



100 Days of Change from the Boozemusings Community

Boom Rethink the Drink

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100 Days of Change

From the Boozemusings Community - Boom Rethink the Drink

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My 100 Day Challenge Tracker

Full Color Cover for Workbook

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Workbook for Your 100 Days Alcohol-Free

Prologue

100 things I was grateful for after 100 days alcohol-free

No hangovers	Setting a better example for my daughter
Improved finances	Admitting I have a problem
Better sleep	Not going with the crowd for the sake of it
Mood stability	Making my own choices
Less depression	More time
More time with family	More reading
Having high-quality alone time	More focus
Less shame	Starting to look at what causes me pain/hurt and how to address these
Fewer 'foot in mouth' moments	Having courage to make a decision and stick to it
I can see life for what it really is (good and bad)	Being vulnerable to being judged by others
Addressing problems head on	Not caring how others judge me – real friends won't
Cleaner/healthier life	Allowing my brain to heal –
Not intentionally poisoning my brain	developing new neural pathways
I can think a little clearer	Not being so full of semi-untruths/bullsh!t – being truer
Better memory (a little)	Being at ease with the highs and lows of life
Real enjoyment of holidays	Improved liver function
Better work	Improved bloods
More time in nature	Improved cholesterol
More time doing physical exercise	Improved skin condition
Appreciating the small things	Improved eye condition – no more bloodshot/yellow eyes
Active participation in family tasks	No more irresponsible behaviour
Better connections with friends	No stupid decisions when drunk
Sober treats!	No more taking drugs when drunk
Slight weight reduction	No more stupid injuries
Guilt-free pudding courses	No more damaged clothes
Improved taste	No more damaged furniture
Improved smell	No more damaged relationships
Starting to address my shortcomings	
Not hiding from life	
	Improved sex life
	Improved relationship with partner
	Knowing my partner is proud of me for trying

My psychiatrist telling me she doesn't drink (and she's a pretty smart cat)
Giving my bipolar brain the best chance of staying well
Improved outlook on life
Growth
Seeing others leading a happy/healthy life without alcohol shows it's possible
Seeing my addiction for what it is
Being free from needing to drink while cooking
Being free from needing to drink while watching tv
Being free from needing to drink at every special occasion
Trusting others with the reasons I'm not drinking
Not being an asshole when drunk
Being able to say no
Being present
Living my best possible life

Reducing medications because of improved wellness
Improved dietary choices
Improved listening
Really feeling my true feelings
Greater insight (important with Bipolar)
Constant reminders of complacency – ODAAT
Being able to tell real friends about my decision
Easier to carry the weekly shopping without lots of beer and wine!
Fewer cans and bottles to shamefully recycle
Being unsure about what the future holds
Not having to hide actions from my family
Not being a liability at work
Living consciously
Laughing more
Smiling more
Being less stressed
Lowered blood pressure
Enjoying the AF journey (not just the destination)
Not always following through on thoughts about alcohol
Change in habitual behaviour – for the better
Being in control of the situations I'm in
Always being able to drive!
Being part of an awesome community
Building up hours, which become days, which become months. Milestones help me reflect
Owning 'what's best for me'
Being more at peace
Looking forward to 'finding peace in forever'

Being More.

— *BOOM community member*

The Magic Trick

There is no magic trick to this. No clever method. You stop drinking alcohol. And you take every day as a new one. And you don't drink whatever happens.

And you read and you do other things. And you live through feeling so very uncomfortable. And you live through feeling so scared and anxious. At first.

And you go to bed early and if you can't sleep you don't panic you maybe read some more.

And you cry and you smile and you scream inside.

And you slowly work out 'when' you drink, 'why' you drink, 'how' you drink.

And you drink other cool refreshing drinks instead of alcohol.
And you make sure you eat regularly.

And you find out 'who you are' and what insecurities alcohol fills. And you find other ways to "fulfill you" and relax you and replace the 'whys' you drink.

And you don't drink alcohol even when your whole being tells you that you deserve just one drink.
And you don't listen to the voice in your head

And you stop looking for a perfect you and accept yourself warts and all.
(although you can change the things that can be changed – if you want to)

But through all of this, you do not drink alcohol – because you can't...
one rule.
And slowly,
very slowly,
your life starts to change in subtle ways.

And slowly, very slowly, you start to get your pride back.

And slowly, very slowly, you change your life by changing the drink in your glass.
Anyone can do this.

But it's the commitment to not drinking whatever happens that is the key.

Without that commitment, your life will stay the same. I'm making it sound like it was easy for me. Hell no – it wasn't at first. Definitely not. I didn't think I could do it yet I did by following that one rule no matter how hard it was at first.

Do not drink alcohol – whatever happens. For now just think about it.
There's no pressure right now.

Just read on here and listen to podcasts etc and remember there's no magic to what I and others have done.

You are perfectly able to do it too.

— *BOOM community member*

Last Day One

I drink because I'm happy.
I drink because I'm sad, lonely, angry or to reward myself for being sober for a week.
I drink because I want to.
I drink when I don't want to.
I drink for no reason and any reason.
I drink today because I drank yesterday and want to feel better. But I won't.
I drink alone sneaking bottles into my house so my neighbours won't see and slip the empties out in the trash for fear the recycling centre staff think I'm a drunk.
I drink because I feel helpless and weak.
I don't drink because I feel helpless and weak.
There's the irony in it.
I drink to feel better but don't.
I drink to escape but remain a prisoner.
I drink in celebration and create a tragedy.
I revel at night and wallow in the morning.
It's hard to believe or comprehend. At times, impossible to deny. Painful to live with but less so to be without.
I am bruised and tired.
I don't need that kind of hurt anymore.
Today I will try just a bit harder. Today I will take one step towards healing.
When today comes to an end I will have a yesterday behind me and a new day ahead.

— *BOOM community member*

**When scared, feeling alone and peering into the darkness,
don't forget that you have a flashlight in your pocket.**



WHAT HAPPENS TO YOUR BODY IN 100 DAYS ALCOHOL FREE

- 6–12 Hours ○ **Liver swings into action**
Blood alcohol clears and your liver immediately begins prioritizing detoxification. Blood pressure and heart rate, which alcohol artificially suppresses, start to normalize. You may feel anxious or restless — this is your nervous system recalibrating, not something going wrong.
Source: NIAAA, 2021
<https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/alcohol-metabolism>
-
- 24 Hours ○ **Blood sugar begins to stabilize**
Alcohol disrupts glucose metabolism by blocking the liver's ability to release stored sugar. Within 24 hours, blood glucose regulation begins recovering. Adenosine receptors — suppressed by alcohol and responsible for sleep pressure — start resetting, laying the groundwork for better sleep.
Source: Emanuele NV et al., Alcohol Health and Research World, 1998;22(3):211–59
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6761899/>
-
- 48 Hours ○ **Acetaldehyde fully cleared**
Acetaldehyde — the toxic by-product of alcohol metabolism and primary cause of hangover symptoms — is completely eliminated. Your dopamine system, which alcohol floods and then depletes, begins its recalibration. Energy and mood often dip before they rise as the brain adjusts.
Source: Zakhari S., Alcohol Research & Health, 2006;29(4):245–54
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6527027/>
-
- Day 3–5 ○ **Sleep architecture improving**
Alcohol suppresses REM sleep — the restorative stage critical for memory, mood regulation and emotional processing. By day 3–5, REM cycles begin lengthening and deepening. Many people report vivid dreams; this is the brain catching up on lost REM. Hydration levels are measurably improving.
Source: Colrain IM et al., Handbook of Clinical Neurology, 2014;125:415–31
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25307588/>
-
- Day 7 ○ **Liver fat begins reducing**
The liver can process roughly one unit of alcohol per hour. Chronic drinking causes fat to accumulate in liver cells (alcoholic fatty liver). After just one week alcohol-free, studies show measurable reductions in liver fat. Blood pressure drops an average of 2 mmHg. Skin hydration begins to visibly improve.
Source: Theise ND., Clinical Liver Disease, 2013;2(2):64–67
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6448621/>
-
- Day 14 ○ **Blood pressure responding**
Two weeks in, clinical studies show average systolic blood pressure reductions of 2–4 mmHg — meaningful at a population level and a significant step toward reducing cardiovascular risk. The skin's ability to retain moisture is measurably improved. Many people notice their face looks less puffy as aldosterone-driven water retention reduces.
Source: Roerecke M et al., Lancet Public Health, 2017;2:e108–e120
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6118407/>
-
- Day 28 ● **Liver fat down ~15% — gut healing**
A landmark UCL/Cancer Research UK study found liver fat reduced by an average of 15% after one month alcohol-free, and blood glucose levels fell by 16%. The gut microbiome — disrupted by alcohol's effect on intestinal permeability ('leaky gut') — shows measurable recovery. Immune function is strengthening as white blood cell counts normalize.
Source: Mehta G et al. (Dry January study), BMJ Open, 2018;8(5):e020673
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC5942469/>
-
- Day 60 ● **Anxiety reducing—brain rewiring**
Alcohol's anxiolytic (anti-anxiety) effect creates a dependency cycle — you drink to relieve anxiety that drinking caused. By 60 days, GABA and glutamate receptor systems have largely rebalanced. Clinical anxiety scores measurably improve. The prefrontal cortex — responsible for decision making and impulse control — shows improved function on cognitive testing.
Source: Clapp P et al., Alcohol Research & Health, 2008;31(4):310–39
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC2923844/>
-
- Day 90 ● **Cancer risk marker falling**
Alcohol is a Group 1 carcinogen linked to seven cancers. At 90 days, biomarkers associated with cancer risk — including raised liver enzymes ALT and GGT — return toward normal ranges. DNA repair mechanisms, suppressed by alcohol, are functioning more effectively. Cognitive test scores for memory and processing speed show significant improvement.
Source: IARC Monographs Vol. 100E; Ridley N et al., Alzheimer's Research and Therapy, 2013;5(1):3
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3580328/>
-
- Day 100 ● **You have transformed your biology**
One hundred days without alcohol represents a profound physiological reset. Cardiovascular risk is measurably reduced. Liver health has improved substantially. Sleep is deeper, skin is clearer, immune function is stronger and the brain's dopamine baseline — the foundation of motivation, reward and joy — has fully recalibrated to function without alcohol. This is not willpower. This is biology.
Source: Shield K et al. (incl. Rehm J), Lancet Public Health, 2020;5:e51–e61; WHO Global Status Report 2018
[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpub/article/PIIS2468-2667\(19\)30231-2/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpub/article/PIIS2468-2667(19)30231-2/fulltext)

Introduction

How to use the Boom Rethink the Drink Community for Support, Accountability and Resources

Since 2017, our Boom Rethink the Drink Community has offered an anonymous, private space online, where people gather to tackle issues with alcohol. Without the endless sales pitches for products, services, and coaching that you'll find in many internet communities, Boom is just people supporting people to live their best lives. Many of our original members are still with us. I can't imagine a better place to find the support you need for this challenge.

Adding daily visits to the Boom Rethink the Drink Community and the Boozemusings Blog is key to your enjoying a successful 100-day alcohol-free challenge.



"Boom greets you with open arms and an open heart. The love and dedication to this community can be felt whenever it lights up your screen. It is truly human. A good friend on a dark night."— BOOM community member

Why Try a Short-Term Alcohol-Free Challenge ?

the following thoughts on that are from members of Boom

I definitely get a lot from short term challenges. They help me keep my goal firmly in sight and bolster my resolve. I like the feel of a group effort. It's my choice and my decision but some back up always feels good.



I find the short-term challenges very helpful. I did several very short-term challenges here. Usually, it was a small group but that was due to only a handful of people joining in. I find them great for momentum. A few times the suggestion of adding on more days at completion was discussed and acceptance was at your discretion. Bottom line, a big Yes! Try it.



Dry February 2021 was how I got my AF start! Still going....over 5 years later.



My first full month of being AF was Arid August 2019. It was the first time I was able to follow through with a no-booze goal, ever, and it was because I felt like I was part of something bigger than myself. Getting and giving that daily support helped me start to believe that I could do it. And I think I kept signing up monthly challenges for almost as long as we had them. So, so grateful.



I have found challenges very helpful. Every time I do one, I get better perspective to a predominantly alcohol-free life. This community is incredible

I found the monthly challenges helpful even when I didn't make it through the whole month. It was motivating to try to achieve more AF days the next month. ODAAT was a starting point. Sometimes it was One Week At a Time. Then One Month At a Time. Now it's One Event At A Time. Weddings, parties, airports, etc are still triggering. I was given tickets to a film, food, and wine festival last week where they served food wine with each film... I have a lot of dietary restrictions so most the food was not an option. Hey, guess what? Wine is gluten free! At least that was what I used to tell myself. So I ate a lot of popcorn and drank a lot of sprite. But I made it through, enjoyed the films, and am relieved that I didn't drink. I think those daily, weekly, monthly challenges helped me realize that I can get through anything.



Perhaps this is an oversimplification, but I got where I am today (almost 4 years AF) by challenging myself to longer AF stretches. It was easier to keep building on each milestone than to continually start over. I'm a competitive person (competing against myself), and I took all my commitments seriously. Like, I have 12 years of formal education beyond HS. If I can do that, why can't I stop drinking? So challenge yourself or take up someone else's challenge. What have you got to lose?



I like 100 days of change. It inspired me and I only did 2 of them before I was quit for good. I'm up for another 100 days of change challenge for just whatever and love the idea of it being well rounded, not just quitting alcohol. I'm 4 years into AF and I think about the last time I was 4 years in, I ended up drinking that year and it led to a 12-year relapse. So, I think even those who have a few years etc could jump on board with this just in case. But adding to it the health aspect? Anyway, that's where I am despite not wanting to drink again



Before you set your start date, look around BOOM and get comfortable. Our #DailyCheckin posts are a great place to start. You'll find them archived in the featured section. Read the post and leave a comment. If you are not already a member of the Boom Rethink the Drink Community find us at www.BoomRethinktheDrink.com.



BOOM is definitely my tribe. It comes with tons of support, advice, articles, resources, testimonials and friendship. It is truly amazing. BOOM is where I rediscovered myself and found my voice.



Boom has had a boomerang effect on my life. It's been a steadfast community where I can shed all of the grief caused in my life by alcohol. No judgements, not one little innuendo, just pure support w-ith loving suggestions and encouragement. We can do this — we are all here with one common thread. We want something better.



It is an open-minded community. Members are from all walks of life, based all over the world, yet it still feels like a close-knit family. Some people come here to think it through, some to moderate, and some looking to stop altogether. Some people are on day 1, some have many years of sobriety. Come check us out if you want to Rethink the Drink.

Success begins with understanding your Why

There are many reasons that people give for wanting to take a break from drinking.

Are you an occasional drinker who wants to try living without alcohol because you've heard that no amount of alcohol is good for your health and actually elevates your risk of cancer considerably?

Are you someone who drinks routinely, assumes that you aren't addicted, but you want to take a break and reset your drinks-consumed-counter?

