

Transcript for Russell Brand | Freedom from Our Addictions (Episode 659)

Full show notes found here: <https://theartofcharm.com/659/>

RUSSELL: That adolescent idea of, "Oh, man, the system. This is all bull****," I don't see things like that no more. One of the things that continues is I'm optimistic about people. I think that people are beautiful and that people will change.

JORDAN: Welcome to The Art of Charm. I'm Jordan Harbinger and I'm here with producer Jason DeFillippo. On this episode -- This is a real fun episode people. Look, this episode almost didn't happen. I'm so glad it did. We ended up recording it at a green room at NBC Universal in L.A. after Russell Brand had just done The Morning Show. He was completely beat and his people kept trying to feed him during the show which made for a pretty funny setup. And if you're watching us on YouTube then you can see I'm in this weirdly low yellow chair which was ridiculously uncomfortable and leaned way back and I had to lean way forward to be in the conversation. But it didn't matter at all. We clicked right away. We had a real conversation.

Everything from addiction to beekeeping -- yeah, he keeps bees, random -- mindfulness to mass media, and there's some philosophy as well as some fan boy questions here because I was and am a big fan of Russell Brand for the past several years now. He was one of the first guests I ever really wanted on the show. Him and Jay Mohr. So now I've got to rack my brain and think who else am I crossing off the AoC podcast bucket list here. This episode was a hell of a lot of fun. I hope you enjoy it.

Oh, before I forget, we did a worksheet for this episode. It's going to be linked in the show notes. We're going to start doing this if it's popular. We can tell by the traffic and what you say of course, via feedback. We're going to start doing worksheets where we take some key takeaways from the guests and ask you questions to apply the stuff that you're learning on the show. That's in the show notes at theartofcharm.com/podcast. Now, let's hear from Russell Brand.

Congrats on the book launch, by the way. Not your first book but still a big deal.

RUSSELL: Yeah, I'm very happy with this particular book. I'm proud of it, I love it, and the thing is, it's because the program in it -- the system in it -- that's not invented by me. So you don't have to worry because I'm potentially an idiot. I could come up with all sorts of mad ideas.

JORDAN: Right.

RUSSELL: The program is like 100 years old. The 12 step program primarily invented to help people with serious chemical dependency issues in your country, America, 100 years ago nearly. I think the principles within it are applicable to all forms of attachment and I think that it can be nothing less in the right context than a kind of secular religion. Most people that get involved with 12 step programs go, "Oh, wow, everyone should be doing this."

This is because of course once you yourself rid of drugs and alcohol one day at a time, you start to realize that drugs and alcohol were never the problem. The problem was your own emotional state -- your own reaction to the world. So you have to start working on them. And the 12 steps works on them, in fact, that's the function of it. The first thing you do with drugs, or alcohol, or food, you stop taking drugs. If it's food, you have a structured way of doing it. Then you start following these steps and it's about inventory in yourself, it's about treating people differently. It's a complete tool for transition.

JORDAN: It sounds like a self help program that you only get to when you have seriously run out of options, which is a problem. Because it seems like you should be working on that stuff before you run into the problems themselves.

RUSSELL: That's exactly right. I wouldn't have done a 12 step program were it not for the fact that I was on the precipice of serious mental health and criminal judicial issues.

JORDAN: Yeah.

RUSSELL: But the problems that I had prior to becoming a drug addict were continual. The way that I related to food, the way that I related to news, TV, was all problematic and that's exactly it. Why wait for crisis? Your life may not provide you with a crisis. You might be someone that's just coping being in crap jobs, crap relationships, not really happy. It takes as its premise the quite simple notion that you deserve to be happy, in inverted commas -- content, free from pain, free from suffering -- which I suppose again, is the foundational point of all religions. Yeah, you're going to die. Do you want some sort of system or are you just try and cope with it for masturbation and buying stuff. "Oh, I've tried and masturbation and buying stuff. All right, see you see you in the death bed." And they're like -- The reason the book starts with talking about death is because one of the visceral things that I feel is that they're a lot of people you meet in the world and even people in my own family, I think, "When is it that you're going to be who you actually are?" I know people that I feel that when they are on their deathbed, they're going to go, "But this isn't who I was!" They're clinging --

JORDAN: After all that.

RUSSELL: Yeah. This is, in a way, a sort of an awakening tool, I guess, or an awakening system or code. But as you said, Jordan, most people don't engage of it until crises.

JORDAN: Why do you think that is? When you were growing up, when you were looking at the problems that you were experiencing, why do you think people look to one thing and not the other? Why do you think people look to substances instead of working on the problem in a way that's -- Is it because it's harder? Is that it? Is it that simple?

RUSSELL: My personal theory is that it's to do with our way of life. That we live in a system that tells you you can make yourself feel better by getting stuff, by buying stuff, by doing stuff, and there

is almost no way that is presented to you in ordinary and realistic terms to deal with your inner life. Why do people drink? I'm not even talking about people with drinking problems, anybody. They drink because they want to feel good. They want to go out on a Friday or a Saturday and feel good. Well, there should be other ways of feeling good. Feeling good shouldn't be something that needs to be facilitated by an external agent. It should be something that you have an ongoing relationship with.

The reason I think the world is like it is because I feel that we have quite a deep and all encompassing capitalist consumer system and we can't see the edges of it. We are all within it, we think about life in those terms, you think about life as a commodity. Is it worth doing? Look at the bees that we were talking about already. You have the bees in order to get the honey. The idea of just having the bees, you're not commodifying it. We default to commodification.

So, I think that creates a mindset in us that we are looking to consume, always looking to acquire. These are not original ideas, they're relatively -- I suppose. When Guy Debord, a French situationist says, "We live in a spectacle. We are losing our contact with reality." We are living in an externalized way engaged in your profession or whatever your job is and when you get home, you're a consumer. Sit and watch that TV, buy stuff, and now people carry their advertising devices in the palm of their hand. Thank God they do because we work in a form of media.

JORDAN: Right, makes sense.

