Goals of this session

This session provides advice on moderating alcohol use. The emphasis is on changing habits and preventing future problems.

There is a small portion of the population who would be diagnosed as “alcohol abusers” (see previous definitions). This person may be instructed by a professional or through self-evaluation to moderate their alcohol use.

In general, this session is for those people who are drinking smaller amounts of alcohol but are drinking enough to be at risk of developing future problems.

Additionally, if your score on the MAST was in the 5-6 range, you might want to explore four or five Alcoholics Anonymous meetings simply to see if you identify with this group. If you find you are hearing a lot of similar information to your own life you may be alcohol...alcoholics identify with other alcoholics.

Disclaimer: The session is ONLY for individuals who did not have a positive score on the MAST (7 points or over) and that they meet the definition of Alcohol Abuser.

Note: If you have any difficulties with a moderation approach, you should follow the abstinence part of this course or contact your EFAP.

What is moderation?

Moderation involves limiting your alcohol use to amounts and patterns that are unlikely to cause you (or others) harm.

For men moderation would mean no more than three drinks on any one occasion and no more than three occasions in any given week or no more than 2 drinks on any five occasions per week.

For women moderation would mean no more than 2 drinks on any one occasion and no more than three occasions per week or no more than 1 drink on any five occasions per week. Drinks cannot be saved and applied to a different occasion.

A drink is defined here as:

- a 12-ounce (355 ml) bottle of beer (4.5% alcohol)
- a 5-ounce (150 ml) glass of wine (12% alcohol)
- a 1 1/5-ounce shot (45 ml) of 80-proof distilled spirits (40% alcohol)

When to stop drinking

Moderating your drinking may be a reasonable goal. However, even smaller amounts of alcohol can be risky in certain circumstances.

- You should stop drinking altogether if:
- You cannot stop or control your drinking
- You suffer from morning shakes during a heavy drinking period
- You have high blood pressure
- You are pregnant
- You have liver disease
- You are taking medicine that reacts with alcohol
- You are under the care of a physician for a health problem (e.g., hypertension) or have a history of health problems. Consult with your doctor about your specific situation and what is best for you.
• If any continued drinking will likely lead to problems in your relationships with others (e.g., partner).
• You are under the legal drinking age in your province or state

If you answer ‘yes’ to any of the above we strongly suggest that you consider abstinence NOT moderation. The best place for you to begin is to contact an EFAP counselor or your medical doctor. You can continue with this course to see what it has to offer, but you should not delay in making an appointment with a counselor.

How do I improve my chances of success at moderation?

Giving up any habit can be challenging but it is not impossible. Many people moderate their drinking, or stop it altogether, on their own.

How will you continue to stick to a moderation (or abstinence) goal? You are most likely to keep up this good work if the following characterizes your situation:

• You have been successful throughout this course and applied the ideas and skills in a careful and thoughtful fashion.
• You have a good support network (friends or relatives).
• You have personal resources (strengths, assets) that you can call on to help you continue the process of change (e.g. spiritual practices, recreational pursuits, a sense of balance, a strong commitment to your goals).
• You have a fairly stable lifestyle, including a steady job, regular contact with other people, and goals toward which you are working.
• You have a history of having success with other efforts at personal change.

As well, take the quiz that follows. The results may help you decide whether moderation is a reasonable choice for you.

Is moderation for you? A quiz

To help you make the decision of whether or not to proceed with a goal of moderating your drinking, try this quiz: The Addictions Severity Index.

The questions cover a wide range of topics having to do with drinking. Read each question carefully but do not think too much about its exact meaning. Think about your most recent drinking habits and answer each question.