Are you addicted and troubled that you might soon be dependent?

Knowing your why can help you decide how best to succeed with this challenge.

If you are just an occasional drinker then your challenge might easily include setting challenging fitness goals. You won't be triggered by the daily routine of life. You also most likely won't be triggered by many of the other things that trigger habitual drinkers. So you'll have energy to focus your accountability more than one direction.

If you drink routinely, several nights a week, you may be surprised to find that you are triggered more often than you expect. A trigger is somewhat different from a craving. It is a feeling, event or activity that you associate with alcohol. So before you begin your 100-day alcohol-free challenge have a think about identifying what you think might trigger you and how you will prepare to handle that feeling, event or activity without drinking. Find more about tackling triggers to follow.

If you know that you are addicted to alcohol and afraid that you might be dependent, please make sure that you fully understand the risks of withdrawal from stopping cold turkey. You are welcome to ask questions in our community but it's always best to talk with a doctor before starting a challenge to break an addiction.

Understanding your why is part of preparing for a successful 100-day alcohol-free challenge. It is the first step in making yourself accountable. Accountable to yourself.

Once you have identified your why and are ready to start your 100-day alcohol-free challenge it is wise to be accountable to the people who you live with and others who are in your life routine. Let them know that you are taking 100 days free of alcohol and that their support will help you reach that goal. If you aren't comfortable sharing details of your why it's fine to let them know that this is a commitment you're excited about!

Let them know that if you reach out to them in a few days looking for encouragement to have a drink or two, the best thing they can do to support you is encourage you to stay on track. Encourage them to be your champions. Let them know how they can help.

I'm the one at the bar nervously looking around if the server isn't there right away to offer me my first drink or a refill.

I'm the one who will have a glass before I go out to eat and drink.

I'm the one whose glass is always empty before everyone else's.

I'm the one who will swig the last bit of my partner's unfinished glass as we leave the table so it doesn't go to waste.

I'm the one who will go home after dinner and crack another bottle.

I'm the one who will rarely re-cork a bottle.

And if I do, it's only got about a couple of inches left at the bottom and I did it to proclaim the next day that I have self-control.

I'm the one who exceeds the recommended weekly alcohol intake in a day.

— BOOM community member



MY WHY

"When the reason is clear, the path becomes easier."

I am choosing to go alcohol free because...

The person I want to be looks and feels like...

The things I've lost to alcohol that I want back are...

The people this decision is also for...

What I'll do with my extra energy, money and clarity...

On a hard day, I will remind myself that...

My one word for this journey is...

MY COMMITMENT

I am choosing this life. On hard days I will return to this page.
signature & date _____

Fear is Normal

Thoughts on not being afraid of sobriety

Fear is a completely normal part of this. Most people who have taken this step were afraid before they took it. The fear is real, familiar, and understandable. And it is also — when you look at it clearly — pointing in entirely the wrong direction.

This page is for the fear. For naming it, understanding it, and walking through it anyway.

What We Were Afraid Of

The fears that keep people drinking are remarkably similar across our community. You may recognise yourself in some or all of these:

"I was afraid that I was destroying my health. I was afraid that I couldn't stop drinking. I was afraid of sobriety. Afraid I'd be dull. Afraid I'd lose my friends. Afraid I couldn't do it. Afraid that if I stopped drinking, everyone would know my secret."

— BOOM community member

"Stopping drinking meant I had to admit to myself that there were parts of my life that were out of my control. If I said it out loud — like the tree falling in the woods — my words would make noise and others would know. What if I didn't want to stop forever? Would people hold it against me if I said I was going sober but couldn't make it stick?"

— BOOM community member

These fears feel enormous from the inside. They feel like barriers. But they are not barriers — they are symptoms of the addiction itself. *Alcohol creates the fear of leaving alcohol.* It is one of its most powerful tricks.

Understanding the Fear

"We are severing a familiar relationship that we have relied on to dispel our needs. Although our fear is somewhat founded, if not misguided, it is a false fear that has become deeply ingrained. Recognising that we have come to rely on that relationship with alcohol for solace — and that it is erroneously founded — is a vital beginning."

— BOOM community member

The grief is real. The mourning is real. And it passes. What replaces it is not emptiness — it is something that alcohol had been blocking all along.

The Fear That Drinking Created

"Going sober can be so hard in the beginning. Most of us feel a freezing shame when we decide that we need to stop drinking. We are afraid that we won't be able to learn to live alcohol-free. But why, oh why do we feel shame if we are beginners? Babies learning to walk don't feel shame. They feel some bumps and bruises. They shed tears and find reassuring arms along the way."

— BOOM community member

Replacing the Fear with Something True

"One lesson I'm learning is all the destructive labels I've picked up and made mine since childhood that are not true and oh so life-damaging. Time for a righteous purge. Kick those labels to the curb along with the booze. With work, patience, and community, some glimmers of the real you come to light."

—BOOM community member

"As long as I continue to feed my soul with pride and dignity I will never give in to the desire to drown my spirit again. It took me six long years to discover that the answer was inside of me. But the day I started posting in a community was the last day I drank."

—BOOM community member

What Happened When We Stopped

"Waking up that first morning — holy moly, who would think that the sounds we take for granted in the early morning would be so clear? Chirping birds, car doors slamming, engines starting. No headache. Clear-headed. Wow."

—BOOM community member

On Slipping — And Not Sliding

"I slipped at eight months. I panicked, scattered, catastrophized, worried, and shamed myself. But I did not stay in my slip. Having gone sober months before, I was no longer comfortable being a drinker in so many ways. Drinking edits me. Censures me. Erases me. I will be a damned fool about drinking. I will try, try, try and try to be sober. Progress, not perfection."

—BOOM community member

A slip is not the end of the story. It is information. It tells you something about your triggers, your vulnerabilities, your need for more support at certain moments. It does not erase the days you built before it. It does not define your capacity for change.

Sobriety is a skill. It is learned. It gets better with practice. And there is no shame whatsoever in being new at it.

Never quit quitting.

Prompt for your journal or post your answers in BOOM

What were you most afraid of before you began this challenge? Write your fears down honestly. Now write what you hope might be true on the other side of them. Come back to this page in 30 days and read what you wrote.

Find more at www.Boozemusings.com — search Fear of Sobriety, FOMO, Thawing Out

Before You Begin

Preparing for Your 100 Days

The decision to stop drinking, even for a short-term alcohol-free challenge, is the beginning, not the finish line. What comes next — the first hours, days, and weeks — will be easier if you prepare before Day 1 arrives. Here is what members of our community suggest.

Prepare Your Body Your body has been running on alcohol's chemical cocktail. When you remove it, your blood sugar, your sleep, your energy levels, and your mood will all need time to recalibrate. This is not weakness. This is biology, doing exactly what it is supposed to do.

In the first days and weeks, eating well is not optional — it is part of your toolkit. One of the simplest and most powerful lessons from our community is the connection between low blood sugar in the late afternoon and alcohol cravings. Plan to eat before your usual drinking time. A hearty snack at 4pm or an early dinner can make all the difference between getting through the evening and not.

Stock your kitchen before Day 1:

- Healthy snacks for the afternoon danger zone
- Protein-rich foods to stabilize blood sugar
- Plenty of water and interesting things to drink — sparkling water, herbal teas, alcohol-free alternatives, ginger ale, smoothies
- Something sweet for the evenings — ice cream is not a failure, it is a strategy
- Ready meals or easy dinners for the days when cooking feels impossible

"Don't be afraid of ice cream. Don't be afraid of takeout. Don't be afraid of beans on toast. Making staying sober your number one priority is always worth it. You'll never regret not drinking the night before when you wake up the next morning hangover-free." — BOOM community member

Prepare Your Mind

How you think about this challenge matters enormously. If you approach it as deprivation — as giving something up, losing something, white-knuckling your way through — it will feel like punishment. But if you approach it as building something — a new life, a clearer mind, a version of yourself you actually like — everything shifts.

Don't focus on what you are walking away from. Focus on what you are walking toward. A fulfilling life. Sharp thinking. Genuine fun. Real confidence. Energy. Health. The ability to wake up every morning without shame.

Dare to dream about what your life could look like. Your 100 days is not about avoiding alcohol. It is about discovering who you are without it.

"Hope begins in the dark, the stubborn hope that if you just show up and try to do the right thing, the dawn will come. You wait and watch and work: you don't give up." — Anne Lamott

Prepare Your Environment

Remove alcohol from your home if you can. Remove the accessories that go with it — corkscrews, wine glasses, the things that are woven into the ritual. If your partner drinks, ask if they can keep their bottles somewhere outside your usual evening space.

Change your routines even slightly. A different chair. A different route home. A different thing to do at 5pm. Your brain associates places, times, and objects with drinking. Disrupting those associations — even in small ways — weakens their hold.

Plan your evenings before they arrive. Your brain finds comfort in knowing what comes next. A bath. A walk. A cup of tea. A good book. A post in BOOM. It doesn't have to be exciting. It just has to not be drinking.

Prepare Your Support

You do not have to do this alone. In fact, trying to do it alone is one of the most common reasons people struggle.

Tell someone you trust what you are doing. Let them know that if you reach out to them looking for permission to have just one drink, the most supportive thing they can do is encourage you to stay on track.

Find your online community. A daily visit to BOOM Rethink the Drink gives you somewhere to land when the evening gets hard — people who understand, who have been exactly where you are, and who will show up for you.

"Boom is a door I stumbled through to a completely new life. Lights are shined in corners I didn't know existed — it's like being an explorer in a new world. Boom is the first thing I think of when I come closest to having a drink again. It's close, it's personal, it's perfect for me. It's saving me."

— BOOM community member

Prepare for the Hard Moments

They will come. Not because you are weak, but because this is what stopping drinking feels like. Anxiety, restlessness, low mood, cravings that arrive out of nowhere, an inner voice offering perfectly rational reasons to have just one drink. This is your brain fighting back. It is not the truth. It is withdrawal.

The only way out is through. And through is absolutely possible.

"If you are in your first weeks sober, make staying sober the number one priority and reduce stress as much as you possibly can. If you need to get takeout, leave the laundry in the dryer, let the dishes pile up — it can all wait."

— BOOM community member

"Be Ready to Feel Low Energy in the Early Evening. One of the chemical hooks in alcohol is adrenaline. You may find that after work, when you're ready to start your evening routine, you miss the adrenaline kick of the drink you used to pour. Do something different! Prepare to know that instead of relying on that chemical hook you will, go for a walk or run, take a shower or bath, sit down with your feet up and relax a bit, meditate, do some weightlifting, stretching or Yoga, take a short nap, have a cup of tea or coffee, or indulge in a few squares of dark chocolate. Decide what treats you'll indulge in and come up with a plan. Maybe you'll be extra careful to keep your eating healthy all day and indulge in some sweets or ice cream in the evening. Make a plan. Prepare. Alcohol is what most adults treat themselves with at the end of a long day. Make sure you have an alternative."

— BOOM community member

One Last Thing Before You Begin

You don't need to have everything figured out. You don't need to feel ready. You don't need to believe yet that this will work. You just need to begin.

Set a small goal first — seven days, ten days. Before you reach it, extend it. Build on each success rather than sitting at the finish line wondering whether to keep going. The momentum you create in those first days is more powerful than you know.

Be ABSOLUTELY kind to yourself. Selfish, even.

— *BOOM community member*

The only thing that got me through was, one day at a time. Saying that I did set short term goals and marked them in a TRY DRY app.

Boom was a lifesaver and still is, asking questions and seeking reassurance daily. Plus checking in daily too. I always felt my posts were dull and boring but despite that I took the time to do it.

Read, read, read , listen to podcasts every day and sleep. Go to bed early and without guilt. Eat earlier in the evening and enjoy popcorn and hot chocolate.

Walking daily outside was a massive boost, often I literally dragged myself outside., but always felt better for it.

Keeping reasonably positive and keeping hold of the fact that things WILL get better. Some days you just have to white knuckle it and that's ok.

Trust the long-term sober Boomers, they all agree, and reach out for advice, they give it generously and with love - BOOM community member

— *BOOM community member*

Trust your decision to quit drinking in the first place, it comes from the logical, self preserving part of your brain. Eliminate the bargaining and rationalizing with the self-destructive part of your brain. It's an internal struggle, alcohol has no voice or consciousness, it's just a chemical compound.

— *BOOM community member*

Tips and Tools from Our Community for Your First 30 days Alcohol-free

the following quotes are from members of Boom

Begin with the right frame of mind: Fall in love with sobriety, it may not be a steady upward curve but generally the longer you go alcohol free in the early days the more you feel well body and mind, RUN WITH THAT. Never forget how awful alcohol makes you feel by contrast, and stay true to your best self, who you can also fall in love with anew. Pay attention to the moments of relief you feel by gaining your freedom, like getting through something tough without alcohol, and having no regrets. You are more likely to make good clear decisions and get more done. Enjoy yourself with new experiences, life is for the plucking now! Let the good stuff snowball and leave the past behind. ■ Believe in yourself!!

Surf the urge. There will be lots of triggers that will tell your brain you need to have a drink. Instead of reaching for alcohol, sit still and close your eyes and visualize yourself surfing the urge to drink. Soon the wave will pass and you can get on with your day.

Be really kind to yourself. I remember, in the first many months, waves of unexplained crabbiness, depression, feeling down. But just as mysteriously, the moods would pass. Great advice here on Boom was to just snuggle on the couch, watch a movie, be really kind to your healing mind and body. Better days come around without fail.

Things that definitely worked for me: When I felt like I wasn't sure I could really stop, I took it one day at a time. Some days, I took it one hour at a time. Make amazing mocktails. Eat dinner way earlier than usual (that one was a life-changer). L-Glutamine helped with cravings. Write down every single ugly thing you can remember about drinking and then read it when you aren't feeling strong. Rest when you are tired. Snuggle in a blanket and watch a movie when you are crabby. Wake up feeling great every morning and feel the gratitude!

Put as much time and energy into not drinking as you've been putting in to planning your drinking, drinking and recovering from drinking. You'll probably find it's a lot of time. Don't let things sit in your head getting bigger and bigger - get them out - post here, or elsewhere talk to someone, journal for yourself. Especially if you're thinking about drinking. Change your routine so the absence of drinking isn't front and centre. Drinking Jo used to stay up late, and fall out of bed at the last possible minute. AF Jo goes to bed early and gets up early. Because I drank when I was cooking, I did some of my cooking first thing in the morning, ready for dinners later in the day. For the first few months, I made myself fancy AF drinks in pretty glasses - it helped divert my attention. Count how much money you're saving - if you're really honest with yourself, you'll be astonished. Don't worry if other people don't get it. They don't need to. Drinking Jo didn't understand people who didn't drink either.

I can do this (I can do this). I can do this (I can do this). I CAN DO THIS!