RUSSELL: Bloody useful to us. It's not all bad. But the reason that we have excessive drug addiction, excessive alcoholism, food issues, is because people are constantly reaching for something external that's already in them.

JORDAN: Do you think it's that people don't know how to get that out of themselves or they don't know that it's there at all?

RUSSELL: As an addict, I feel like the drive is slightly stronger. I think person that develops chemical dependency issues develops them because they are not happy. They're like, "Oh, no, is this life? I'm going to die? I'm expected to -- This is school, is it? What, this is family life? Well this isn't going to work. You better give me something else." And because the world tells you, "Well, it's going to be outside of you," and no one tells you -- giving you ideas of prayer, meditation, you look to resolve it using some external agent or method. People that are in recovery groups have found a different way of dealing with their feelings.

JORDAN: Yeah, I had a question before, "How do you get addicted to Ebay?" But I assume it was just like every day, looking for something new on Ebay. Why Ebay and not Amazon, for example?

RUSSELL: I've never personally had those kind of addiction. More with me it would be social media say, like tech stuff. And what I mean is, I think addiction is something that you do a lot, it's not good for you, you don't want to do it, and you can't stop.

JORDAN: Compulsion.

RUSSELL: Yeah compulsion and obsession, I think are two of the ingredients of addiction. Now if your obsessions and compulsions are about a substance, it gets bad fast. And if it's about behavior, you can carry on longer. I put on this social media and stuff because I do notice I stare at my phone a lot and I often don't feel better after looking at Twitter for ages.

JORDAN: Twitter will definitely not make you feel better. Out of all the social media, Twitter will make you feel the worst the quickest because it seems so anonymous and so easy. It's kind of like every time you go out there, you get those little jabs. On Instagram you're looking at them, they're looking at you, most of the profiles aren't anonymous, on Faceook for example.

Twitter is just like -- It's useful and yet a cesspool at the same time.

RUSSELL: Oh, it's a useful cesspool. It's a bear pit.

JORDAN: Yeah a bear pit, yeah. Is there any healthy balance for you? Social media is good but I have to cap myself at half an hour or you're just like, "I can't look at this at all anymore."

RUSSELL: I think with the chemical dependency, abstinence. If you're a drug addict, you can't take drugs one day at a time. If you're an alcoholic, you can't take drugs. Gambling I think you can't gamble. But food and sex, these are life giving things. They're natural . things so we have to find a structured way and I would that social media belongs in that category. So me personally, I don't anymore have my Twitter password. Someone I work with does that. So I'll go, "Here is a photograph and a thing," and maybe once in a while they'll tell me some stuff that's going on on there. But with Facebook I've never had it. I can look at my Facebook page but I can't go in it. And with Instagram I post stuff. I've always -- I'm a sensitive person and I'll get too affected by it --

JORDAN: Sure.

RUSSELL: -- even negatively or positively. I would say -- Say you went, "I'm only going to use social media for half an hour a day, between 4:30 and 5:00. That's when I visit social media," and then if you try and do it and you can't, it's like, well there you go. You've learned something about yourself. You aren't capable to keeping it to half an hour. So that tells you you're not in control of it anymore. So that's in a way step one. You've got a problem with social media.

JORDAN: It seems tough to admit you're addicted to something because it's obvious when it's cocaine, it's obvious when it's alcohol -- maybe not for a lot of folks but it can be. But when it's computers, social media, or shopping, it's really easy to couch -- or sex -- It's easy to couch that in something else especially for

somebody who is well known to the world, to realize they're addicted to sex and not just having fun. Do you remember that process? Because at some point you must have been like, "This is awesome. Every woman that I fancy I can go after and get. This is what I'm supposed to be doing," and then at some point you must have gone, "Actually, this is really bad for my emotional well being."

RUSSELL:

Addiction is a bit of a blind spot for me sort of oddly. I sometimes think I'm clever but then sometimes it's revealed to me that I'm not because my behavior is so dumb. With sex it's interesting because I feel like I'm an adult, I'm attracted to adults, in my case of the opposite sex -- adult human females. It's all pretty vanilla and they're not coerced. When I first got famous, I felt like I was addressing the previous circumstance of not feeling good enough, not feeling attractive, trying to address that.

It was so exciting and felt kind of validating and of course sex is fun anyway. That's the point of it. I suppose using the model that I've just said -- doing it, it becomes problematic, you can't stop it -- Well, it becomes problematic when you think, "Oh, I might like to be in a relationship with one person now and you try and then you sort of can't because one, I think people that have a lot of sex with strangers often find intimacy with one person challenging.

JORDAN:

Is it because you're spreading it out thin instead of going deep?

RUSSELL:

Yeah, that's a really simple way to put it. I think it is that and I think intimacy with a stranger -- For most people I know that have had issues around sex, intimacy with a stranger is kind of lovely. You don't know them and then you have that sudden excitement of sex and you're kind of connected to them in that context. I used to joke about this. I used to say it's because I can have sex with a stranger because I'm not thinking about any other information in that person's life. I'm not thinking, "Oh, no, her brother has got diabetes. Oh, she might be worried about this. What if that happened." No they only exist in that

context. In a way there's something spiritual about it. You're in the moment, there's no judgement, the connection is very pure, the type of stuff I'm into at least. But after a while, I think that that means that when you do somebody, it seems almost absurd to be intimate with them in the physical proximity and the frequency of sex. A lot of people my age, and God knows what it's like if you're younger -- Pornography is what I learned sex from. No one taught me, "All right, this is what it is to be a man and if you're into women this is what women are like. If you're into men this is what men are like. This is how we treat each other and this is what it should feel like and this is how to be loving," it was just like, "Here look at these magazines, look at these videos." It's not a very good template, really.

JORDAN: When you and I were kids, you had to find a kid who had the magazines, and you might have been the kid who had the magazines -- I had a neighbor who had those -- and then maybe when I was 14 or something or 12 one guy had a tape that he had stolen from his uncle or something like that.