Note: This quiz is primarily a measure of the likelihood of alcohol dependency. The results should only be used a guide for making your decision about a moderation goal. If you are in doubt about your results, or have any questions, contact an EFAP counsellor.
### Addictions Severity Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Do you find it difficult to get the thought of drinking out of your mind?</td>
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<td>2. Is getting drunk more important than your next meal?</td>
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<td>3. Do you plan your day around when and where you can drink?</td>
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<td>4. Do you drink in the morning, afternoon, and evening?</td>
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<td>5. Do you drink for the effect of alcohol without caring what the drink is?</td>
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<td>6. Do you drink as much as you want irrespective of what you are doing the next day?</td>
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<td>7. Given that many problems might be caused by alcohol, do you still drink too much?</td>
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<td>8. Do you know that you won’t be able to stop drinking once you start?</td>
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<td>9. Do you try to control your drinking by giving it up completely for days or weeks at a time?</td>
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<td>10. The morning after a heavy drinking session, do you need your first drink to get yourself going?</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. The morning after a heavy drinking session, do you wake up with a definite shakiness of your hands?</td>
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<td>12. After a heavy drinking session do you wake up and retch or vomit?</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. The morning after a heavy drinking session do you go out of your way to avoid people?</td>
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<td>14. After a heavy drinking session do you see frightening things that later you realize were imaginary?</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. Do you go drinking and the next day find that you have forgotten what happened the night before?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Number of responses for each column (total each column)

Multiply the number in each column by the indicated multiple (0, 1, 2, or 3)

Grand Total (add up the numbers)

Scoring instructions: Total the number of responses for each column and write in the space provided.

Multiply each of the totals by the corresponding value for that column (e.g. total number of “never” responses multiply by ‘0’. Total number of “often” responses, multiple by ‘2’)

Add up these numbers to get the grand total.
Scoring Key

Low to moderate dependence (1-15)
Your score is in a low to moderate range for this test. If you do not suffer withdrawal symptoms when you stop drinking, then this information taken together suggests that a self-management goal of moderation may be appropriate for you.

Keep in mind this is only a test to help determine the likelihood of a degree of alcohol dependence and whether you should seek further evaluation.

If you are in doubt, seek help from an EFAP counselor.

Whatever you do, don’t delay. Problems become more troublesome, more complicated, and more pervasive if they are left unchallenged and unchanged.

Moderate dependence (16 – 19)
Your score suggests that drinking is having a negative impact on your mental and/or physical condition, but that severe physical dependence is unlikely.

Abstinence treatment goals should be very seriously considered. We suggest that you follow the suggestions for abstinence in this course, not moderation.

As well, because your results indicate that your drinking patterns may be hazardous or harmful, consider seeking further evaluation from your doctor and making an appointment to speak with an EFAP counselor. They can help you determine if your alcohol consumption is adversely affecting your health or interfering with your work and relationships.

Whatever you do, don’t delay. Problems become more troublesome, more complicated, and more pervasive if they are left unchallenged and unchanged.

High dependence (20 or greater)
It is likely that your current drinking patterns are hazardous or harmful to your health and well being, with a likelihood of physical dependence.

We strongly recommend that you contact an EFAP counselor.

Abstinence treatment goals should only be considered and we strongly recommend that you also contact an EFAP counselor and consider seeking further evaluation from your doctor. They can help you determine if your alcohol consumption is adversely affecting your health or interfering with your work and relationships.

You can continue with the course, but you should only follow the suggestions for abstinence, not moderation.

Whatever you do, don’t delay. Problems become more troublesome, more complicated, and more pervasive if they are left unchallenged and unchanged.
Your action plan

Many people who successfully moderate their drinking do so by following a simple plan. The workbook for this section will help you to produce that plan.

Note: If you have any difficulties with this part of the program, we suggest that you follow the suggestions for abstinence in this course (Sessions 3 – 7) and/or speak with an EFAP counselor.

The steps in the workbook are as follows:

• Step 1. Weigh the pros and cons of drinking
• Step 2. Know your life goals and priorities
• Step 3. Know your strengths and how you can use them
• Step 4. Become a confident thinker
• Step 5. Build support
• Step 6. Know your triggers
• Step 7: Cope with unwanted emotions
• Step 8 Counter the urge to drink
• Step 9. Review the skills to control drinking
• Step 10. Create healthy habits
• Your action plan

Step 1. Weigh the pros and cons of drinking

Now is the time to look squarely and honestly at the problems that your alcohol use is causing.