There are no ‘Magic Bullets’; Only you. All the advice and help is only as good as you want it to be – Every one of us is unique -The Answer is YOU – Listen, Read, Accept the advice – it is coming from those who have been there – are there. The most important person is you, without you – nothing happens. Use resources, use everything. If you really try and, take on board the experiences of those here who share – you will succeed.



If you are in your first weeks sober make staying sober the #1 priority and reduce stress as much as you possibly can. If you need to get takeout, leave the laundry in the dryer, let the dishes pile up ...it can all wait. Fill yourself up with sober material in whatever form you prefer... reading, podcasts, online community interaction, meetings etc. Move your body in a way you enjoy or makes you feel good–walk, stretch, bike, etc. Get support wherever you can! ☺ Above all else, believe you can do it and believe it’s worth it.



Stay sober TODAY and don’t worry about anything else for the time being. Make the journey all about you; what can I do for myself to make me feel better, meetings for connection, and find what works for you!



Hang in there and have a plan to get through the day and evening. No shops after 2pm and in bed by 8:30. Everyone’s experience is different. I didn’t experience the “pink cloud” at all in the first 30-40 days. In fact, for the most part, I felt physically and emotionally flat and tired. But it was WAY better than feeling tired, hungover, and crawling-out-of-my skin anxious. It gets better.



Here’s a backwards look at what worked/is working for me. Do all of the above, especially making a specific plan, and when necessary, try to get comfortable with discomfort. Breathe your way through the creepy crawly wine o’clocks if they come, and definitely distract yourself, but instead of pushing your feelings too far away, examine them as objectively as you can and keep reminding yourself that this too shall pass. If you find that you’re in more physical or emotional pain than you’re used to, remember that alcohol has been masking it and now you have a great opportunity to figure out new ways to deal with it head-on. But that doesn’t have to happen today, or this week, or this month. Write your feelings. Share them. Stick to getting through today and stick around the BOOM community.

If your grocery shop also sells booze/wine/beer like they do where I live, shop in the mornings. Do not attempt to swing by after work when you are hungry and tired and the drink now voice is strong.



I would talk out loud to myself. Sounds crazy, I know, but buying a box of wine and finishing it in two days is crazier. I would be in my kitchen shaking and crying and feeling like a bum telling myself out loud why I was doing it “*you dont need it, you’re gonna feel like shit tomorrow, something has to give or you’re gonna be dead before your 50, you can do this, just breathe, you’re gonna be ok*” **it helped me get through that 5 minutes when I was in my PJs and ready to put makeup and a new outfit on to go to the supermarket because “I HAVE TO have a drink”.** Like a pep talk to myself. Read a book about someone else’s victory, and find one that speaks your language. Check into BOOM and post, even if it’s just to physically type ‘*day 4 sober*’. Get that shit out of your house and I got rid of ALL my glasses. They were a major trigger. Just seeing them, even a regular juice glass, which I was using cuz they hold a ton of poison, made my heart go pitty-pat.

Most of all remember you are not the first person in the world to do this and you don’t have some disgusting defect you are very simply making a change .



Keep going till the prickliness goes and you start to feel squishy inside again, then ride that wave and use the feeling as your motivation.



I think not drinking for 100 days gives you plenty of opportunities to try new things! Paint your nails; go for a walk; watch an exercise video online; pick a book (you can join our book club); make a healthy meal; find a new AF drink; write 3 pages longhand about yourself; turn on music and dance, find a sound bath meditation on YouTube and let the healing energy soak in! Also, spend a day (or a week) practicing re-wiring your brain. Do things differently! For example, try using your non-dominant hand to do things like brush teeth, brush hair, open doors. Use a different coffee mug. Sit in a different chair at work meetings. Sleep on the opposite side of the bed! Put on your socks before your pants or shirt before pants (anything other than what is usual). There is research that says doing small things in a different manner can help start those neurotransmitters firing in different directions, and that's been the key to change for me!



Distract. Go to bed early. Get a routine going. It doesn’t matter how dull everything feels right now, just as long as you’re racking up sober days so you can heal. For me it was reading. Quit lit especially but fiction or memoir, not instruction. I’d already read all the Annie Grace and Allen Carr I could stomach back to front a million times (with notes and highlighting) No need to keep beating it into my brain and honestly, my brain really didn’t work anyway those first few months. Don’t get frustrated with the brain fog. Be patient with yourself and stay focused on simple, physical stuff. Lots of sugary desserts (if that’s your thing) and a PLAN for each night after 3 pm. Okay, today I’m gonna stop for a fancy coffee, go home, make dinner, then read in the bath. And sometimes I’m going to fall apart halfway through dinner, barely finish it up, tell my family I feel sick, go up to bed, cry, journal, read the same page of a book over and over. And that’s okay. But I will not drink NO MATTER WHAT.

Consider each day as an “adventure” – what will life today be like while I’m alcohol-free? Pay attention to how you are feeling, what you’re thinking, what you’re observing and see it as part of your experiment for TODAY. Tomorrow will be a new experiment. For today, just see how you’re doing. Remember – alcohol has neurological and physiological consequences – it takes time for your body to heal from these, so it will be easy and hard, depending on this healing process. Be patient and gentle with your mind and body.



1. Create a safe and calm space where you can retreat and shut down if need be.
2. Schedule exercise into your life. I like group classes.
3. Read! Read! Read!
4. Take it one day at a time. Treat every day as day 1 and don’t get too hung up on the actual number of days.
5. Be careful around the day 17/18 mark.
6. Put a picture of yourself as a kid on your home screen or laptop screensaver.
7. Do yoga.
8. Be kind to yourself
7. Sober treats!! Shopping, have cake in the house, lucky charms for me!
8. Have lots of AF drinks in the house.
9. Plan to give yourself a treat at the same time you normally pour a drink so you have something to look forward to at the same time of day.
10. Structuring your week helps but definitely your evenings (our brains like to know what’s happening next so do exactly the same thing for a few evenings in a row, same timings)

Smile

Breathe

Repeat



Definitely try to lean in to the discomfort. Look at it and try to understand that this discomfort is the feeling of you making progress. That is what worked for me. I think someone wrote me early on and said – it does get easier – and I held on to that belief. That idea that it has to be uncomfortable before it gets better – but that it really does get better. And it does. Yoga helped me. I think because it forces that ‘being’ in your body and breathing through it. And yes, go to bed early. Treat yourself like you are the most important person in the world. Be selfish. Eat what you want. Treat yourself! Every single week you are sober – you get to do something special for yourself. And reach out here. We will send you tons of love.



“Drinking is an activity. When you suddenly stop drinking it helps to have other activities to fill the empty space. Prepare to combat this feeling of emptiness by picking up some books you’d like to read. Decide to learn to knit and get the supplies you’ll need. Decide to learn to paint or get an adult coloring book and set up a play list to distract and inspire you.”

Remember! One of the reasons that people feel raw, exposed, and vulnerable when they stop drinking, is that their brains haven't learned how to shoot out that "feel good" chemical dopamine without the alcohol key in the ignition. The path in early sobriety or intermittent sobriety is all about that "pull" but also all about getting past it. Getting free! Some people do a flawless job of getting and staying sober, but for many it's a process and a path strewn with stumbles and falls. And it's human nature to focus on the disappointments and not upon the gains. Making yourself accountable in a supportive community, checking off successful days in an active and positive way, is the beginning of retraining your brain to feel good naturally.



Sometimes you literally have to resort to reminding yourself that "The Only Way Out Is Through", "Get Comfortable with Being Uncomfortable" and "Just do The Next Right Thing". The next right thing will not be drinking because you have accepted this challenge to live alcohol-free for 100 days. Remember your why and stay focused on knowing that you can indeed do this.



Find more thoughts from our Boom Rethink the Drink Community inside the app using the active link from the Introduction in the online version of this 100 Days alcohol-free workbook.

Read the posts in Getting Started Alcohol-Free . A section inside Boom that is full of posts written by our members about the "How To's" of staying alcohol-free in the first months.

Read the comments to this question in BOOM – What Advice Would You Give Our New Members About Those first 30 or 40 Days .

Please post often. You can write as much or as little as you'd like in your posts. Start by telling us why you're here. What do you hope to achieve?

Ask questions, offer support, tell us about yourself.



Stay in the Day You're In

Thinking beyond the day you are in can be exhausting and overwhelming.

Whether you call it "One Day At a Time" or "Stay in the Day You're In", there is no more important tool.

You know your Why.

You've done your Research.

You have prepared.

You have a great team to help you work through the tough spots and celebrate the great moments.

"When I stopped thinking, *I can never drink again*, and started thinking, *I will not drink today*, staying Alcohol-Free became much easier. It's not a magic pill and I do still have tough days, but focusing on today and today only takes a huge amount of pressure off. Instead of feeling the weight of "forever" on my shoulders, I only feel the weight of today. Believe me, today by itself is a lot lighter than even "today and tomorrow." There have actually been times when I've told myself, "Sure, you can drink tomorrow! You can drink as much as you want tomorrow!" Then tomorrow becomes today and all I have to focus on is, "I will not drink today."

My son has a hard time with understanding this approach. At first he thought it meant that I was somehow giving myself permission to drink again at some undefined point in the future. I think he's got the idea now, because he tells me sometimes, "I know that you can only promise you won't drink today, but I really hope it's forever." My answer to that is always, "I feel the exact same way."

One Day At a Time (ODAAT) explained :

"The past doesn't matter and the future isn't promised to you, so there's just the moment we're in."
from 'Transmetropolitan' by Warren Ellis

Only today (and tomorrow is today again) is and always will be my mantra!! During the first few weeks I repeatedly 'promised' the wine witch that I could drink 'tomorrow' just to get her to shut up!! I still freak out at the thought of 'never' drinking again or staying AF 'forever'

That ties in though with my outlook on life in general- thoughts of forever or never freak me out! Does that make me a person who does not like commitments? I don't think so! I just know that life is fleeting and the only time I have influence over is NOW. I set my intention for the day each morning – I make today my best day, I make today's decision not to drink non- negotiable.

Staying sober One Day at a Time, really takes away the pressure from focusing on things in the future and concentrating on the here and now. Why stress over tomorrow when it is completely out of our hands? We can actually do something about today. Today I am alcohol free! Tomorrow can wait."

"The future is made up of only one substance and that is the present moment. By taking care of the present, you are doing everything you can to assure a good future."

-Thich Nhat Hanh



THE FIRST WEEK SURVIVAL GUIDE

What to expect—and what to do —hour by hour

Hours 1–6 **Feel it**
You may feel fine, relieved, even euphoric. Ride this. Tell someone you trust what you're doing. Remove alcohol from the house if you can.

Find more at www.Boozemusings.com — search -You are Allowed to Change

Hours 6–12 **The fog rolls in**
Anxiety, restlessness and mild headache are common as your nervous system recalibrates. This is biology, not weakness. Drink water constantly. Have a sugary snack — your blood sugar is adjusting.

Find more at www.Boozemusings.com — search -Alcohol, Anxiety and Sobriety

Hours 12–24 **The hardest stretch**
Sleep may be difficult and cravings can peak. If you experience shaking, sweating or feel very unwell, contact your GP — withdrawal can be serious for heavy drinkers. For most people: a warm bath, a film, early bed. Tomorrow is different.

Find more at www.Boozemusings.com — search - How to get a Good Nights Sleep When You Stop Drinking

Day 2 **Fragile but functional**
Acetaldehyde —alcohol's toxic by-product — fully clears today. You may feel emotionally raw. This is normal. Eat properly. Step outside even briefly. Avoid caffeine in the evening. Tell the Boom community how you're doing.

Find more at www.Boozemusings.com — search - Day 2 Sober

Day 3 **The turning point**
Many people hit a wall on day 3 — low mood, poor sleep, irritability. This is peak neurological adjustment. It passes. Plan something for today that isn't sitting at home. A walk, a call, a coffee shop. Urges last 15–20 minutes. Surf them.

Find more at www.Boozemusings.com — search - Walk With Me Into Lasting Change

Day 4–5 **Glimpses of better**
REM sleep begins returning. You may notice vivid dreams — your brain catching up on lost restorative sleep. Energy flickers back. Skin looks slightly better. The voice in your head gets quieter. Notice and name what's improving.

Find more at www.Boozemusings.com — search - Guide to your First Month Sober

Day 6–7 **You made a week**
Blood pressure is dropping. Liver fat is already reducing. You've broken the daily habit loop. One week is not nothing — it's the hardest week there is. Acknowledge it. Plan your next milestone. Day 30 is closer than it feels.

The 15-minute rule

Most cravings peak and pass within 15–20 minutes. You don't have to beat it — you just have to wait it out.

Find more at www.Boozemusings.com — search - Beating Back Alcohol Cravings and SOS Cravings post

Boozemusings is a lifestyle blog and the BOOM Community is a peer support group. We are NOT trained addiction counselors but simply a community of people who have overcome or are overcoming alcohol issues. We do not provide medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment, nor does anything on our websites or in the following pages create a physician/patient relationship. If you require medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment, please consult your physician.

Your First Month Alcohol-Free

What to Expect — Week by Week

Nobody tells you quite what the first month feels like from the inside. The First Week Survival Guide preceding this page, walks you through the first seven days hour by hour. This page takes you further — through the weeks that follow — so that nothing catches you off guard and everything that feels strange feels expected instead.

"The only difference between those further along in sobriety and you is time. When they say it gets better and it's worth it — believe them. They've figured something out to get where they are."

— BOOM community member

Days 1–3: The Only Way Out Is Through

Day one is often easier than you expect. You are focused, steady, comforted by your decision. You may sleep relatively well. Drink plenty of water — aim for three litres to help your body detox and reduce anxiety.

Days two and three are where the real work begins. Minutes can pass slowly. Your mind may race. Emotions arrive like an angry toddler — loud, irrational, hard to manage. Your brain will offer perfectly reasonable-sounding arguments for drinking:

'You weren't that bad.' / 'Just start again tomorrow.' / 'Just one won't hurt.'

This is your addicted brain fighting back. It will sound exactly like your own thoughts. The only way to tell the difference is to examine the content — if the proposal isn't good for you, it is not you. Name it. Don't negotiate with it. Get through the next five minutes.

Physical symptoms in these early days may include headaches, sweating, sleep difficulties, vivid dreams, fatigue, restlessness and anxiety. A hot bath with Epsom salts, light movement, and early nights all help. If you experience tremors or shaking, contact your doctor — withdrawal can be serious for heavy drinkers and medical support is always available.

"White-knuckle willpower — yes, you'll need it at times. Just hang on minute by minute. Use meditation, tea, reading, sleep aids — whatever it takes. If you hit your bed sober at the end of the day, you win."

— BOOM community member

Days 4–7: Building Momentum

Something begins to shift around day four. The acute physical symptoms start to ease. Sleep is still disrupted but improving. REM cycles — the restorative sleep that alcohol suppresses — begin to lengthen and deepen. Many people notice vivid dreams during this period. This is your brain catching up on lost rest. It is a good sign.