RUSSELL: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

JORDAN: You need to wait and your mom's not home and you know she's going to be gone for two hours and your buddy comes over. There's a lookout and everything. Now, your kid could be in the back seat of the car with you while you're driving and he could be on PornHub and you would have no idea.

RUSSELL: It's unbelievable.

JORDAN: Yeah.

RUSSELL: The same is kind of true with drugs. With what's called spice in my country, those ever evolving sort of smokable drugs.

JORDAN: Bath salts I think we call them.

RUSSELL: Bath salts, that's right, in your country. You can buy them and your kid could be using drugs. So the way that we treat

addiction has got to change because addiction is changing, because like you say, your kid could be in the back of your car looking at PornHub or ordering online drugs. Unless they have access to a way of addressing that and the feelings that are motivating them towards that. My experience of porn was similar but looking back, I recognize I was just trying to make myself feel better. Of course it's natural when your sexuality is awakening, you're looking to express it, but is it the correct way to be looking at images? You're starting off on the path of your sexuality regarding the people that you'll be having sex with as an object. Because the beginning of objectification is happening right there. For me, I was doing a lot to make myself feel better as well. I was like, "Wow, these make me feel good. It's a distraction. I'm not in myself when I'm doing this," and you're right, it's terrifying, the idea of the access to pornography that kids all have now.

JORDAN: It seems like drugs and things like that people might say, "Hey man, look, you ever think about you're doing too much of this?" Guys don't get that with sex, right? Your friends never go, "Look man, you're having too much sex. We need to tone it down." People are going, "You're my hero."

RUSSELL: Yeah, that's right. I would notice that a lot of how I would relate to men, I felt powerful among men because other men knew that I would sleep with a lot of women. Now, what I have since learned is that a necessary component of that was that I was not respecting what it was like for the people I was having sex with. What's so amazing about being famous is that people are willing and excited and up for it and there's a constant flow and it's sort of unbelievable in one respect.

JORDAN: Yeah, it sounds pretty good right now.

RUSSELL: It does sound good when I'm saying it again. But the problem is of course, now I know, now that I'm awakened -- one moment at a time -- that these are human beings and once you realize, Oh, they're probably doing that for their -- They've got their own motivation because they're not going to feel any better for

having sex with a famous person except for the moment of orgasm which I did use to try to guarantee, Jordan. Other than that, you're involving yourself in an exchange that isn't necessarily going to be beneficial.

JORDAN: Yeah.

RUSSELL: So, I'm participating in other people's unconscious behavior and for myself, what lies on the other side of addiction -- that's what interesting. What lies on the other side of the compulsion? See this, when you want to look at social media and you don't, what happens to you? You start to get anxious. You start to get nervous. You want to have sex with someone and you don't, what happens? You start to get nervous. You start to get anxious. Well, you have to go through that pain at some point because if you live constantly confined by your unwillingness to go through pain, you do not develop into who you are supposed to be. I've lived in that cycle. It meant I became kind of stagnant, spiritually.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

JORDAN: So if you mean that you have to go through that cycle of pain in order to get through the addiction, did then the addiction start because of pain?

RUSSELL: Yes. Addiction begins with pain and ends with pain. You're in pain, you introduce some secondary agent to deal with the pain, then that might even make you feel worse so you're back in pain and you do it again. It's very obvious when it's drugs, it's less obvious when it's pornography. People feel ashamed. If someone's trying to be faithful in a relationship and they sleep with other people outside the relationship, they feel ashamed when they do it and then feeling of shame is so bad and it's not always the right thing to tell the other person, it gets worse, they do it again.

Food, it's the same process. When you feel awful, you're in pain, you feel lonely, you eat too much food, you make yourself puke,

you feel ashamed, and you do it again. At some point this cycle has to be broken. This is one of the things I've found myself saying and I think it's pretty true, Jordan. We don't choose between having a program and not having a program, we choose between a conscious program and unconscious program. We work in the program. I've got a program already. My program is I want drugs, I want sex, I want people to like me, I want money, I want prestige, and if I don't intervene with that, like a waterfall, it rushes away. This program makes me awaken.

One, there's a problem -- whether it's drugs, sex, porn, food, relationships, whatever. One, there's a problem, two, it's possible that it could be better because I see other people not living like it, other people that work the program, three, I've become willing to be teachable. I've become willing to look at things in a different way, I've become willing to accept help, whether it's from a community or from a higher power, a spiritual idea there.

JORDAN: How does that fit in with your career now because you can't not have prestige and do the job that you're doing but you have to then short circuit the addiction part of the prestige.

RUSSELL: The method and the perspective of addiction I have is that addiction as a drive, if you drilled down, this thing is a will to power, whether you call obsession or compulsion, whatever it is. It's a yearning, a hunger. What does it want? What does it want, this hunger? Once I'm awakened, I can watch it a little bit more. For me, I'm not going to become a yogi or a monk or someone that lives in a cave and meditates all day. That's not, I don't think, my path. I'm going to be involved with the material world. I have a wife, I have a baby, I've got bees, damn it.

JORDAN: Yeah, you've got bees. There's no going back. You can't abandon the bees.

RUSSELL: You can't un-bee yourself.

JORDAN: No.

RUSSELL: What it changes is that I know when I'm doing this podcast right now in this moment, I'm thinking, "I hope this goes well. I hope this will be the best one of the podcasts that Jordan has ever done and it will get the best figures." Now, when I see myself thinking that, I still go, "That's just that habit you have in your mind. Don't take it too seriously." Your thoughts become the first layer of the outside world. Your cognitive activity, your thoughts, no longer define you. You start to recognize it as just a pattern in your mind. "Oh, I always think stuff like that. Don't worry about it too much." Like, "Oh, no, I'm so shallow. I want everyone to love me," just go, "Oh, yeah, that's just a habit you picked up somewhere." I have tried to be the experiencer, the consciousness that watches those patterns, and when you have undergone this program, that perspective becomes easier to access. It is by no means permanent. That's why you get people that get to the top of the mountain -- priests, yogis, swamis -- and then you find out they're all having sex with the people in their communes.

JORDAN: Yeah.

