimate pain.

Now, there is a discomfort in following true pleasure. Because do you know what true pleasure is? It's showing up boldly, proudly, unapologetically. True pleasure is about savoring this moment and being excited for the next. It's about doing the scary things and knowing that every time you do it, you're getting better and better. And see, maybe that's the difference between me and some people. I've just associated pleasure with the uncomfortable things, which is why I'm always putting myself out there. I've wired my brain to pursue true pleasure, the kind of pleasure that makes my life better. And sometimes that's a nap. Sometimes that is a glass of wine for me. It's not for everyone. Sometimes that is slowing down during a certain time in my business. But you have to

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be tapped in and have that self-awareness of what you want, what you value, and what your why is, what motivates you. That is necessary in order to be a responsible hedonist.

Also, a responsible hedonist has ethical pleasure seeking. Responsible hedonism isn't a free pass to be a hedonistic rogue. It's about ethics and doing good in the world while feeling good. I like to call it ethical pleasure seeking. When you seek pleasure, always consider the impact on others. So let me give you an example of what this may look like. Imagine you are at this lively party with friends and the drinks are flowing. And you're having such a fabulous time and you're tempted to have a few more drinks to maximize your own pleasure. However, as a responsible hedonist, you remind yourself to be mindful of the impact of your actions on other people. So you would take a moment to reflect on being an ethical pleasure seeker and think about what is the impact if I continue to drink? on the party, on the values of the people around, you would also look at how this could potentially lead to disruptive behavior to yourself and to others. And you may not align with the values of responsible socializing.

So you decide to enjoy yourself with moderation. You continue to have a great time, having great conversations, dancing, and you have a few drinks maybe mindfully, or you may decide not to have them at all. But you know that if you over drink, it will potentially have a negative impact not only on you, but the people around you. Not to mention, As Epicurus says, hedonism is the pursuit of pleasure and the absence of pain. And the moment you start over drinking, it's no longer pleasurable. You're back in pain. So that is not true hedonism. Another point that I want to make about responsible hedonism is you must learn the pleasure equation. It's the delicate art of balancing short-term and long-term pleasures. And responsible hedonists are a master at this.

Sure, a spontaneous pizza night is fantastic, but what about saving for that dream vacation? Balancing your immediate desires with your long-term goals is where real magic happens. I think about a mastermind that I was a part of, I don't know, but it's probably been like 10 years ago. And we would work during the day, and the other women in the mastermind with me, they wanted to continue working. And I was always the first one to say, ladies, we need to go take a break. We need to go shop, we need to go to dinner, we need to get up, we need to get moving.

Because I've always had this understanding that if the journey is full of hustle and grind, and you're always putting off pleasure, then what are we doing it for? And sure, some

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people could look at me and say, well, Tonya, your business, they've grown their business much more quickly than you. OK. Some of them have. Some of them passed me years and years ago in terms of their revenue. But you know what? I've had a blast growing my business. I've had so much fun. Because I didn't delay living my life until one day when I crossed a revenue marker. I have always carved out time throughout the year to go on a vacation, to slow down, to rest. And sure, like the long term cost of that is my business hasn't like skyrocketed one year. It's just been a gradual, slow growth, year after year, just slowly growing. And I've been enjoying the entire process. And I think it's because I understand how to be a responsible hedonist. I'm able to think about my actions today and the impact they'll have on the future.

I'm also able to look at my actions. And if I don't do something, what am I depriving myself of in this moment? And is it worth it? And sometimes I'm going to say yes to the cookie. And sometimes I'm going to say no, it is not an exact science. It's you being tapped into your desires. and your motivations. Why are you doing what you do? Another place that you can see this play out is with finances. Think of it as a hedonistic budget, right? Are you allocating money for your future? And what you want a year from now, five years from now, 10 years from now. And are you allocating funds to enjoy today and figuring out what that is? Because what a lot of people are doing, they're trying to save all their money for the future and they are starving today. And then some people are overindulging in this moment. You could think of it, they're spending too much money.

They're overindulging in things at the detriment of their future. But when you begin to find your unique harmony of hedonism, where you are enjoying today and you are also making choices today that have a positive impact on your future. That's when I find that you have true fulfillment. Think of it as a hedonistic budget. Allocating your pleasures wisely ensures the steady stream of joy throughout your life rather than a one-time explosion of happiness. The next point is around having mindful bliss. In responsible hedonism, we don't just chase pleasure. We savor it mindfully. Whether it's biting into a juicy peach or dancing the night away, being fully present in the moment amplifies joy. And sometimes, not just sometimes, often, it's the most simple things that can bring us the greatest pleasure and they're available to us all of the time. But we're too busy, right?