This is also the week to set your first milestone goal clearly. Seven days. Just seven days. And the key — move your goal before you reach it. On day five of a seven-day goal, extend it to ten days. This keeps you always building rather than sitting at the finish line wondering whether to continue.

Your first sober weekend deserves special attention. Clear your calendar of anything alcohol-centered. Accept that you need to feel quiet and safe. Plan something productive for the space — a deep clean, a project, a long walk, a film you have been meaning to watch. This is not passive. It is protective.

"FOMO will try to sabotage you. Push back against your inner toddler. If you don't think you can handle an event, don't go. Make it your house rule. You've spent years drinking. You can miss a few social events."

— *BOOM community member*

Days 8–14: Sober Treats and New Tools

By the end of the first week, blood pressure is dropping and liver fat is already beginning to reduce. You have made it through the hardest seven days there are — the days when your body was recalibrating and every hour felt like a negotiation. The daily habit loop is not broken yet — that typically happens somewhere around days ten to twelve — but you have interrupted it. You have proven to yourself that you can get through a day without drinking. That proof is everything. Acknowledge it properly.

Now is the time to introduce sober treats deliberately and intentionally. Not as consolation prizes but as genuine rewards — signals to your brain that sobriety comes with real pleasure, not just absence.

"Identify them as sober treats. Say to yourself — this is a sober treat, I am proud of you. Say it when you buy it and again when you use it. As people with drinking problems, we don't nurture ourselves. Sober treats teach you to care for yourself in healthy ways."

— *BOOM community member*

By day fourteen, blood pressure reductions are already measurable. The skin's ability to retain moisture is improving. Many people notice their faces look less puffy. Energy is flickering back. The voice in your head is getting quieter. Notice and name what is improving — write it down.

Days 15–21: The Game Changes

Something shifts in the second and third week that is hard to describe and easy to feel. Around days ten to twelve, the daily habit loop breaks — the automatic, conditioned reach for a drink at a certain time of day begins to lose its grip. By the end of the third week many people find that things feel measurably easier. The white-knuckling eases. The cravings arrive less frequently and pass more quickly. The gap between wanting a drink and not having one begins to feel less like deprivation and more like choice.

What takes considerably longer — often a year or two — is the deeper rewiring of the neural pathways that alcohol hijacked for pleasure and reward. Be patient with yourself on that longer journey. The daily battle gets easier long before the deeper healing is complete.

"Return of abilities: focus, clarity, intellectual rigour, drive and creativity return far sooner than you expect. The fog lifts within weeks, not months."

— *BOOM community member*

If you hit a wall around days seventeen or eighteen — low mood, sudden intense craving, a feeling of flatness — know that this is common and it passes. It is a known dip in the early sobriety curve. It does not mean you are failing. It means you are healing.

Stay close to BOOM during this period. Post even when — especially when — you have nothing particular to say.

Days 22–30: Approaching the First Milestone

By the final week of your first month, liver fat reduction is approaching fifteen percent in clinical studies. Blood glucose levels are falling. The gut microbiome is recovering. Immune function is strengthening. Sleep is deeper. You are waking up refreshed rather than drained.

Emotionally, this period can bring a complicated mix of pride and vulnerability. The pink cloud — that early euphoria some people feel — may or may not have arrived for you. If it hasn't, that is not a sign that something is wrong. Some people feel flat and fragile throughout the first month. The gains are happening in the biology whether or not you can feel them yet.

"I didn't experience the pink cloud at all in the first thirty to forty days. In fact for the most part I felt physically and emotionally flat and tired. But it was WAY better than feeling tired, hungover and crawling-out-of-my-skin anxious. It gets better."

— BOOM community member

Day thirty is a genuine milestone. Mark it. Celebrate it. Tell BOOM. Tell yourself. You have done something that a version of you — not very long ago — did not believe was possible.

And then extend your goal. Because day thirty is not the finish line. It is the place where the real work begins to feel like real life.

A Note on the Weeks Ahead

The second month is often quieter than the first. The drama of early withdrawal has passed. The novelty of sobriety has settled into routine. This is where the deeper work happens — understanding your triggers, rebuilding your sense of self, discovering who you are and what you enjoy when alcohol is not organizing everything around it.

By day sixty, anxiety scores are measurably improving. The prefrontal cortex shows improved function. By day ninety, cancer risk biomarkers are falling. By day one hundred, you have transformed your biology.

This is not willpower. This is biology.

Prompt for your journal or post your answers in BOOM:

Where are you right now in this timeline? What has surprised you most about how the first days or weeks have felt? What do you wish you had known before you started? Write it out — and if you're willing, share it in BOOM. Your experience is exactly what someone a week behind you needs to read.

Find more at www.Boozemusings.com — search First Month Sober, What to Expect, Sober Milestones

Understanding the Chemical Hooks Perspective from members of our Boom Community

Before you begin your 100-day challenge it's important to understand how alcohol affects you. Whether or not you personally are addicted alcohol is addictive. Alcohol contains chemical that grab you and make sure you keep coming back for more. Understanding what those chemical hooks are will help you understand why you feel deprived when you stop drinking. Understanding that the feeling of deprivation is artificial, will help you look for satisfaction in other ways.

In the Boozemusings blog version of this workbook - [Join us for a 100 Day Alcohol-Free Challenge](#) - you'll these video links

- What Alcohol Does to Your Body, Brain & Health from Huberman Labs
- Dr. Anna Lembke & Steven Bartlett: Dopamine Hacks & Alcohol's Impact Explained in 10 Minutes

If you haven't watched these they are well worth your time to look up.

On the following pages you'll find 4 articles written by members of our Boom Rethink the Drink Community. For more thoughts on this and other subjects from members of Boom search - *30 posts for 30 days To Help You Quit Drinking* - or - *Sober Milestones* at www.Boozemusings.com

Be With the Drool

In the sobriety and recovery circles I've been hanging around for the past couple years, so many people talk about their struggle and setbacks with alcohol as a personal failure.

"I can't get this. How can anyone be so stupid? I feel so ashamed. There's something wrong with me."

And that vicious cycle of desperately wanting to/trying to stop the madness and stay off the rat wheel, yet finding that so damn hard, has them lashed to a downward spiral of discouragement headed for the deep dark jungles of self-loathing and despair. I'm here to say there is nothing wrong with you beyond being human!— but that is, in itself, a mind-blowing complexity.

You are a fully conscious being, capable of imagining unlimited possibilities and (at least in theory) capable of creating anything you can imagine. Take a moment to let that soak in. We can dream, create, accomplish, plan, collaborate, communicate, execute, inspire, motivate, catalyze, heal, transform, transcend, and defy all odds, including at times, the laws of nature and the boundaries of time and space. We not only have the power of thought, but we can also be the witness and observe our own thoughts. In order to free up lots of bandwidth for all those superpowers, our incredibly efficient brain wants to cruise-control through anything that no longer requires attention/thinking.

The area of the brain that handles these off-loaded automatic responses is called the limbic system. Here is where we find motivation, emotion, learning, and memory along with survival instincts including arousal, fear response, and conditioned responses to pain and pleasure. This so-called "primitive" part of our brain connects us most closely to our animal nature.

Yup, in a very real sense, we are just like Pavlov's dogs: We can be conditioned (or condition ourselves) into just about any non-thinking, automated, subconscious response through REWARD or PUNISHMENT. Most of us know that process by its nickname, Habit—our best friend and our worst enemy. In a perfect world, our habits would all be positive. But we don't live in a perfect world, not even close.

When such deep under-belly influences like memory, motivation, pain, pleasure, and survival are involved, no wonder unproductive or harmful habits are so easy to fall into and so hard to pull away from. We can feel stuck dealing with unresolved past/present pain, anxiety, and fear or we might feel dead inside because our brain got used to super-nova dopamine fireworks.

In both cases, the hijacked limbic brain starts screaming: YOU NEED THIS FOR YOUR SURVIVAL! WE'RE GONNA DIE WITHOUT IT!

Of course, that scream is on a frequency that only your subconscious can hear because even your primitive brain knows that your rational mind won't buy that one! The voices in your rational mind are ever so charming and clever and convincing and inviting and captivating, like "You deserve this!" Or how about, "Just one drink tonight, it's good to loosen up and not be so rigid." I know that everyone out here can insert some lines of their own right here.

So let's start by getting over any sense of shame in falling prey to addiction. I don't care what terrible low you just hit or where you've been or how dark your story is. Maybe you slid into a habit that is becoming troublesome or maybe you've tumbled all the way into full-blown addiction, but your brain was doing exactly what it was created to do.

It's so easy in today's crazy, scary, stressed-out world for the brain to get hijacked by a substance or activity that helps us feel less pain or more pleasure or both. At least, in the beginning, it seems to "fix" something or represent some kind of upper or good time. By the time "good" has soured or turned into "terrible," many of us are hooked. And let's face it. Anyone involved at all in modern life is bombarded by opportunities and media invitations to escape, medicate, tune out, turn on, calm down, get high.

There's nothing mysterious or unusual about ending up in battle with an addiction, the only mystery is finding your way out. Your path to freedom. What works for you.

Which brings us back to our beautiful brain and Pavlov's dogs: Surely you know the experiment: Pavlov rang a bell each time he fed the dogs. After some time, he rang the bell and they started to salivate in anticipation of being fed—but no food showed up. The drooling and anticipation at the sound of the bell went on for a while, but eventually, the "conditioned" association and physiological response faded completely.

Our sober journeys may vary greatly, but one thing we all seem to share is the misery of dealing with cravings and/or urges—and my personal favorite, related obsessive thoughts. It just might be helpful for some of us to visualize what's going on as BELLS and DROOL.

The bells are anything that we've identified as a trigger, which is a pretty easy mystery to solve because it comes before the drool. I know the list can be long. Happy, sad, depressed, manic, bored, hungry, lonely, emotional pain, physical pain, bad news, good news, grief, celebrations—people, places, and things including time of day. Fill in your own blanks, most of us can do that pretty well. So much for the BELLS.

Planning for known BELLS is a huge part of this work: Changing up routines, avoiding some things, finding new activities and new associations. Seeking out alternative rewards or pleasurable distractions (or just effective distractions, don't ask for the moon). That's not all we have to do, but it does make the rest of our job easier.

The real work is learning how to BE WITH THE DROOL and not fall prey to the scream for the old reward. It's uncomfortable for sure, no one likes the feeling of an itch they can't scratch. How long will it last? How strong will it be? Who knows. That's where your planning becomes pure

gold. You can white- knuckle through anything, but why set yourself up for that? Life is going to toss enough surprises your way and blindside you now and then, so PLAN WHERE YOU CAN. BEING WITH THE DROOL doesn't mean resisting:

What we resist persists because it sinks us into internal conflict. No one enjoys wrestling with alligators. Being with the drool means just that, letting it BE there and staying as peaceful as possible as you observe all the thoughts and emotions and sensations bubbling up. If possible, grab a journal and write out every thought and feeling. If you are into EFT (Emotional Freedom Techniques), Tapping is another incredibly helpful thing to do with a drool. This is also the time to reach for your arsenal of tools and resources, to connect with your chosen social community like BOOM, and basically gather around yourself any and all support that strengthens your resolve. If you think that being with the drool and just riding/tapping/writing it out sounds wildly impossible, IT IS NOT. This is nothing more than a practiced skill. And like any skill, results are not likely to be instantly perfect. When we were babies, no one questioned whether we would learn to walk, no matter how many times we crashed into things or fell down. They had no trouble trusting that we would eventually get the knack. We can trust that now.

And here's some truly GREAT NEWS about our animal nature: Without the old reward, that drool is going to fade in length and intensity. It's possible that a good 20 sessions of being with the drool without resisting or giving in might cut the strength in half. Why not test that theory out? Be curious, be full of wonder. SMART Recovery even recommends keeping a simple Urge Log with date, trigger, duration, intensity, and outcome.

It is a FACT that unrewarded conditioned responses will grow weaker and fade away. Hopefully, in the meantime, you are creating NEW incredible habit loops and conditioned responses based on the rewards of healthy food and delicious AF drinks, creative pursuits, productivity, true friends, and all the things in life that are bright and beautiful.

That's right! Our habit loops and reward-conditioning works FOR US too! Finding things that give you true pleasure and peace and happiness means that before long your urges and cravings will be for things like daily exercise, yoga class, the next creative project, new adventures, time in Mother Nature, meditation, connection, and quality time for your children or family or friends.

Just one more important thing to remember:

Behaviorists have proven that intermittent rewards create the strongest, longest-lasting response. A conditioned response will die fairly quickly when the reward disappears completely. If you intermittently reinforce the reward, the conditioned response hangs around a LOT longer. That's why being relentless in our quest for an alcohol-free life is the quickest, easiest, most painless way through. Slips and stumbles are so easy to rationalize but they prolong that damn itch and can even make it more miserably stronger than it was before.

We all learned to walk for God's sake. We can all learn the simple skill we need to dry up that dreaded drool for good.

Who out there wants to join me in "being with the drool" and watching it fade into nothingness?
Bow! Wow! Ruff! Ruff! Woof! Woof!

Let's wag more and bark less!

— *BOOM community member*

WHY I DRANK ALCOHOL EVEN THOUGH IT CAUSED ME SO MUCH PAIN

I used to believe my drinking was abnormal.

Now I believe what I was going through was more 'normal' than I ever imagined.

Secretly hundreds of thousands of people are scratching their heads in shame and fear as to why they drink too much alcohol.

Hiding the 'secret.'

I now know that many many people struggle to control the drug alcohol.

Look at us all here.

Look at all the books being written. Articles and podcasts discussing how to control your alcohol intake.

Sites springing up all over the World like this one to help give support to those struggling with alcohol.

Before I joined the site I didn't discuss it or admit to the struggle within.

Everyone who decides to drink alcohol uses it in that moment because it affects them.

I used it FOR that effect.

I became far too dependent on the effect.

I truly believed I needed to get that effect from alcohol – and so used the drug alcohol for the wrong reasons.

To mask my feelings, enhance my feelings, stop my feelings.

I become dependent on that drug to do that for me. I thought I needed it to do that for me.

I wasn't per se craving alcohol – I was craving a change in mood.

When I was anxious, angry, sad, tired, happy, jealous, bored, fed up, looking for a 'gift to give myself.'

I leaned on alcohol as an easy way to change my mood. An easy option to use.

Use a socially acceptable drug.

A legal drug.

Since I'd found it I hadn't grown emotionally.

My emotional growth stunted because I never learned to find other ways to change my mood. To cope with my boredom. My constantly buzzing thoughts. Cope with the ups and downs of my life.

At first, when I became AF it was very frightening. Totally alien territory.

No it wasn't easy at first but I held on this time.

Determined.

Sometimes became angry that I was not like 'other people.'

You know the ones who can give or take a drink?

But now I see that they don't need alcohol to cope with life. It doesn't mean they don't struggle at times but they had learned other coping strategies to get through their life.