RUSSELL: You're like, "Okay I trusted you." It happens not just in Christian culture, it happens in far out places where western people like me really think, "Oh, no they've got the answer in their robes with shaved heads." You find out they're doing the same thing. Unless you've stayed moment to moment vigilant about your patterns, they will reassert.

JORDAN: That has to be kind of scary to know that as much work as you've done to get through addiction -- You're 15 years almost clean, right?

RUSSELL: Yeah.

JORDAN: That if you let your guard down, you could be back to square one. Is that not intimidating a little bit? It seems like that would be scary for me because it's like you keep walking away from

the cliff edge and then you turn right just to check and see how far away you are and you realize you've just been walking along the cliff edge for 15 years.

RUSSELL: That's a good metaphor.

JORDAN: Thanks.

RUSSELL: Well, yeah but we all are walking along the cliff edge. In a way, the addiction just makes you address it. All of us are just one decision away from destroying our lives, really. You can in traffic get in a fight with someone, you punch them, they hit their head, they die, that's your life now.

JORDAN: Oh, man.

RUSSELL: Or you cheat on your wife because someone is nice to you and you felt vulnerable in that moment or you take drugs and you overdose. It can happen but I think you can guard against these things by having a kind of a spiritual awakening, by being connected, or whatever the answer is. It ain't in my head because if it was, I'd have found it by now.

JORDAN: Right.

RUSSELL: All I've done my whole life is try to be happy. It's not working. I need help. Write down all the things that are ***** you up or have ever ***** you up, don't lie or leave anything out. Make a thorough inventory and there's a particular technique for doing that. Honestly tell someone trustworthy about how ***** you are. You start involving other people.

When I'd done that, it taught me that I didn't need to be so ashamed of myself, that all of the dark, dirty little secrets that I carried -- The guy that I told was like, "Yeah, that's no big deal. I did something like that." At some level, I think we...will wake up at 3 a.m., "Oh, no, I'm worthless, I'm crap, I'm not good enough," or like, that's not real. It's just a sort of a pattern that you're

carrying. And by telling someone else, it alleviates you. Most traditions have confession in them, you observe.

When I did the inventory, it made me realize the way I got in trouble at school is the same way I got in trouble at MTV. The way I got in trouble in Hollywood is the same way I got in trouble with politics. I have a pattern. I get into a place, I get loads of attention, and then I do something mad. I've always done it and I do it because of pride, self-centeredness, aspects of my ego. Then the step for the seventh step, right now you know that: Are you willing to live in a new way that's not all about you and your previous ***** up stuff? You have to. It's like, "Well, okay. Am I willing to not do that?" Now the thing we're talking about, lust, you know, the pornography. It's easy in this room to think about that.

If I'm on my own late at night, the feeling comes, "Oh, maybe I will look at pornography." Am I in that moment willing to take a different course of action? Am I willing to call up someone else, and go, "Yeah listen, I'm in this moment thinking about one, using drugs, two, cheating on my wife, three, pornography, four, eating food and making myself puke, five, texting that guy that I know is no good for me." Yeah if you're prepared to make the phone call before you do it, the person will go, "Okay, well remember we've done all these steps. We've done all this inventory. We know where this leads. Are you going to do it? Yes or no?" and that sometimes gives you respite. That's why you work it one day at a time, one moment at a time, because it will always come back. You are always walking along a cliff edge. I like that analogy.

Once you've done this process, you realize you've hurt a lot of people in your life. Prepare to apologize to everyone for everything affected by you being so ***** up. So you prepare to apologize. You just go and you write down all the people you might have harmed.

JORDAN:

Oh, wow.

RUSSELL: Yeah.

JORDAN: That's got to be a sobering -- pardon the pun -- list of people. It can't be a short list.

RUSSELL: No, I'm old. There's loads of people and a lot of those people, you know what you do? You go, "Yeah but they did this."

JORDAN: Yeah.

RUSSELL: You're not allowed to that. You have to go, "Nevermind what they did. What did you do?" and you just put down your stuff. And you've completely eliminated, e.g. my stepdad, if I think, "Oh, my stepdad, I wasn't very nice to him when I was a kid," but my next thought is, "Yeah, but I was just a kid. He's an adult."

JORDAN: He should have known better.

RUSSELL: Yeah, but that's not going to help me change going, "He should know better," that's where I am already.

I need to change my perspective and to change my perspective, I have to go, "Forget what he did. I did something wrong." And then the next step, now apologize unless that will make things worse. So I get myself into a frame of mind where I become willing to go without any of the parentheses or caveats, go "Whatever happened when you were my mom, it was not acceptable. I apologize for that. It must have hurt you. It must have been very difficult for you. I'm not that man anymore, I don't live like that and I don't treat people that way anymore. I apologize. Is there anything else that I did that you want to tell me about? And if there's anything I can do to make amends, I'll do it." Once you do that, your consciousness has changed. You've hacked into your patterns.

JORDAN: You can't do that all at once though because if you apologize to people and say, "Is there anything else you want to go back and forth?" there's probably a lot of people that go, "You know what? Now that you mention it, there's a whole lot of stuff you did that

when we lived together, while I was raising you, during your college years, blah, blah, blah, when we were married." You've got to be taking some -- not abuse maybe? Or maybe abuse from some of these people, whether you deserve it or not.

RUSSELL: You go into it consciously and you don't go into it alone. That's the ninth step for reason. You've already done these previous eight steps. You're already a different guy by the time you get to that point and also, importantly, you do it under the guidance of a mentor.

So one by one, you go, "All right, I'm doing the one with the stepdad now." "Okay, so what are your expectations? How do you see it going? What are you going to say? What are you going to say when we he says this?" An important part of it and in fact the best part of it, is the bit where they go, "You don't know this but when you did that, it made me feel this," and you just have to sit there while someone tells you and you feel, "Oh, my God, my actuals really hurt other people."

And the reason it's called an amends process is not just restitution and apology to the other person, because it amends you. You think, "I'm not doing that ever again. I don't ever want to hurt someone the way I've hurt that person." People that just were like extras in your life, people that you just pass buy in a crowd scene --

JORDAN: Right.