We're too busy either escaping our lives and calling it pleasure or chasing some future moment thinking, oh, I'll enjoy my life then. And we forget to really pay homage and pay attention to things like a beautiful sunrise, or to the smile of our loved ones, or to the

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natural beauty that surrounds you. You know, I'm sitting up here at my parents' house in the attic. They made this cute little attic for me to stay in when I come here. And I'm looking outside and I'm seeing my mom. She's watering her flowers. And I'm trying to really see her. Right? A lot of times we just glance at it like, oh, yeah, that's my mom. But I'm like, oh, my God, that's my mom. And I won't have her forever. And so I want to savor her. I want to enjoy her. I want to just delight in her presence. And those are the little pleasures that are available to us all of the time. But so many of you are thinking, oh, I don't have time for that. I don't think I have time not to do that. And what I can tell you is that the more I savor my life, the more I enjoy it, the more I am present in it, the better my life gets. And this has everything to do with self-image work for those of you who are wondering, what's this got to do with self-image?

Because you savoring your life in this moment, really taking it in mindfully is you showing up as the most expansive version of you. And the more you do that, the more it just becomes who you are. So you must practice mindfulness in your pursuit of pleasure. Put away those distractions and breathe. Soak in every drop of happiness life has to offer. And the final point that I want to make around how to be a responsible hedonist is you have to embrace your inner hedonist with discipline. Because within all of us is that part of us that thinks that she doesn't know how to stop, that thinks that she doesn't have control, that doesn't trust in her ability to really enjoy life. And so you try to just avoid it. You try to avoid anything that might potentially throw you into a tailspin. And this is where you have to practice self-trust and discipline. Responsible hedonists know that going overboard can lead to pain. And that's not hedonism.

That's something entirely different. Remember, hedonism is the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain. And so the moment that you overindulge is the moment that you're back into pain. You know, I teach this in the slim self image, we talk about really listening to our bodies and enjoying food, which is so opposite of what most of us have been wired to believe we have to do in order to lose weight. But I think the more you truly enjoy food, the easier it is to lose weight. But I talk about this concept of eating when you're hungry is one of the most pleasurable things ever. And then when you continue to eat beyond your hunger, now you're back into pain. There's nothing pleasurable about that. And so we have to be disciplined with our pleasures.

It's like enjoying a delicious dessert without overindulging and then feeling that sugar crash afterward. When you have discipline, it's you being the disciple of yourself. It's you following your own commands. And hopefully, whoever you've put in charge of your life

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knows where you're going, knows what you value, knows your why. And so you can always trust that that part of you is going to lead you in a beautiful direction. And that part of you doesn't want you to deny yourself of pleasures. That part of you wants you to enjoy your life because they know or it knows or she knows that the more you enjoy your life, the more in alignment with your future you will be. But you must be disciplined. And discipline sometimes is tough love. It's that part of you says, I love you so much, you need to put the cookie down, because you're not eating it because you're hungry, or you want pleasure, you're eating it because you're sad, and you think this cookie is going to be the answer and it never will be. It's that part of you that will say, Hey, listen, I know you're scared and that's why you're procrastinating, but let's get up and let's get this thing going.

Let's complete it because it's going to feel so good once you do. To me, that is the ultimate heathenism. It's when you're doing things that truly, truly feel good, not a temporary fix, but something that deeply feels good in your soul and makes your life so much more happy, healthy, and more fulfilling. And just like that, my friends, we wrap up our high vibe journey into the world of responsible hedonism. And remember, it's not about saying no to pleasure, but saying yes to a life filled with joy, ethics, and mindfulness. So have fun this week, savor every moment. And once again, thank you for tuning in. And I can't wait to see you in our next episode. Cheers. Are you ready to discover the ingredients to living a truly charmed life? Then get ready my friend for the event of the year, your charmed life coming to the enchanting city of New Orleans this November 2nd through 5th.

Join me in the vibrant streets of the Big Easy as we dive into the eight ingredients of a charmed life that will show you how to live with more joy, vitality, and abundance. From epic parties, extraordinary friendships, and life-changing conversations, this event has it all. Your charmed life is not just an event. It's a luxe experience that will leave you feeling inspired, empowered, and ready to make the world your playground. Over the course of two and a half days, you will discover the eight essential ingredients to living a truly charmed life. One, that your nine-year-old self will raise a flute to one day and say, well done, darling. All you need to do is go to [schoolofselfimage.com](http://schoolofselfimage.com) forward slash live to get your ticket. Your charmed life awaits in New Orleans. I cannot wait to see you there.