They weren't dependent on alcohol as a crutch.

Only by living without alcohol can I 'grow' and learn ways to live my life without feeling my easy option is alcohol.

For too long I didn't believe that was possible.

In fact I COULDN'T believe that WAS possible.

Not until I actually stayed AF for a long time.

Learned to live with my emotions and mood swings.

Learned other ways to change my emotions and mood swings.

Only then did I realize that I can actually do this 'living life' thing on my own.

I still have good days and bad days, that will never change.

The difference is that I'm so much happier to live through them without relying on alcohol to get me through.

The following paragraph about dopamine is not my writing but gives me some insight into what I was doing wrong by using alcohol when there are many other ways to get your mood change without using alcohol. It was those other ways I had to learn and it took a long time to accept them as alternatives. Alcohol was an 'easy' option which gave me my dopamine hit quickly. Other options (the ones in capitals at the bottom of the page) take a bit more effort and time and there's many many more options not just those in the list. Maybe you can add to them in the comments. For me – despite my discomforts at first – they have become better options than poisoning my body with a drug that has so many negative side effects.

What Is Dopamine?

from Alcohol and Dopamine

“Dopamine is a neurotransmitter — a chemical messenger that carries signals between brain cells and communicates information throughout the body.

The brain uses billions of neurotransmitters to manage everything from our breathing to our heartbeat to our digestion.”

“Alcohol has a powerful effect on dopamine activity in the brain. When we drink, the brain's so-called reward circuits are flooded with dopamine. This produces euphoric feelings — or what we recognize as feeling “buzzed.”

Dopamine also activates memory circuits in other parts of the brain that remember this pleasant experience and leave you thirsting for more. But over time, alcohol can cause dopamine levels to plummet, leaving you feeling miserable and desiring more alcohol to feel better.”

“ACTIVITIES SUCH AS EATING, HUGGING, CONNECTING WITH OTHERS, MEDITATION, GETTING ENOUGH SLEEP AND EXERCISING CAN GENERATE DOPAMINE PRODUCTION IN THE BRAIN

— BOOM community member

I chose to not drink without making any fuss about it, even with family - I'd had a few health issues, said I was on a health kick and basically left it at that. In private I stocked up on lovely teas, fruitcake and no sugar ginger beer and luckily found Boom. I bought myself some pretty things just because they made me happy.... There's a lot to be said for treating yourself.

— BOOM community member

Realize that after the hangover has worn off and your body has had some time to heal, you will develop a kind of amnesia. There is a term for it but I have forgotten what it is. You start to forget how bad you felt that morning you swore off alcohol. You start to tell yourself that it wasn't so bad and maybe you over reacted to one hangover. If you have journaled or posted here during those first few days, go back and read what you wrote and try to relive those feelings you had that drove you to swear off alcohol. OR, if you haven't written it down, scroll through posts here and you will surely find one from someone on day 1 and imagine yourself there. Sometimes we need to be reminded. There is so much glamour and joy marketed around alcohol but it is all just marketing. None of it is true.

— BOOM community member

The alcohol effect on middle aged “fun” sensors

There is a lot of science out there about the chemistry of the brain and the effect of alcohol on it. The bottom line from all research whether pro or anti-alcohol is more or less the same. Alcohol affects the brain, PERIOD!!!!

I would love to go out there and do tons of research, but neither Beers-are-US or Fuzzy-but- Deadly, are willing to give me a grant to study the negative effect of alcohol on humans. Why did I pick those two, they were the first ones to come to mind since the first one makes enough beer to drown a continent and the other makes nice fuzzy, fruity, innocent tasting drinks that KILL. Obviously, I did not put the name of real alcohol producers since they would sue my knickers off!

I have been a member of Boom Rethink the Drink for a bit now, and I have heard many stories which have convinced me further that I should continue to pursue an alcohol free lifestyle. A lot of testimony showed me that not only are there triggers that get us to drink, or re-start drinking, there are TURNING POINTS in our lives, events that gets us started. None of the people in my community, including me, have just woken up one morning and said “I am going to start getting drunk every day from now on and make sure I never go to bed sober because it seems like a fun thing to do”. Sometimes, it is a relationship that goes sour, a health incident or being around people that drink and make you feel like that is the only way.

Based on that observation, I decided to try to find what that moment was for me. When did I start thinking that being sober is no fun whatsoever... Interesting, I just said: “FUN”. When did life start to be less fun for my brain and it needed to be chemically fooled into thinking it was having fun!

Here is an excerpt from scientific research on alcohol and dopamine:

“ Some of the better researched neurotransmitter systems with which alcohol interacts are the following:

Endorphins: Alcohol affects the endorphin system in a manner similar to opiates, acting as a pain-killer and giving an endorphin “high”

Dopamine: All drugs which lead to dependence appear to affect the dopamine system. Stimulants like amphetamine and cocaine affect dopamine directly whereas other drugs appear to affect it indirectly. In this article we will review the research on the effect of alcohol on dopamine

Norepinephrine: Also known as noradrenaline. Alcohol causes a release of norepinephrine in the brain which is one reason why alcohol acts as a stimulant and not just as a depressant.

Adrenaline: Alcohol causes the adrenal glands to release adrenaline–this is another reason why alcohol has stimulant properties. The adrenaline is carried to the brain via the bloodstream.

Alcohol does not lead to an increase of dopamine throughout the brain; it only causes an increase in dopamine in the area of the reward pathway (Boileau et al 2003) <https://hams.cc/dopamine.pdf>

Right there, I see three things: Dopamine, Endorphins and Adrenaline.

What is so special to me about those three? I LIKE THEM!!!!

Here are some examples:

Dopamine: I really, really enjoy sex. I don’t care what anyone thinks, a lot of us do. If you don’t that is your thing but it is fun with the right partner. It is relaxing, intimate and well, just plain FUN!!!!

Endorphins: When I exercise vigorously, my body releases those. So, I went to the gym, I got all pumped up and I felt good! I was having FUN!!! (Not to mention the other people in there wearing some outfits which leave little to the imaginations (there goes the dopamine dose (FUN!)))

Adrenaline: How many of you like a little thrill? Come on, get dressed in front of a window thinking that the neighbor might see you. Take that corner a little faster to see how it feels. I used to walk around the house naked all the time. I drove open wheel race cars around track at stupid speeds and waited to the last second to brake and almost scarred myself unconscious. I mountain biked in an area where people barely dared to walk. It was FUN!!!!

The thing is, because of time constraints and an unsupportive environment, I pretty well stopped going to the gym and even workout altogether. Life is too busy and there are too many things to do to bother. I have a partner for whom sex is not important, it is a chore and only performed to make sure the other doesn't stray. Finally, I am supposed to be mature so I should not speed or try to break my neck. My last recollection of trying to scare the living day lights out of me was a track day with a Porsche 911 Turbo (nicknamed "The widow maker"). That was early 2012. I honestly don't remember when I was in a gym last or work out vigorously.

So my three favorite natural molecules were pretty well no longer being fabricated by my body. I was no longer having FUN!

A number of not so fun events also happened from 2012 and that made matters worse. I will not get into that since you have had bad stuff happen to you too so fill in the blank. So, guess what started to ramp up during this time. That was way too easy right? Who said alcohol consumption? Give yourself a pat on the back, you win. Less "FUN" more BOOZE. More "You can't or should not do that" and more BOOZE.

Something as simple as a week camping, where suddenly pretty well everything I used to do is now dangerous, obscene, or inappropriate for a person my AGE! So the camping trip becomes a booze fest which is easy since so many people like to go camping to get drunk. I used to like it for the outdoors, the stupid sober stunts and nature! Drinking at every event turned into drinking when I get home from work (it is an event kind of) to drinking myself to a coma to go to sleep without thinking. My brain was having so much "FUN". I was feeding it all that liquid fun!

Then I woke up drunk and alone in a crowd . What a lucky, lucky, lucky turn of event! There were a few glimpses of my problem, like videos of me with my grandkids looking like a sad sack. I could see in the fog that changes were needed. I started reading posts in this community and saw myself in so many people. I saw what had happened to me. I needed less liquid "FUN" and to go back to the three more natural molecules in my life.

This is recent, I am only 19 days sober. Maybe I don't yet have the right to write this essay on alcohol but I really don't care what people think. The last 19 days have been the greatest most satisfying and painful kick in the back end I have had in a long time. Am I having fun yet? I wish I could say: "Absolutely" but one must be realistic so maybe a little with some rough days. I am way more lucid. Waking up without a hangover is... FUN!

Am I going to stick with it? I can't answer that but if I keep reading what is out there, I will be scared into sticking to it. Being scared releases Endorphin i.e. FUN!

It is time to be me again.

— *BOOM community member*

How to Override your Lizard Brain

Have you heard about your Lizard Brain? The part of your brain designed to keep you safe? That ancient brain that evolved when we lived in an older world with predators that wanted to eat us? That part of your brain still kicks in now in the 21st century. We may not be running from saber tooth tigers but our ancient, reflexive, lizard brain reacts when we feel threatened by stress, harassment, or physical or psychological abuse. When you drink you “evolve” that survival brain to see alcohol as the answer to danger.

The brain releases hormones leading to responses called fight, flight, freeze, flop, or friend.

The way the lizard brain operates for Fight, Flight etc... is not always helpful for modern-day life. Brain design as such, when it is releasing hormones to deal with a situation, will not overtly distinguish between a saber tooth tiger wanting to snack on you, and for example maybe... you having some work stress. When I'm stressed I feel overwhelmed and experience a paralysis of thought, so I can freeze and struggle to make decisions, or work my way through the mess. I can also fight (get stroppy and pick arguments with e.g. other car drivers) and go into flight (dicky tummy, manic gym work, housework), and sometimes I have experienced massive fatigue (flop I guess) when an issue has been going on for a long time.

The brain can react and escalate a situation at work, a FaceBook snub, a text where an 'x' was omitted, to 'crisis' level leaving you broadly in a Fight Flight Freeze, Flop or Friend response that would work well a few thousand years ago but not so well now.

This is where alcohol and other addictive substances and behaviours have filled a gap so powerfully to help us deal with modern life. This is why for many alcohol can become habit-forming because when these reactive trauma behaviours hit, they are very uncomfortable and we don't really have an appropriate outlet. We don't often run for our lives so we might grind our teeth for months causing headaches as well as toothache. Alcohol can 'dampen' these uncomfortable responses very quickly.

We need to train ourselves to climb down a bit from a bad situation and look at it objectively.

We need to train ourselves to sit quietly and evaluate the situation for what it really is.

This can be tricky when the paranoid boozier in us gets involved. When we get a craving it may be tied to a trigger – this might be real occurrence of something triggering or you might manufacture it. I self-sabotaged when I was drinking and I always told myself 'that was a hideous day at work! – It wasn't. It was normal or even fine, but I had to legitimize my drinking so saying it was 'fine' wouldn't do. IT WAS HIDEOUS! STRESS!

I had to learn to surf the urge when I found my lizard brain demanding the alcohol that I had taught it was the answer to stress.

Take the time to take 1 minute, 5 minutes, one hour, two hours, one day at a time, and surf that urge. Eat, meditate, walk, wash up, wash the car whatever it takes but look at what is happening with curiosity – that will bring the response down to something that is manageable. Is this a life-threatening situation? Will alcohol really solve the dilemma? and if it is still really hard it will fizzle out of its own accord after 2 to 2.5 hours or so.

When you drink habitually, not only does your brain learn that it needs alcohol to survive, but the withdrawal symptoms that you suffer when you stop can cause anxiety, stress, depression, and fear. That empty nervous feeling that at first, can only be appeased by adding back the alcohol.

So learn about your brain and how it's been changed by drinking. You can reverse the damage done and move forward to thrive rather than just survive!

— BOOM community member



Over time, alcohol slowly and seductively becomes the go to thing for pleasure. This happens so slowly that we don't realize it, even refusing to believe it. Alcohol is so fast, easy and effective at stimulating the pleasure centers in the brain that eventually, unconsciously, all the natural things we did for pleasure are overshadowed. So when we quit, we find we feel great at first, then, after a couple of weeks or months, we realize those natural things we did for pleasure don't seem to pack the same punch they used to and we begin to tell ourselves, only alcohol can give us pleasure. This is where the problem lies. We have to stay the course and be patient. The real stuff can give us the same pleasure but it takes a long time to achieve that and every time we have one drink we're back at square one. This sounds harsh but I believe it's the absolute truth.

— BOOM community member



Think of yourself as a non-drinker and act that way. And I mean REALLY know you're a non-drinker. I chose not to say or think that I had quit or given up alcohol because it made it sound like I was missing out. But seeing myself as a non-drinker, well, that was much easier on the addicted brain!

— BOOM community member



HANDLING SPECIFICS

H.A.L.T.(S.)

Understanding the acronym H.A.L.T, Hungry-Angry-Lonely-Tired (and Sad) is crucial. Everything you ever wanted to know about HALT is explained thoroughly in the post by this title on Boozemusings – *HALT: 4 Early Sobriety Triggers That Can Lead to Relapse*. Here is an abbreviated version.

When a craving hits, it rarely arrives out of nowhere. Most of the time there is something underneath it — a physical need, an emotion, or a situation that your brain has learned to answer with alcohol. The acronym H.A.L.T. is one of the most widely used tools in recovery because it simplifies something complex: understanding why staying alcohol-free feels harder at certain moments than others.

Before you reach for a drink, pause and ask yourself —

Am I Hungry? Am I Angry? Am I Lonely? Am I Tired? Am I Sad?

H — HUNGRY : That empty feeling at 4pm is real — and it is a trigger.

When you remove alcohol from your evening routine, your body still expects what it was used to receiving. A blood sugar crash in the late afternoon is one of the most common and easily overlooked triggers for alcohol cravings. The fix is beautifully simple: eat something. A hearty snack at 4pm or an early dinner can change everything in those first weeks.

What helps:

- Keep afternoon snacks ready every day
- Try an early dinner around 5pm
- Stay hydrated — thirst is often mistaken for craving
- Some find L-glutamine powder helpful for blood sugar balance (speak to your GP first)

Prompt for your journal or post your answers in BOOM:

What do I usually eat —or not eat—in the hours before I would typically drink? What could I prepare to have ready tomorrow afternoon?

A — ANGRY

Anger is powerful. Don't drink at it — lean into it.

Most habitual drinkers have learned to drink at anger. It became the way to mask the emotion, push it down, make it manageable. But drinking never actually resolved the anger — it inflamed it and left the problem unsolved. When anger arises in sobriety, it can feel enormous because for the first time you are feeling it fully and without a numbing agent.

What helps:

- Don't judge the feeling — just name it: 'I am angry right now'
- Let it wash over you like a wave. Lean in. It won't knock you down
- Breathe: slowly in through the nose, hold, out through the mouth
- Post in BOOM before you act on the feeling

Prompt for your journal or post your answers in BOOM:

Who or what am I most likely to feel angry at during this challenge? What is my plan for that moment?