RUSSELL: You think, "Oh, my God, I've damaged them." So now when I'm walking down a corridor Access Hollywood or wherever we happen to be, we could be in any number of places.

JORDAN: That's right.

RUSSELL: It could have been that. I could have just chosen that off the top of my head. When I walk down the corridor, I'm polite to everyone. I'm polite. I want no one coming away going, "He's a dick, that guy."

JORDAN: Yeah.

RUSSELL: I can't take no more of it.

JORDAN: It's a lot of responsibility, especially for somebody who's in the spotlight.

RUSSELL: But what choice do we have, Jordan? That's the realization that you come to. You're not giving anything up because none of that stuff works anyway. It's not like, "Yeah but now I can't be an ***** anymore." Being an ***** wasn't working anyway, otherwise I'd have carried on doing it. Having sex with everyone wasn't working. Being obsessed with fame and money wasn't working. So you're not giving up anything real. Every so often, of course, you are seduced again. What's important here and what I'm trying to do which is a bit hard is that I think there's a lot of stuff in religion that is being sort of booting out in the secular age because we all know the complications with religious life -- the violence, the bigotry, the institutionalization, etcetera.

JORDAN: Right.

RUSSELL: But in religion there are stories that are about the human psyche and the human condition that are indispensable -- Oh, it's a tough gig, this -- Well look at the myth of the Egyptian sun god, Ra, who nightly wrestles with the serpent of darkness so that the dawn may come, knowing that the next day he will undertake the same battle again. I mean of course that helps early people to have some relationship with astronomy and astrology and all that but it also helps to understand this is life, the every day.

Sisyphus, who daily pushes the rocks to the top of the mountain knowing that tomorrow he does it again. Prometheus who has his guts pecked out by the eagle for stealing fire and giving light to mankind, knows that the next day his stomach is going to heal and the eagle is going to peck it out again. This is it. Accept it. There is suffering in life. We're going to die. So the

choices are, are you going to be beautiful while you're here or are you going to make stuff worse?

Now the problem I think we have is the culture is saying, "We are going to make it as bad as possible. We are going to exemplify and constitutionalize the worst aspects of human nature. Greed, selfishness, these are going to be our politics now. And I'm not even talking about recent events, although obviously yes. But capitalism generally, materialism generally -- An age of darkness, an age where we only understand what's gross because we've forgotten how to go within. And that this simple program for dealing with yourself means that I as just one little unit within it, am doing my best.

With the severe and underscored caveat, I'm still a total **** up and I still every day will do stuff that's selfish and make mistakes and be impatient with my wife and make mistakes with kid. The guiding light is I'm trying to be good. I'm not just going, "Yeah, but that's life. Who gives a ****? So what? It doesn't really matter, does it? So what? My wife is lucky to have me. Who cares if I sleep with some other people once in a while?" I could go that way if I would like. All of us, we can all go that way. We're all comprised of good and evil. But it's a commitment, an intention, a program, a method.

JORDAN: Speaking of wrestling with good and evil, you were a vegetarian since you were 14. That means then, at one point in your life, you were not willing to eat meat but you were willing to do crack or something. How does that work? What was going on there?

RUSSELL: Some of it is about identity, I think.

JORDAN: Yeah.

RUSSELL: I was a fan of The Smiths and I just found it impossible not to translate my love of animals on account of, "Oh, that dog." I'd found it impossible to not translate that to, "I shouldn't eat that animal over there, should I?" It became sort of repulsive

mentally and a nice commitment. Drugs, although you're a pain in the ass to other people, it's a self destructive thing. You're trying to annihilate the self, you're trying to get beyond the self. So, it's yourself you're harming really. So, the vegetarianism, I must admit there were probably late night relapses and Burger out of my mind on something or another where I urge (ph) from that path. But I see the paradox of being a vegetarian crackhead.

JORDAN: Yeah, so unusual, but I think it makes sense with your earlier constant battle that's going on. It seems almost like there's an element of, "All right, well I can't control this area of my life so maybe I can try to control this other area and be strict enough with it."

RUSSELL: And also the addiction is a little bit about control. You can control it, you can get heroin, you can get crack, you can alter your state of mind, much harder to control another human being.

JORDAN: Yeah.

RUSSELL: Impossible, ultimately. What I liked about being a drug addict is you're just on your own. I wasn't very sociable. Just on your own doing drugs, shutting down all nice and comfortable and all of the pain melting away and the tight fist in my belly opening up. The problem was in the end, it stopped working and it got worse and it created worse problems. So I needed to find another way of alleviating that tension. Thankfully I found it in that program. So, I think addiction is a sort of way of finding control, finding meaning, finding order, finding connection in a culture that doesn't provide it, doesn't know how to provide it because it's too busy turning you into a component in an economic machine.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

JORDAN: Why write this book now, after being clean for 15 years? Why not write it earlier? What sparked the interest suddenly in this?

Because it's not like you just recovered and you're like, "I'm going to write a book on this." You've gone through this process for as long as us the public has really known you.

RUSSELL: Because I think at this point I understand it and I understand it well enough to know how little I understand it. I'm at a point where I can say it, whilst I've written this book, anybody that's got clean time could have written a book. I still have to spend and enjoy and love spending time with other recovering addicts and recovering alcoholics and people with issues around all manners of compulsions.

When I go and spend time with them, I'm not sat in the middle with a blanket draped around me and dramatically lit, I'm just another one of them. And it's a relief to be another one of them. It's a relief to know that I'm still like you say, on the cliff edge, and I could fall over any moment. I'm not better than anybody else. I don't have that illusion. I lost that now. Sometimes I can be a bit grand and a show off but I know that I'm no better than anyone else. But the relief is, I know I'm no worse than anybody else. I'm just a normal person. Have you seen that film *Punch-Drunk Love*, the Sandler movie?

JORDAN: A long time ago, yeah.