L — LONELY (and Bored)

The emptiness isn't because you stopped drinking. It was created by the drinking.

Loneliness and boredom are among the most misunderstood feelings in early sobriety. It can feel like life is grey and empty without alcohol. But that emptiness was not waiting for you on the other side of sobriety — it was built by the addiction itself. Connection is the antidote. Reaching out to others, and reaching inward through writing, helps rebuild what alcohol quietly hollowed out.

What helps:

- Post in BOOM — even just to say how you're feeling today
- Have a list of distractions ready before the feeling arrives
- Reconnect with something you used to love before drinking took over
- Remember: the void shrinks the longer you stay alcohol-free

Prompt for your journal or post your answers in BOOM:

When am I most likely to feel lonely or bored during this challenge? What three things can I do in that moment instead of drinking?

T — TIRED

You crave the adrenaline kick, not the alcohol itself.

Alcohol is a depressant, so it seems strange to crave it when you're already tired. But alcohol also triggers a burst of adrenaline — that familiar lift when you pour the first drink. After a long day, when decision fatigue has worn you down, your brain reaches for the chemical cocktail it knows. Learning to let yourself genuinely rest — without that artificial lift — is one of the most important skills in early sobriety.

What helps:

- Give yourself permission to go to bed early — especially in the first month
- Replace the adrenaline trigger with a walk, a shower, or even dark chocolate
- Reduce big decisions after 5pm when you can
- Build a simple, predictable evening routine — your brain finds comfort in knowing what comes next

Prompt for your journal or post your answers in BOOM:

What does tired look like for me? Is it physical exhaustion, emotional depletion, or decision fatigue — or all three? What would genuine rest look like tonight?

S — SAD

Sadness is not a reason to drink. It is a reason to reach out.

Sadness arrives in early sobriety sometimes as a general low mood, sometimes as grief, sometimes as something harder to name. Alcohol offered an immediate, chemical way to lift or numb that feeling. Without it, you have to find another way through. The good news is that the ways through sadness that don't involve alcohol actually work — and they don't leave you feeling worse the next day.

What helps:

- Name it. Say out loud or write down: 'I am sad today'
- Treat yourself — something small and genuinely pleasurable
- Listen to music that lifts your mood (smiling, even artificially, releases mood chemicals in the brain)

What You May Feel

Grieving an Abusive Lover

"I once thought that alcohol was my confidant, my comfort, my power. I remember feeling that my bottle of wine was like a friend. A calm harbour at the end of the day. A lover who understood me and would soothe me. I remember the mourning for my lover when I left it behind."

— BOOM community member

"I spent so long thinking about how much I would lose if I gave alcohol up — it felt like I was losing my best friend. I spent days, weeks, months, years obsessing over this loss, without realizing that in the process, I had lost me."

— BOOM community member

The Relationship

For most habitual drinkers, alcohol was not just a substance. It was a relationship. It was a companion at the end of a hard day, a confidant in moments of loneliness, a lover that offered comfort, relaxation, courage, and a temporary escape from everything difficult. It felt like a friend. It felt, at times, like the best friend you had.

The grief you feel when you stop drinking is real. It is the grief of ending a long relationship — one that was intimate, habitual, and deeply woven into the fabric of your daily life. That grief deserves to be acknowledged, not pushed aside or judged.

Recognizing the Abuse

Abusive relationships are not always easy to recognize from inside them. They offer real moments of comfort and connection alongside the harm. They create dependency. They make leaving feel impossible. They make the person leaving feel as though they are the problem — not the relationship.

But here is the truth that changes everything: the relationship you are grieving was an abusive one.

"My relationship with alcohol turned out to be that of a narcissist, a bully, my kryptonite. It was like a love turned sour. I tried so long to make it work. I tried many many times to leave it behind. But the manipulative nature of alcohol abuse left me repeatedly returning. I felt ashamed. I couldn't imagine life without it. I clung to the hope of one day being able to drink like normal people."

— BOOM community member

"The sick thing about this abuser is that not only does it abuse our bodies and our neural pathways and our lives — it gets us to abuse ourselves. We literally ask for it. We buy it. We drink it. We say bad things to ourselves. We cut ourselves off from the people we love. We are puppets and we make ourselves victims. The abuser cannot actually do it by itself."

— BOOM community member

Alcohol knows your weaknesses. It knows when you are tired, when you are lonely, when you are angry, when you are bored. It knows exactly what to say to keep you coming back. And it is very, very good at making you believe that you cannot survive without it.

You can. You will. You already are.

The Stages of Grief

When we lose any significant relationship — even a destructive one — we move through recognizable stages of grief. Understanding them can help you meet each one with compassion rather than confusion.

Denial

Thinking you can change just one thing and keep everything else the same. Believing that moderation is still possible. Telling yourself it wasn't that bad.

Anger

Feeling furious at alcohol, at yourself, at the situation. Angry that other people seem able to drink normally. Angry at how much time was lost. This anger is healthy — let it move through you.

Bargaining

"Just one drink." "Just on weekends." "Just on holidays." "I've done so well, surely I can handle one now." Recognize this voice. It is the addiction speaking, not you.

Depression

A flat, grey time when the drink is gone and the new life has not yet fully arrived. You are between one shore and another. This is real. It passes. Stay on board.

Acceptance

The moment — brief at first, then longer — when you know clearly and quietly that you don't need it anymore. That you are better without it. That the relationship is over and you are free.

You will not move through these stages in a neat line. You may revisit them. You may circle back to anger after months of acceptance. This is normal. The stages are not a schedule — they are a map.

*"With distance from alcohol, my perspective of my life is changing. Without the guilt and shame clouding my thoughts and eroding my self-esteem, I am able to examine my life with a more empathetic approach. In sobriety I am cleaning away the dirt and accepting all the cracks and ugliness of my imperfect being. It feels like a miracle."
— BOOM communitymember*

Filling the Void with Something True

When a long relationship ends — even a bad one — it leaves a gap. The hours that were filled by drinking, the emotions that were managed by alcohol, the rituals and routines that were built around it — all of that space is now empty. And empty space is uncomfortable.

The temptation is to fill it quickly with anything that fits. But the deeper work of sobriety is to fill it slowly and intentionally with something that is actually good for you.

"Sobriety, if I'm gentle, open, and patient with myself, is not deprivation — though it can feel like that at first. Actually, it is boozing that is deprivation. Deprivation of hobbies, intimacy, creativity, spirituality, health and gratitude. Sobriety is deconstructing shame. It is sweeping away critical voices. It is kicking out love denied. Everyone wants and needs love. It is never found at the bottom of a bottle — and we are meant to give and receive it."

— BOOM community member

"The void becomes full of solid, lasting, and priceless gifts. Overnight? Probably not. But may you love yourself by being alcohol-free. May you love yourself enough to try again. And again and again."

— BOOM community member

Prompt for your journal or post your answers in BOOM



Think about your relationship with alcohol as if it were a person. What did it give you? What did it take from you? What would you say to it now that the relationship is over? Write the goodbye letter you never sent — or the one you wish you had been able to write years ago.

Find more at www.Boozemusings.com — search Abusive Relationship, Grief, Filling the Void

SURFING THE WAVES OF EMOTION

One of the most unexpected and disorientating parts of stopping drinking is discovering that you have feelings you never knew were there. Or feelings you knew were there but never had to fully face, because alcohol was always ready to take them away.

When you stop drinking, you stop numbing. And suddenly all of it is present — the anxiety, the loneliness, the emptiness, the fear, the grief, the joy, the boredom, the raw and unfiltered experience of being alive. This is not something going wrong. This is something going profoundly right. But it does not always feel that way at first.

This page is for those moments when the feelings feel like too much.

Why Feeling Everything Feels So Overwhelming

"Alcohol masked my emotions and my personality. It took away the bits of me I struggled with. I liked feeling euphoric, I liked fun. And drinking gave me all that easily in the first glass. Starting to drink at 16 gave me a cop-out long before I knew I needed one."

— BOOM community member

"I drank out of fear. Fear that who I am as a person isn't good enough, interesting enough or likeable enough. Drinking hid these insecurities and allowed me to be who I always wanted to be. I felt free, opinionated, funny. Like someone easily loved."

— BOOM community member

"Every single nerve ending in me felt exposed. Yet the world carried on as if I hadn't just ripped the safety blanket I'd hidden myself in for years out from under my feet. I am becoming a new person. And the growing pains hurt."

— BOOM community member

The Image That Helps

Think of your emotions as waves on the ocean. Before sobriety, many of us were not surfing those waves. We were diving under them — hiding in the dark, cold water beneath, letting them pass over us. We could see others on the surface from below, living their lives, riding what came. We wanted that. But we didn't know how to get there.

"In early sobriety I was swimming under the waves of emotion, in a state of denial, drowning in self-loathing, despair, and loneliness. I felt like I was slowly losing myself. I could see from underneath the water, people living their lives on the surface. They seemed content, happy in their own skin. I wanted that."

— BOOM community member

"I am standing on a beach right now, board in hand, and I can see some huge waves coming my way. Am I scared? Yes. But am I alone? No. Living my life under the waves is no life at all. The new me wants to live, and be on the surface. That's something I never want to give up."

— *BOOM* community member

What Surfing Emotions Actually Looks Like

It is not dramatic or heroic. It is mostly quiet and often uncomfortable. It looks like sitting with a feeling instead of reaching for something to make it go away. It looks like naming what you feel. It looks like breathing through it.

Name the feeling.

Before you can surf a wave you have to see it coming. Anxiety. Loneliness. Emptiness. Anger. Sadness. Just naming the emotion creates a small but real distance between you and it.

Remember that emotions are fleeting.

This is one of the most important things to understand in early sobriety. A painful emotion — even a very powerful one — will change, usually within minutes. Making a decision to drink based on a momentary feeling happens far too often. That feeling would have passed on its own.

Perspective is a practice.

Positive emotions are not about pretending everything is fine. They are about choosing what to focus on. It is about seeing the beauty of the sunset rather than the coming darkness. This takes practice, especially in early days, but it is a skill that builds.

Your mind is your own.

You don't have to believe every negative thought that arrives. Thoughts are not facts. You can observe them without acting on them.

Smile — even artificially.

It sounds too simple to be true, but the research is real. Smiling — even when you don't feel it — triggers the release of mood-lifting chemicals in the brain.

Move your body.

Walking, stretching, yoga, dancing in the kitchen — physical movement shifts emotional states faster than almost anything else.

Write it out.

Journaling, or posting in BOOM, gets the feeling out of your head and into words, which almost always makes it feel smaller and more manageable.

On Loneliness in Particular

"I have felt very lonely in my sobriety. I've realized it's because I feel that no one really understands the sacrifices made when quitting drinking. Unless you've been there, unless you've been sober — how can you even begin to understand? I don't want someone to humor me, nor do I need pity. I want someone to tell me that they understand how I feel and mean it."

— *BOOM* community member

This is one of the most important reasons to be in BOOM during your 100 days. Not because anyone there has all the answers — but because they understand without needing it explained.

"Stopping drinking made me face myself. I've had to find out who I really am — and that has been a roller-coaster. The feelings and emotions I feel naturally when coping with life are random and scary at times. They were always there. Stopping drinking made me face them."

— *BOOM* community member

A Word About the Long Haul

"This community is my comfort place where I can spill out my emotions and be understood, and even after so long it is my place of calm and safety. It's important you all know that this gets easier with time — but that those of us who have been AF for a long time still have life crises and issues to deal with. We aren't cured. But faced head-on, it's not as scary as I thought. For most of the time I am happy, and peaceful, and I've learned to get my euphoria from elsewhere."

— *BOOM* community member

The difference is not that the waves stop coming. It is that you learn to surf. And once you have learned, you don't forget.

Prompt for your journal or post your answers in BOOM:

What emotion is hardest for you to sit with right now? What did you used to do with that feeling when you were drinking? What could you do with it today instead — without alcohol? Write about the wave you are in the middle of, or the one you can see coming.

Find more at www.Boozemusings.com — search Feeling Everything, Emotional Sobriety, Surfing Emotions

Navigating Social Pressure

The Question Nobody Asks Out Loud

One of the most quietly exhausting parts of being newly alcohol-free is not the craving. It's the explanation. The raised eyebrow. The "just one won't hurt." The colleague who takes your sobriety personally. The friend who keeps telling you that you're "no fun anymore."

Nobody tells you, when you stop drinking, that you will suddenly become responsible for managing everyone else's discomfort about it.

You are not.

Why People Push Back

When you stop drinking in a world that is saturated with alcohol, you become — without meaning to — a mirror. People around you see your choice and, whether they say so or not, they hold it up against their own. Many will feel judged, even if you have said nothing. Some will feel unsettled. A few will feel genuinely happy for you. And some will do everything in their power to get you to pick up a drink, because your not-drinking makes them uncomfortable in ways they can't quite name.

Understanding this doesn't make it easier in the moment. But it helps to know that the pressure is almost never really about you. It is about them.

"Don't worry if other people don't get it. They don't need to." — BOOM community member

What You Will Hear

You will hear some version of most of these:

- "Just one won't hurt."
- "You're not an alcoholic, you can have one."
- "Come on, it's a special occasion."
- "You've been doing so well — you can take a break tonight."
- "You're making everyone uncomfortable."
- "I don't know how to be around you when you're not drinking."
-

These are not arguments. They are noise. You do not have to engage with them, defend yourself against them, or explain yourself at all. But it helps to have a simple, confident response ready before you need it, so that the moment doesn't catch you off guard.

What to Say

Keep it brief. The more you explain, the more you invite debate.

Some options that work:

- "I'm good with this, thanks." (Smile. Move on.)
- "I'm not drinking at the moment." (Not an invitation to discussion.)
- "I'm driving tonight." (Nobody argues with this.)
- "Doctor's orders." (Nobody argues with this either.)
- "I feel so much better when I don't — I'm sticking with it."

You don't owe anyone your story.

You don't have to justify your choice with history, health facts, or apology. A confident, cheerful, brief response and a change of subject is all you need.

Don't let FOMO sabotage you

Push back against your inner toddler. If you don't think you can handle an event, don't go. Make it your house rule."
—BOOM community member

Your Right to Leave

This is the most underused tool in your kit: you can leave. You can arrive, give it a fair go, and leave when you have had enough — before the evening becomes a test of endurance. You do not have to stay until the last song, until the last person goes home, until every drink at the table has been refilled three times. Decide in advance what your exit looks like. Have a reason prepared if you need one. Then use it without guilt. Leaving early is not failure. It is strategy.

When It Gets Hard

If someone is genuinely pressuring you — not just nudging but actively and repeatedly pushing — you can be direct: "I've made a decision I'm happy with. I'd love it if we could talk about something else."

You don't need to be aggressive. You don't need to be apologetic. Clear, warm, and final.

And when you get home — or when you step away from the moment — post in BOOM. Tell us what happened. Tell us how you handled it. You will find that what felt huge in the moment becomes smaller the moment you put words to it.

"The void becomes full of solid, lasting, and priceless gifts. May you love yourself enough to try again. And again and again."

— BOOM community member

Prompt for your journal or post your answers in BOOM:

What does social pressure feel like for you? Is it someone specific, a type of event, or a feeling that comes from inside? What is your plan for the next time it arrives?

The Things that Could Make me Slip

- Stress
- Anxiety
- Time
- Reward thinking
- Idea of romance sober
- Arguments
- Not being in control

So I Remember my Sober Joys

- Clean teeth, fresh breath
- Enough quality sleep
- Always ready for a hug
- More motivated at work
- Remember conversations and they are more meaningful
- When I flirt with my husband I won't be a drunken mess
- Did I mention food tastes better ?!
- Feeling calmer and capable
- I can find a map out of the overwhelm maze not get stuck there
- More organized which makes me feel calmer
- No FOMO, atm anyway, not one bit
- I can give away a bottle of wine and not have anymore in the house and feel relieved and smile
- Feeling like a weight has been lifted
- Just fcuking happier!

Staying Alcohol-Free at Work Events

Handling Happy Hour, Office Parties, and Colleagues Who Don't Understand

The Workplace offers a Particular Kind of Pressure

well, in situations where we feel we need to perform — to be easy, social, approachable, one of the team. Happy hour, the office party, the networking drinks, the post-conference bar — these events are practically choreographed around alcohol. And when you step out of the script, people notice.

You may have a colleague who teases you for not coming to the bar. You may have a boss who assumes you're being difficult. You may have a well-meaning friend at work who keeps telling you that a drink would help you relax.

You know what helps you relax? Not waking up with anxiety and shame. That is your quiet answer, even if you never say it out loud.

"You can go to the bar whenever you want. I don't care. But I'm not interested. And stop telling me it's part of my professional development."

— BOOM community member

The Truth About Networking Without Alcohol

Here is something the drinking culture of work won't tell you: you are sharper without it. Your conversations are more coherent. You actually remember what was said. You make a better impression when you are present and clear-eyed than when you are on your second glass of wine and talking louder than you meant to.

Many of our community members report that the first alcohol-free networking event felt impossible — and the second felt manageable — and by the third, it felt like simply what they do now.

The fifteen-minute method works well for these events. You don't have to survive the whole evening at once. You just have to get through the next fifteen minutes.

Walk in. Order a sparkling water with lime. Find one person. Ask them how they are and listen properly. You have just done the first fifteen minutes. Now find the next person. Move through the room in small increments. You don't need alcohol to do any of this. You never did. It just felt that way.

What helps before you go:

- Brush your teeth and have a mint. It creates a psychological clean break and makes ordering a soft drink feel natural.
- Decide in advance exactly what you will order. Rehearse it if you need to — it sounds silly, but it works
- Locate a non-drinking colleague in advance and ask if they will act as your quiet ally for the evening.
- Give your self permission to leave after a set time. Not as a punishment. As a plan.

What helps when you're there:

- Hold your drink. A glass of sparkling water with ice looks exactly like a gin and tonic. Nobody is watching as carefully as you think.
- Redirect conversations toward topics you enjoy. You are interesting. You have things to say.
- Remember that the most memorable people in any room are the ones who are genuinely present — and that is you
- When it gets hard, step outside briefly. Get some air. Post a quick message in BOOM. Come back in.

What helps when you get home:

Celebrate it. Properly. You just did something genuinely hard — you showed up in a booze-soaked environment and you stayed clear. That deserves a sober treat and a good night's sleep.

"I chose to not drink without making any fuss about it. In private I stocked up on lovely teas, fruitcake and no-sugar ginger beer and luckily found BOOM. I bought myself some pretty things just because they made me happy. There's a lot to be said for treating yourself."

— BOOM community member

When a Colleague Won't Let It Go

If a colleague keeps pushing — keeps pointing out your not-drinking, keeps suggesting you need a drink to be fun or approachable or professionally effective — you don't have to respond in the way they expect.

You can say something kind and clear:

"I feel great at the moment, thanks. I'd rather talk about the project/your holiday/that film you mentioned."

Change the subject with warmth and confidence.

You do not need to explain your history. You do not need to defend your choice. Your choice is made.

You are living it. That is enough.

Prompt for your journal or post your answers in BOOM

What work situation are you most apprehensive about? What is one thing you could put in place before it arrives that would make it easier?

Find more at www.Boozemusings.com — search Work Events, Happy Hour, Professional Life Sober

Why do I stay sober ?

I want to grow and experience an authentic life without the alcohol filter.

I don't want to die from anything related to alcohol.

I want to dance with my son on his wedding day (he's 6) and I want to be proud of myself.

I remember that if I want a pause, a temporary escape from your life, the alcohol won't help.

I either find another way to release the pressure or find a way to prevent the build up in the first place.

Life is just sweeter with booze out of the way

It doesn't have to be extraordinary

Just a beautiful new normality

I didn't see it before but I'm seeing it now

Life just has more color somehow



The World Is Designed Around Drinking on Holiday

It starts before you even get there. The champagne on arrival at the all-inclusive. The wine refrigerator restocked daily. The cocktails at the beach bar from noon onwards. The flight magazine full of advertising that links alcohol with sunshine, romance, freedom, and reward.

It can feel, in the early days of sobriety, as though the entire holiday industry has conspired against you.

It hasn't. It has just never thought about you.

And that is, actually, freeing. Because it means you get to decide what your holiday looks like — perhaps for the first time in a long time.

What the First Alcohol-Free Holiday Might Feel Like

It is worth being honest about this: the first alcohol-free holiday can be genuinely difficult. You may feel the pull of old habits at every meal, every sunset, every social gathering by the pool. You may feel the strangeness of doing something familiar in an unfamiliar way. You may have a moment — or several moments — of real longing for the old version of things.

Let those feelings exist. They are not a sign that you are failing. They are a sign that you are changing. The discomfort is real, and it passes. What's on the other side of it is a holiday you will actually remember.

"I love not drinking! It is the greatest gift I have ever given myself. I can't wait for my holiday, being sober and present in every moment."

— BOOM community member

"You have to trust the person that on day one knew that putting down the drink was the right choice. You have to accept that at first, doing things alcohol-free is going to feel awkward, strange, and new — and hold onto the faith that working through that awkward, strange, newness is worth the effort."

— BOOM community member

Practical Preparation

Before you go:

- Plan your non-alcoholic drinks. Seek out what the resort, destination, or host country offers in terms of mocktails, sparkling water, interesting soft drinks, and local non-alcoholic beverages. Make it something to look forward to.
- If you are travelling with people who drink, have a quiet conversation before you leave about your choice and how they can best support you. You don't need to make it a big deal — just let them know.

- Have a BOOM exit route: know that you can step away, write a post, get support, and come back steadier.
- Give yourself permission for the holiday to look different from holidays you've had before. Different is not worse.

While you're there:

- Eat regularly. Blood sugar fluctuations on holiday — irregular meal times, heat, different foods — can trigger cravings unexpectedly. The H.A.L.T. check matters on vacation just as much as at home.
- Stay hydrated. Heat and travel are dehydrating, and thirst often arrives disguised as craving.
- Build in quiet time. A holiday where you are "on" constantly around drinking companions can be exhausting. Give yourself permission to read by the pool, walk alone, take a nap.
- Enjoy the morning. This is one of the quiet joys that many in our community speak of — waking up clear-headed, watching the sunrise, having breakfast without guilt. That is yours now.

And remember — you can leave early from events, dinners, or gatherings whenever you need to. This is not a failure of holiday spirit. It is a form of self-care.

"This is a 'how to do things sober' technique called — leave when you are ready. Don't feel obligated to watch the sunrise with the last man standing."

— BOOM community member

What Becomes Possible

"I will be up bright and fresh, present in my day, able to do all the sporting activities — I will be there enjoying the holiday instead of being in a little pissed bubble."

— BOOM community member

"The next day, I felt that warm afterglow of good times had with friends, and the happy warm feelings of love from being with people that really care about me. I used to think a lot of those good feelings came from the booze. But now I know better. Those feelings are real. And I don't need booze to bring them on or enhance them."

— BOOM community member

The holiday you are going to have sober is not the consolation prize version of the holiday you used to have. For many people in our community it turns out to be something considerably better — more present, more genuine, more remembered.

Prompt for your journal or post your answers in BOOM What is your biggest fear about your first alcohol-free holiday or vacation? What is one thing you are genuinely looking forward to about experiencing it sober?

Find more at www.Boozemusings.com — search Alcohol-Free Holidays, Sober Vacation, All-Inclusive Sober

Weddings Alcohol-Free

The Event That Feels Impossible

Of all the big life moments that can feel un-navigable without alcohol, weddings are the ones that come up most often in our community. They go on for hours. They are saturated in sentiment. They involve people you don't always know well, in settings designed around champagne, open bars, and toasts. They happen at the precise emotional frequency that used to send you straight to the drinks table.

Here is what our community knows: the first wedding you attend sober will feel strange. The second will feel manageable. And at some point — sooner than you expect — you will look back at the wedding you attended and feel nothing but glad you were clear-eyed for all of it.

"One of the most terrifying things to me when I stopped drinking was the thought of never being able to drink at big life celebrations like weddings. It was mostly the specter of never being normal again. Always being someone who couldn't quite fit in. It's funny when I look back at that now."

— BOOM community member

What Drinking at Weddings Actually Looked Like

It is very easy to romanticize drinking. On a beautiful day, surrounded by love and celebration, the idea of a glass of champagne can feel like the natural completion of everything. This is exactly the moment to pause and run the tape forward — not to punish yourself, but to tell yourself the truth.

Many of us can name the last wedding we drank at. The one that started with good intentions and ended somewhere we didn't plan to go. The toasts that blurred into something louder and less dignified. The morning after, with the shame sitting heavy alongside the hangover.

"I was not 'normal' in the way I drank at these life celebrations. I was the one that went from being an effervescent, enthusiastic conversationalist — to a slurring, sloppy, overly familiar person. I was NOT normal when I drank at these celebrations."

— BOOM community member

— BOOM community member

Planning Your Sober Wedding Strategy

Before the day:

- Plan what you will drink and, if possible, bring something you enjoy. A sparkling elderflower, a quality tonic water, something that feels celebratory.

- Eat beforehand. Weddings often run hours behind schedule and the food arrives late. Hunger is a trigger. Don't let it ambush you.
- Decide in advance what you will focus on. What are you going to wear? Who are you most looking forward to seeing? What is genuinely beautiful about this particular day?
- Have your exit plan ready. Know when you are planning to leave and give yourself full permission to go when you are ready.
- If the crowd is one where your not-drinking might draw commentary, have your answer ready: "antibiotics," "driving," "I'm good, thanks" — brief, cheerful, final.

On the day:

- Hold a drink at all times. Sparkling water with a lime looks like anything. Nobody is watching. · Stay close to the people you genuinely love at these events. Weddings are often the best opportunity to have real conversation with people you don't see often enough. Be present for those conversations. You will remember them.
- If you feel the pull — if the champagne toast arrives and the craving with it — let the moment pass. Cravings at weddings peak and pass just like any other craving. They last minutes. The toast takes thirty seconds. You can do thirty seconds.
- Leave when you are ready. Not when obligation says to. When you are ready.

The morning after:

You will wake up. You will remember everything. You will feel the genuine warmth of the day — the people, the music, the vows — without it filtered through the haze of alcohol or darkened by shame.

"Sober, I had a very enjoyable time. I still laughed and visited a lot. I got up and danced and sang along with the old songs I knew by heart. And the next day, I felt that warm afterglow of good times with friends. I used to think a lot of those good feelings came from the booze. But now I know better. Those feelings are real."

— BOOM community member

"Somehow if I had been drinking, cutting off the skirt of my bridesmaid's dress to free my legs so I could dance properly would not have been something I could have done with dignity. But sober I am unfettered, free, simply comfortably me — unique, whole, the life of the party not because I'm boozed up but because life is a party."

— BOOM community member

"I am so happy to be sober, and no one even commented on it at the wedding. It's common knowledge now that I no longer drink, and I honestly think that no one cares. I noticed many others who had very little or no alcohol to drink. I think it really is catching on more."

— BOOM community member

The Shift That Happens

The fear of being the one not drinking at a wedding is real. But the reality, reported again and again by people in our community, is that nobody cares as much as you think they will. They are busy being happy. They are caught up in the day. They are not watching your glass.

Staying Alcohol-Free When You Live With a Drinker

Of all the challenges that come with going alcohol-free, one of the least talked about is this one: what happens when the person sharing your home, your kitchen, your evenings — keeps drinking?

You are not choosing this challenge in a vacuum. You are choosing it in a living room where a bottle of wine is on the table. In a marriage or partnership where drinking was a shared language. In a house where the clink of ice in a glass happens at 6pm, just as it always has.

This is one of the most common situations in our community, and one of the most quietly difficult.

You are not alone in it.

The Most Important Thing to Know First

The most important relationship that changes when you stop drinking is not your relationship with your partner. It is your relationship with yourself.

Everything else — every decision about your relationship, your home, your future — becomes clearer from that foundation. But it takes time. And the one consistent truth our community returns to again and again is this:

Start by stopping, even if you do it alone. Drinking will not improve your relationship. Sobriety might.

A partnership that requires you to drink in order to function is a partnership built on faulty ground. But time and again, people in our community have found that when they removed alcohol from their own head space, their partnership turned out to be built on more solid ground than they had feared.

Sometimes the changes that happen in a relationship in the first months of sobriety are the opposite of what people expect.

Give it time before you decide.

What You Are Likely to Feel

When you first stop drinking and your partner continues, you may feel a rush of feelings you weren't expecting.

Relief — that you've made the decision, that it's done, that today you are not drinking.

Resentment — watching them pour a glass that you are not having. Notching up every drink. A burning feeling that they are not meeting you where you are.

Loneliness — the evening that used to be shared over a bottle now feels different. You are changing and they are not. At least not yet.

Clarity — and with it, a startling realization that some of what you thought was wrong with your relationship may actually have been the alcohol all along. And some of what you thought was fine may now be harder to look at clearly.

“What I hadn’t realized is that being sober would make me question my relationship. Suddenly I had no escape mechanism. Without the blur of alcohol to paper over the cracks, could we survive?”

— BOOM community member

You have just removed the thing that was numbing not only your pain but your perception. Everything will feel sharper. Some of what you see will be real. Some of it will be the rawness of early sobriety. Give yourself time to tell the difference.

The advice our community gives most consistently on this: **don’t make any major relationship decisions in your first year.** Focus on staying alcohol-free. The rest will follow.

The Evenings Are the Hardest Part

If your partner drinks in the evenings — and for most people, that is when the drinking happens — you will need a plan for that time. Not a vague intention. A plan.