RUSSELL: There's a bit in it after he confronts Philip Seymour Hoffman who's been bullying him on the phone, after he's been real meek and he's been easily bullied, there's a bit where he just confronts him finally and goes, "I am a nice person. I am a nice person." And the reason that it's sort of beautiful and moving is because he's not saying, "I'm great," or "I'm powerful," or "I'm wonderful," or "I'm invincible." He's just saying, "I am a nice person."

It's such a simple little aspiration, "I am a nice person," to just be a nice person in the world. So I suppose if I had written this a while ago, there would have been much more, "I'm the new Jesus," about it. I'm always attracted to being the new Jesus, why not? I mean part of the point of Jesus was saying that there

is a consciousness accessible to all of us that is within us. The kingdom of heaven is within, the way to God is through I, the way to God is through the self -- It's about that God made flesh. It was about God is within man. God is not in the constellations in the stars. God is in your belly. God is telling you, "Don't do that. That was wrong." Because no one else is telling me, "Don't cheat," no one else is telling me, "Don't speak badly to people if you don't think they can do anything for you."

My guts go, "That was cruel, what you just did," like who is that in there that's saying that? Jiminy Cricket ***** kicking me in the guts. Now it's written from a perspective of fallibility and ordinary, real, fallibility about the ordinary real aspiration that ordinary people can have -- that we can all have together -- to be beautiful.

JORDAN: How do you prioritize your different passions? On the one hand you're a comedian, actor, a public personality, you have thousands of people constantly interrupting you and trying to get your attention, but on the other hand, you're a creative so you need to carve out massive amounts of time to be creative, create books, create great comedy -- I would imagine that requires a lot of solitude. And these paths maybe appear to contradict. You have to be in the limelight, you have to be accessible, you have to be interacting with people, but you probably have to carve out a piece of your life to think deeply, otherwise you wouldn't be able to do it.

RUSSELL: It is contradictory and it's changed since I've been married and had a baby. Before, my whole life -- even though I was clean from drugs for a long time, the behaviors were carrying on around sex then the behaviors were carrying on around the obsession with the work itself. Now, I have a wife and I have a daughter and these are so compelling and so absorbing. My baby and my wife are with me on this trip so when I'm in the hotel room, before maybe there will be a stylist, who would have been a good friend of mine if it was a hair and makeup, also a good friend. My life, the focus, the pinnacle of my life is the showing off in those times. Now there's a baby. There's baby

stuff everywhere. So you can't but be ordinary. It just grounds you and it smashes your ego and your face actually, sometimes.

JORDAN: Yeah, I bet.

RUSSELL: In so many bloody ways, violent child. I've sort of learned. It's a very in one way, a practical thing. I do stand up three nights a week back in the U.K., I've written this book, and I know that if I don't spend time at home, if I don't spend time around other addicts, I'll go wrong. So, I've got no choice.

And the last three steps, funnily enough, are the maintenance steps. One we've done, the making amends. The things that we've already talked through. Ten, watch out for ***** up thinking and behavior and be honest when it happens. If I'm out today and I start thinking -- that's the point where it starts to be real -- If I start thinking, "Oh, that person shouldn't have said that," or, "This should have done that," or, "That should have sold more," I go, "Ah, that thing is happening. It's happening again."

Right, stay connected to your new perspective. That's why I need prayer and meditation because part of my life is solitude. It doesn't matter if this goes well or if this goes badly, I'm going to be sitting down for half an hour with a candle, in my case looking at picture of Amma, the great hugging saint who travels from India, does nothing but raises money and helps people and sleeps on the floor. She's just this unbelievable figure. That will be part of my day.

And the prayer part of it reminds me of the principles that I want to live for and by, what I'm grateful for in my life, and how I'm supposed to treat people. And number 12, and the point of all of this, curiously, look at life less selfishly, be nice to everyone, help people if you can. So this whole journey deposits you in a place where you're trying to be of use to people.

And again, every day I will default back to, "Should I buy this shirt or not? Do I look cool in this photo? I don't like that that

person said that," but I don't just accept it, justify it, pursue it. I remember, "Oh, no, God, have you done anything for anyone else today? No, all I've done today is thought about myself." I'll go out and I'll try and help someone and be productive and constructive. And those things -- that's changing you. I don't know much about neuroplasticity, you'll be surprised to learn.

JORDAN: Yeah.

RUSSELL: Apparently your consciousness alters if you do these things.

JORDAN: Absolutely. Yeah absolutely. We talk about neuroplasticity all the time on the show. You know when you see a road in a hot climate and it's got the little dimples where all the cars drive?

RUSSELL: Yeah.

JORDAN: It's a lot like that, right? So when it's hot and that asphalt heats up, cars drive along essentially the same way, or a hiking trail that is carved in a grassy area, you can see it because people keep walking on it. That's essentially a very over simplified way of how the brain works. So if you start different habits, you can start to create new neural pathways. The problem with things like addiction is that those old pathways that you've treaded for a decade and a half or whatever, since you were 14 years old, those are still there. And you know that from experience whether you know about neuroplasticity or not, because if somebody were to hold you down and force you to do a substance, those pathways would light up like crazy and you might have a hard time stopping.

RUSSELL: Mmm.

JORDAN: Yeah, so now you've got your new habit which is this green juice and that's a more healthy habit to have, but as you know, any habit done to an extreme can result in something negative, right? You could end up surrounded by corn made cups and have missed all of your appointments and haven't hung out

with your family in three months because you got addicted to this green juice.

RUSSELL: Wallowing in kale in a bathtub.

JORDAN: Yeah.

RUSSELL: I'm not going anywhere. Bring me more kale.

JORDAN: Yeah, exactly.

RUSSELL: It could easily happen. One of the things about the spiritual life that is fascinating to me is the way that they somehow -- thank you for explaining that so well -- the way that they intuited information that we can now demonstrate materially and anatomically and medically, they intuited that. So this system, of course it was the 12 steps is only 100 years old but it's taken from a Christian group, the Oxford Group, which was older than that. Then these principles are perennial and universal and they're found everywhere, like with the Mindfulness Movement, they say, "Oh, if you meditate it's good for your blood, it's good for your heart." Oh, is there anyone else that said you should meditate thousands of years ago before scanning was available? Yeah.

JORDAN: Right.

RUSSELL: Well, what else are those people saying because I think there might be other stuff in there. It's obvious that there's a lot of stuff that's in religion that are cultural inflections of the time that they were written, bigoted, prejudicial information, practical stuff that doesn't seem relevant anymore.

JORDAN: Sure.

RUSSELL: All of that. The things that interest me are the things that are found in all religions. That's the stuff that we should be focusing on. If it's found in all of them, there's something that's coming out of the human consciousness that's truthful. So now

that it's found in the religion of our time which I accept is more science based and empirical and that's a bloody good thing and it's given us so much, we should look to which of those principles were already present and that's just one example. You can act yourself into thinking differently, you can't think yourself into acting differently.

JORDAN: You can act yourself into thinking differently but you can't think yourself into acting differently?

RUSSELL: Yeah.

JORDAN: I like that.

RUSSELL: It's good, isn't it?

JORDAN: Yeah, that's really good.

RUSSELL: A lot of these things are the folk wisdom of the 12 step program.

JORDAN: Do you ever think, "All right, I've got a baby daughter. Oh, crap, I've slept with a lot of women. This is what men are like?" Does that ever worry you or are you just kind of like, "Look, I've," --

RUSSELL: Not yet. On one level because I sort of see it like -- Maybe you need to talk to me again when she's 16 or hopefully 25.

JORDAN: Sure, you should be so lucky.

RUSSELL: What I feel is, I don't know what type of a woman she is going to be. The other sort of thing is I'm going to teach her, if she's up for it --

JORDAN: Right.

RUSSELL: -- to not do stuff to make her feel good just for the sake of it, to be a grounded, connected person, and the only way I can do that is by being grounded and connected around her. Now I know all parents go into parents with those objectives and all sorts of

curve balls must come flying in from every direction but my hope is that by being conscious and awake around her, she won't go, "Oh, I'll feel great if I drink a lot and if I sleep with a load of people."

JORDAN: Yeah.

RUSSELL: I'll be like, "No, I did try that and it does work temporarily but here's some boring stuff."

JORDAN: Right.

RUSSELL: Would you like to try this green juice, Mabel? I don't think you'll find anything that could be more satisfying.

JORDAN: Yeah, it could be tough, especially with a teenager.

RUSSELL: I know because --

JORDAN: It could be extremely tough.

RUSSELL: Well you know the score about neurology and biochemistry that she won't even have the mental facility, literally it doesn't arrive until the mid twenties to understand some aspects of reason. I was listening to.

JORDAN: She will, however, have the mental facility to tell you that you don't know anything, you don't understand, and you never could understand, and then she's going to read this book and probably, with any luck for you, curl up in a little ball and go to sleep and realize that you dodged a bullet, right?

RUSSELL: I hope so. I hope so.

JORDAN: You were on Colbert last night. That was your first time on the show?

RUSSELL: Yeah.

JORDAN: Yeah. How is this stuff for you now? This aside, is that stuff still fun or are you kind of like, "All right, this is part of the job. I'm used to it by now?"

RUSSELL: It is still fun if I do it right. I recognize that something like this, through all these years, the reason I love this medium is it's sort of oddly old fashioned in a way.

JORDAN: Yes.

RUSSELL: It's less constructed, there's a lot more room to unpack and examine ideas, it's more free form, it's more intimate, it's more real. Something like going on Colbert is a performance, that's what I'm aware of and I noticed while I was doing it. I thought, "Oh, God, I'm acting funny. I'm doing silly stuff with my legs, I'm leaning into him, I'm being antic and daft," but I kind of like doing that. It's a laugh to do that.

And another thing is I recognize my own snobbery because going onto day time shows that are built around entertainment, I start saying, "I read very deep scriptural texts, I analyze Nietzsche, I don't think that these people are going to understand me," but then I go on and I realize that I'm from that background, whether it's entertainment or growing up watching that stuff. These people are just people like me. They're interested in the same things I'm interested in.

And funny enough, a few of those shows that I've been on, I've been given a little bit of a wake up because they're like, "My cousin is a drug addict," or "My relationship is codependent," they've spoken in a very plain way. I've been like, "Oh, brilliant. Well, this is what this is about." So it's been actually -- That adolescent idea of, "Oh, man the system, this is lal bull****," I don't see things like that no more. One of the things that I maintain and that's a continuum of the last book I wrote, which was Revolution. It was all about changing systems and anarchism --

JORDAN: Right.

RUSSELL: -- and deception in the media and my understanding of Noam Chomsky and learning and trying to distill important academic information into an accessible format. One of the things that continues is I'm optimistic about people. I think people are beautiful and that people will change. When I'm going on Populist TV, I don't think, "Oh, I'm too good for this," that sort of thing. No, these are beautiful humans. This is going to be brilliant.

JORDAN: And they're looking to you both to be entertained and for you to make them think. Or, do you think people are looking to you to be entertained and then you're kind of like, "Let me slide some entertainment in there then here's something that's much more important.

RUSSELL: I try and do both of those things. When I'm listening to people giving me spiritual information and advice, I love the theoretical stuff but when people tell me a story about, "I did this and this is how it felt," I like it. And when people tell me stuff that's funny it really impacts me. So being put in the conditions where I have to be entertaining is not a drag. It's a joy as long as I look after myself. If I'm over tired then I can be a bit, I don't know. Like, "Oh, I've got to do this bull****."

JORDAN: Yeah, I wondered if that was going to happen today. I was like, "Maybe we should just do a really short one because he might be really tired."

RUSSELL: No it's been a joy. It's a joy to talk about it and it's a context in which I feel comfortable. You're obviously a very intelligent person and you're obviously tuned into what's real and challenging yourself and willing to be open. I've been watching you in your iContact. You're obviously going through things yourself in life and it's been lovely to be able to communicate with another person.