What has worked for people in our community:

- Create a safe space that is yours. A comfortable chair, your drinks on the table beside it, your book or your headphones. A place that signals to your brain: this is my evening, and it is good.
- Match their drink for drink with an alcohol-free version. Sparkling water, a mocktail, a ginger beer in a proper glass. The ritual of a drink in your hand matters more than you think.

- If their drinking is heavy and it is hard to be in the same room, give yourself permission to be in a different one. This is not rejection. It is protection.
- Go to bed earlier than you used to. This is not giving up. It is strategy.
- Post in BOOM before the evening gets hard, not after.

“When you’re not drunk, someone who is drinking heavily becomes very not interesting. So I would go off and read in the evening and leave him to his liquid companion. In the long run that really helped drive home that the drinking was no longer a social thing in our relationship.”

— BOOM community member

Resentment is one of the most dangerous feelings in early sobriety — and living with a drinker can feed it quietly and constantly.

You watch them pour. You notice every glass. You count. You feel, somewhere underneath the counting, something that feels like: ***why aren’t they doing this with me? Why is this so easy for them? Don’t they see what I’m doing?***

Resentment is almost always about unmet expectations. And in early sobriety, your expectations of your partner — for support, for recognition, for solidarity — may be higher than they know.

Tell them what you need. Clearly, and without anger if you can manage it.

“I had changed the rules and I expected him to follow suit, become a different person. But he didn’t know that.”

— BOOM community member

You cannot expect your partner to support a journey they don’t fully understand. Have the conversation. Let them know what you need. And then — as hard as this is — try to focus on your side of the street. You cannot control their drinking. You can only tend your own sobriety.

Seeing Your Relationship Clearly

Sobriety has a way of bringing things into focus that the drinking kept blurred. For some people this is a gift — they see their partner’s loyalty, their steadiness, the ways they have been loved even through the worst of the drinking, more clearly than before.

For others, sobriety surfaces things that are harder to look at. Patterns that the alcohol was masking. A relationship that may have been held together by a shared habit rather than a shared life.

Both of these are real. Both deserve to be looked at honestly. And neither of them needs to be decided today.

“I had to stand back and get off my high horse to see the good qualities — because I’d covered them with my own requirements of how he should behave, my own needs, and somehow lost him along the way.”

— BOOM community member

“The most important relationship in my life that alcohol destroyed was my relationship with myself. It washed away my self-confidence. My dependence was fed with shame.”

— BOOM community member

The person you are becoming in sobriety will be better equipped to assess your relationship than the person you were when you were drinking. Trust that person. They are on their way.

- Ask your partner if they are willing, to keep alcohol somewhere you don’t encounter it daily — not on the kitchen counter, not at eye level in the fridge.
- Clear away the accessories of drinking that are woven into your habit — the particular glasses, the bottle opener on the bench. Small changes to your environment weaken old associations.
- Stock your kitchen with things you genuinely enjoy drinking. Make it an abundance, not a deprivation.

- Be honest about what you are doing and why. You don’t owe them your full history, but you do owe them honesty about what you need right now. · Don’t try to change them.

Focus entirely on yourself. The changes in you are more likely to prompt reflection in them than any amount of pressure, hints, or score keeping.

- Some partners, over time, drink less or stop entirely — not because they were asked to, but because they watched someone they love transform and wanted that too. This happens. It cannot be forced. But it happens.

- The H.A.L.T check matters here as much as anywhere. If you are Hungry, Angry, Lonely, or Tired and you are watching someone drink, the pull will be stronger. Address the underlying feeling first.
- Cravings triggered by watching someone else drink peak and pass, just like any other craving. They last minutes. You can do minutes.
- If a dinner party or evening in feels impossible, you have permission to leave. Leave early. Leave before it gets hard. This is strategy, not failure.

Living with a drinker in early sobriety is genuinely hard. It is one of the hardest versions of this challenge. If you are in it, please know that the difficulty is not a sign that you are failing or that your relationship is doomed.

It is a sign that you are doing something brave in complicated circumstances. And brave things in complicated circumstances deserve extra support.

Come to BOOM every day. Post even when you have nothing in particular to say. Let people who have been exactly where you are right now — in that living room, with that bottle on the table — remind you that it is possible, and that it gets easier.

“It was an online community of peers that eventually answered my questions about how to stay sober when your partner continues to drink. Talking deeply about the issues, in a safe, anonymous, supportive space, with other people who could relate — helped me stay sober and saved my relationship. It saved my sanity.”

— BOOM community member

Prompt for your journal or post your answers in BOOM

What is the hardest moment of the day when you are alcohol-free and your partner is drinking?
What is one thing you could put in place before that moment arrives tomorrow?

What have you lost to alcohol in your relationship that you would most like to get back? And what do you think sobriety — yours — might make possible?

Find more at www.Boozemusings.com — search Living with a Drinker, Relationships and Sobriety, Partners Who Drink

My Journey to Loving Life Alcohol-Free

When I finally stopped drinking after years of self-doubt and struggle, I began by reading a stack of books that spoke to other people's "sober journeys". Sober journey is a descriptive term that's used often when people speak about their alcohol-free lives, and like most identifiers used to encapsulate something deeply personal and monumentally transformative, the term "sober journey" often ends up sounding a bit trite. But stepping out from under the influence of alcohol is not something done in a few quick steps. It is a journey. For me it has been a journey back to myself and one that I celebrate often by sharing the joy of it!

I spent most of my adult life alternating between celebrating the joy of drinking and struggling with my fear that I might have a problem with alcohol. In my late 20's, then in my 30's and early 40's, if it was after 5pm, or any time on a holiday or weekend, I had a drink in my hand. Alcohol was my trusted companion until I inevitably drank with the same devotion that I give to every activity I enjoy. I became dangerously addicted. By the age of 46 I was routinely drinking 10 bottles of wine a week even with a day or two of detox mixed in.

Like most high functioning, middle aged adults who are unable to control how much they drink I found it daunting to moderate my drinking or stop and stay stopped. I hated to admit that I was addicted to alcohol. It seemed that I was heading for Alcoholics Anonymous, and I was ashamed of that prospect. Then I stumbled over a book that led to my reading blogs and I found a solution that I never expected. I wrote my way sober! That was 2015 and I have been writing instead of drinking and living happily alcohol-free ever since.

What does it mean to write your way sober? I'm not talking about journaling or even starting a Word Press blog. As an internet illiterate musician who had not written since college, I was thrilled to find a private and anonymous community that had everything I needed ready to go. I started blogging my way sober one awkwardly rendered paragraph at a time in an online community based in Australia that was called Hello Sunday Morning.

The premise of HSM was to re-evaluate your relationship with alcohol by taking a year or three months off drinking, while posting in blog style about the challenges and advantages of living alcohol-free. My understanding of sobriety had always been something that was forced on people who resisted and resented it, and that life without alcohol was a dull affair. But Hello Sunday Morning allowed me to open my mind to a new way of thinking about going sober. Through the writing we did, and the support we offered each other, it was a community whose energy was grounded in self-actualization rather than blind acceptance of the status quo. I found my experience with that community so transformative that when the HSM community closed I started my own online community called Boom Rethink the Drink. Demystifying the process of living life happily alcohol-free has become my passion.

It is easy to say "I drink too much" but quite another thing to fix that problem. To drop that dialogue of denial.

"Maybe I'm not that bad ... one more drink can't hurt...I'll stop tomorrow"

You can stop drinking. You can make this the week that your sobriety takes off, but you need to be ready to do the work. The work that I had to do was not at all what I expected, and it was not at all a quick fix. Just as drinking had been a hobby for me that I spent time enjoying daily, the work of staying sober became a hobby that I eventually enjoyed even more!

Putting the bottle down is a crucial first step but it is only the tip of the iceberg. I had to take ownership of my behavior by not drinking, but I also had to understand the reasons I kept picking up the bottle to begin with. Not the reasons that other people might have suggested to me or assumed, . I had to be able to look at my drinking patterns, my history, and the assumptions I held, honestly and openly in a safe space.

In Hello Sunday Morning and now in BOOM, we post about everything we go through as we adjust to and maintain life without alcohol. I can talk about the things that I don't share with my family, friends, or coworkers. Sharing my story and being supported by others in the community has helped me understand and appreciate myself without shame and without assumption. The group and the posting have been pivotal to my evolution as a person while helping me work through my challenges. It's kept me focused and, in that focus, I've blossomed! I was able to replace negativity with positivity, view sobriety as an opportunity and an adventure rather than a "buzzkill," and bring about a great change in my life.

It is true that a big part of sobriety is about saying, "No," but that only works to a degree. Stopping habitual, addictive behavior through willpower alone is not the best solution. Having the strength of a community behind you makes the struggle feel a lot more manageable. My experience with the Boom Rethink the Drink community is that they not only helped me stop drinking, but they helped me get excited about being sober. The community system of posting, commenting, and supporting each other from day one and before, to years and years Alcohol-Free, encouraged me to reach back and help the next person coming along, just like those with more Alcohol-Free time reached back to help me when I started out. The community works and grows together because everyone is invested in themselves and invested in each other. The definition of great teamwork!

It is hard to break the status quo in a world where alcohol is the only drug that people will question you for not using. Use this workbook to engage with the topics it covers to evolve in your sobriety, or to start getting to the bottom of why you are caught in the wash, rinse, repeat cycle of drinking to excess. You deserve a fuller life than a drinking life. You deserve to find yourself again, to be able to trust yourself again.

Throughout this workbook, you will find writings that have been offered by members of our community from their own post archives. These are poems and stories that different members wrote to the HSM and BOOM communities as blog posts while they tackled the topics we present. Use the posting prompts and themes in this workbook to start writing your way free.

Question your assumptions about what is really in it for you when it comes to drinking.
Life is too Short to Waste it Wasted

Join us at www.BoomRethinktheDrink.com

Food for Thought for 100 Days of Change

Food for thought and writing prompt. Share your thoughts on this or other things with us in BOOM . Or just pop in and support the team .

“An over-indulgence of anything, even something as pure as water, can intoxicate.”

Criss Jami

Question for 100 Day alcohol-free challenge and 100 Days of Change

The quote above could sound like an overreaction . Does it sound like that to you?

People will often say that some of us have addictive personalities, and as people with addictive personalities we will over indulge in other things when we stop drinking.

What is your experience with that?

Does it concern you?

Is it possible to have “too much of a good thing” or are there things like creative expression, gratitude practice, healthy lifestyle habits, love and compassion for others , that are indeed intoxicating but impossible to have too much of?

Are you concerned about “replacement addiction” or are you happy to focus on just removing the alcohol from your life no matter what ?

Food for Thought

“Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts.” —
Winston S. Churchill

“I wanted you to see what real courage is, instead of getting the idea that courage is a man with a gun in his hand. It's when you know you're licked before you begin, but you begin anyway and see it through no matter what.” — Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Question for 100 Day alcohol-free challenge and 100 Days of Change

The two quotes above speak to the courage to continue in life and death struggles. The struggle to quite drinking can be a battle that is life or death for some.

We have a quote in our community that comes up often-
“Never quit quitting! “

Think about courage and reflect on what the courage to continue means to you.

Food for Thought

“You can't numb those hard feelings without numbing the other affects, our emotions. You cannot selectively numb. So when we numb those, we numb joy, we numb gratitude, we numb happiness. And then we are miserable, and we are looking for purpose and meaning, and then we feel vulnerable, so then we have a couple of beers and a banana nut muffin. And it becomes this dangerous cycle.” — Brené Brown

Question for 100 Day alcohol-free challenge and 100 Days of Change

Feeling the feels is often the thing that derails people in short-term alcohol-free challenges. Gratitude practice, and other mindfulness techniques can help you focus on the positive. But it can take time before the good feelings begin to overshadow the difficult feelings. Our natural reaction is to want to numb.

What helps you stay positive in the moment? How do you handle the down times? If you share your thoughts in a post in Boom, you'll help others in the community who are struggling today.

Food for Thought

“Live the Life of Your Dreams: Be brave enough to live the life of your dreams according to your vision and purpose instead of the expectations and opinions of others.” — Roy T. Bennett

Question for 100 Day alcohol-free challenge

How do the opinions of others affect you when you are staying alcohol-free?

Can you see “Peer pressure” affecting you in other behaviors?

When you were young did peer pressure push you in directions you knew you should not go?

What changes would you make in your life if you lived fully independent of other people’s opinions?

Food for Thought

“Every action you take is a vote for the type of person you wish to become. No single instance will transform your beliefs, but as the votes build up, so does the evidence of your new identity. This is one reason why meaningful change does not require radical change. Small habits can make a meaningful difference by providing evidence of a new identity. And if a change is meaningful, it is actually big. That's the paradox of making small improvements.”

— James Clear

Question for 100 Day alcohol-free challenge

For most of us quitting alcohol is changing a BIG habit. It's acknowledging the elephant in the room. It's battling the monster under the bed. An addiction is more powerful by far than a habit.

But changing or adding small habits throughout your day can help you beat the beast.

What small things are you changing each day to help you reach your daily goal?

Food for Thought

“Belonging is the innate, human desire to be a part of something larger than us. Because this yearning is so primal, we often try to acquire it by fitting in and seeking approval, which are not only hollow substitutes for belonging, but often barriers to it. True belonging only happens when we present our authentic, imperfect selves to the world. Our sense of belonging can never be greater than our level of self-acceptance.” — Brené Brown

Question for 100 Day alcohol-free challenge

I have found that presenting my authentic self in my posts in the Boom community has helped me uncover and celebrate my self. Self-acceptance, self-realization, has been the reward of going alcohol-free and the reward for the work I've done with posting in Boom.

How does belonging to this community and/or other communities help you with self-acceptance?

Food for Thought

“When life held your hand in the flames, it taught you something about the kind of burning you can endure. You survived: don’t forget that, and don’t diminish it. KEEP MOVING.” — Maggie Smith

Question for 100 Day alcohol-free challenge and 100 Days of Change

Most of us are survivors. We have suffered pain and kept moving.

What have you survived that you didn’t think you could?

Have you celebrated yourself for being the survivor that you are ?

Come into Boom, share your story, and let us celebrate YOU! today.

MY 100 DAY CHALLENGE

My challenge: _____

Name: _____

Start date: _____

1	2	3	4	5	6	7 ★	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30 ★
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60 ★
61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70
71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80
81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90
91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100 ★

■ Milestone days: 7 · 30 · 60 · 100

"Small daily steps lead to remarkable results."

BOOM 



loving life alcohol free

MY 100 DAY TRACKER

tick off each day — one square at a time

Name: _____

Start date: _____

1	2	3	4	5	6	7 ★	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30 ★
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60 ★
61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70
71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80
81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90
91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100 ★

■ Milestone days: 7 · 30 · 60 · 100



boomrethinkthedrink.com
Join the community

100 Days for You



Open Your Mind to the
Possibilities

100 Days of Change

*“No matter what your history has been,
your destiny is what you create today.*

What are you going to create?”

— Steve Maraboli

BOOM 