JORDAN: Well I appreciate it, man. I appreciate you and I appreciate this. What is next for you, by the way?

RUSSELL: Doing a lot of stand up. I'll probably come back to this country, America, and do stand up soon. I may do some acting. Sometimes I read a film script and think I'd like to that. What else will I do? I don't know. This is a weird time in my life. I sort of always used to know. "I'm going to do this, then I'm going to do this, then I'm going to do this." Now I don't really know but I feel all right about it.

JORDAN: By the way, the back of my head is in your comedy special at The Improv from about four years ago.

RUSSELL: Oh, wow, cool.

JORDAN: Yeah, right in the middle too. And I thought, "Oh, man." We had to do this thing because we were in those first rows where they're like, "You've got to sign a waiver because if you turn around this way, your face is in there maybe."

RUSSELL: Oh, thanks.

JORDAN: It was cool.

RUSSELL: I'm glad you came. Did you like it?

JORDAN: I did like it. It was interesting because I went with a group of people that I had decided -- They had done some pretty shady stuff to me years and years ago and they called and they said, "Will you come and go to this Russell Brand thing with us?" and I said, "No, because you guys did all this stuff that was really *****,", and they said, "Actually, that's why we're inviting you because we all want to apologize and we all want to make up and take you out to dinner and we would love for you to come to this comedy with thing with us and end the night on this feel good note," and that's exactly what happened.

RUSSELL: Oh, my God, I was a tool for a reconciliation.

JORDAN: You were, absolutely.

RUSSELL: Excellent.

JORDAN: So, thank you very much for everything.

RUSSELL: Thanks, Jordan. Thank you.

JORDAN: Great big thank you to Russell Brand. The book title is Recovery: Freedom from Our Addictions. It's a really lovely book. If you're interested in this sort of thing I highly recommend this. This interview almost didn't happen, by the way. They pitched us which was a huge virtual pat on the back. I tried for years to get him to do the show. No response and then one day out of the blue, "Hey would you like to interview Russell Brand?" Yes, please! And then the day before they're like, "Look, he's not feeling good. He's really not feeling well. He kind of just wants to cut the tour shirt and just fly back to the U.K." and I was like, "I will fly to the U.K. but man I booked a flight and hotel to L.A. I don't live there anymore," and they were like, "Oh, crap, okay." So they talked with him and he stayed. He freaking stayed and we did the show.

And I'll tell you, look he is a great person and I'll dig into that in a second, but I've to tell you, his people are so nice as well. And that is highly unusual. And at first I was thinking, "Wow, these people must be new or maybe they work for somebody else," because everybody I was dealing with in the email was just so incredibly nice and polite. They weren't all British, because I know that's what you're thinking. And I thought, "That's so strange, they must not work with celebrities that much," because usually people who work with celebrities in my experience, they don't all always fall on the side of patient, nice, caring folks, I should say.

But it reflected well on him and I'll tell you, when I met him he was also incredibly nice and friendly. He was super present, very real and interesting as you heard on the show. I got none of that fake comedian vibe that you hear from a lot of folks and Russell, of course, is charming as you know from every

interview, every movie, everything he's ever been on, but it's different because he's also very genuine.

He is an open book just as he was here with us on the show and he's not one of those guys that morphs into a robot the second the cameras power off, and I have had that happen with a lot of people on this show. It's a little disappointing because even though you get a great show out of it, you're just thinking, "Oh, okay. You're just a really good actor," and that is not the case with Russell. He is just who he appears to be on media. And if you're ever fortunate enough to meet him, you'll immediately want to be his best friend, let me tell you.

So, great big thank you to him and the book title, once again, Recovery: Freedom from Our Addictions. That will be linked up in the show notes for this episode. And if you enjoyed this episode, don't forget to thank Russell on Twitter. We'll have that linked in the show notes as well. There is somebody that monitors his Twitter and he said they get the messages back to him. So, you're not wasting your breath there. Tweet at me your number one takeaway from Russell Brand. I'm @theartofcharm on Twitter.

I'm also on Instagram now, which I love. It took me forever because before when I first looked at it, it was a POS. You couldn't message anybody or do anything. But, I'm @jordanharbinger on Instagram and @theartofcharm on Twitter so add me on both of those and we can talk about stupid funny things all day because that's all I post on there. You can find the show notes for this episode at theartofcharm.com/podcast. I also want to encourage you to join our AoC challenge at theartofcharm.com/challenge or you can text in. You can text A-O-C to the number 38470. That's A-O-C to the number 38470.

And what will happen then is we'll send you these little missions every couple of days and it's about improving your networking skills, your connection skills, inspiring those around you to develop a personal and professional relationship

with you -- It's free, a lot of people might not know that. That's the idea.

It's a fun way to start the ball rolling, get some forward momentum, and apply the things that you are learning on the show to your life here every day. We'll also send you our fundamentals Toolbox that I mentioned earlier on the show, which include some great practical stuff ready to apply, right out of the box on reading body language, charismatic nonverbal communication, the science of attraction, negotiation techniques, networking and influence strategies, persuasion tactics, everything else that we teach here on the show and at our live programs here at The Art of Charm. It will make you a better networker, a better connector, and a better thinker. That's theartofcharm.com/challenge or text AOC to the number 38470.

By the way, don't forget this is the first episode we're doing this. We made a worksheet in the show notes for you to fill out and you can actually find some key takeaways and fill it out and da, da, da. That's in the show notes. Just look for the worksheet. We're going to be doing that for a lot of shows moving forward if it's popular. This episode of AoC was produced by Jason DeFillippo. Jason Sanderson is our audio engineer and editor. Show notes on the website are by Robert Fogarty. Theme music by Little People, Transcriptions by TranscriptionOutsourcing.net -- I'm your host Jordan Harbinger.

If you can think of anyone who might benefit from the episode you just heard, please pay AoC and myself the highest compliment and pay it forward by sharing this episode with that person. It only takes a moment and great ideas are meant to be shared. So share the show with your friends and enemies, stay charming, and leave everything and everyone better than you found them.