Stopping your drinking is not easy. In fact, it’s very hard. The key is you have to want to. You have to have a lot of reasons to moderate or stop your drinking because there are a lot of reasons to continue.

Weighing the pros and cons of drinking can be an excellent motivator. It can also help you later if you have a setback or relapse and need to remind yourself why you decided to make this change.

Take a moment and think about what you like about drinking. Check all that apply.

The pros: What I like about drinking

• It relaxes me
• It helps me sleep
• I like feeling intoxicated or ‘high’
• It helps me forget my problems
• It helps me be more open
• It helps me feel sexier
• It helps me adjust my attitude
• It makes me more sociable
• It helps me be more creative
• It helps me feel better
• Other:
• Other:
• Other:
The cons: What I do not like about drinking

Think about what you don’t like about your drinking and create a list. When you have come up with 10 items, rank them from 1 (most important) to 10 (still important, but less so). The examples below may help you come up with ideas.

Top 10 reasons to quit drinking

1. ________________________ - rank: ___
2. ________________________ - rank: ___
3. ________________________ - rank: ___
4. ________________________ - rank: ___
5. ________________________ - rank: ___
6. ________________________ - rank: ___
7. ________________________ - rank: ___
8. ________________________ - rank: ___
9. ________________________ - rank: ___
10. _______________________ - rank: ___

Some examples of the cons of drinking:

- It affects my work or school performance (e.g. absenteeism, missed deadlines, conflicts with supervisors, coworkers, customers, etc.)
- It affects my health (e.g. hangovers, poor sleep, weight gain or loss, headaches)
- It affects my work (lateness, absenteeism, missed deadlines, conflicts with supervisors, coworkers, customers, etc.)
- It affects how I feel emotionally (feeling depressed, feeling out of control, etc.)
- It affects my relationships (problems between myself and family members, significant other, or friends)
- It interferes with non-work activities (hobbies, exercise, outside interests that I neglect)
- I feel lousy the next day
- It causes legal problems
- It creates money problems
- I have blackouts or gaps in memory
- I make poor decisions
- I feel guilty
- I embarrass someone
- I neglect my responsibilities
- I need to drink more for the same effect

Keep this list as a reminder of why you want to moderate or stop your drinking, or use the list to start a discussion with a good friend or a counselor.
Step 2. Know your life goals and priorities

A key to success in life is having a clear and guiding sense of your goals and priorities. You may have thought about these in the past, but lost track of them in the “busy”-ness of life and with the influence of heavy drinking. As well, priorities can naturally change over time as we pass through different stages of life.

Life goals and priorities can come in many forms, and be stated in many different ways, but here is a list of some possibilities. Choose from the list and add your own until you have ten. Record these in the space provided.

1. health
2. financial security
3. family, marriage, children
4. career or vocation
5. education
6. personal freedom
7. inner peace and focus
8. contribution to community/society
9. friendships
10. avocation or other interests
11. balance and moderation
12. other

My life goals and priorities:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.

There are some attractive benefits out there you can reach by getting your alcohol problem under control.
Step 3. Know your strengths and how you can use them

If you have been drinking for a long time, you may have lost touch with your talents and positive qualities.

Everyone has strengths, positive qualities, and talents. Use this exercise to remind yourself what these are and how you can use them to reach your moderation goal.

List at least 5 of your greatest strengths

Here are some examples:

- getting to work on time
- meeting work deadlines and carrying out job responsibilities
- making and getting to appointments
- staying within a budget
- providing for my family
- being disciplined
- being a good friend

Think about how you can use these strengths to stop your drinking.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List of my greatest strengths</th>
<th>How I can use my strengths to stop drinking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
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<td>2.</td>
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<td>9.</td>
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<td>10.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

List at least 5 things you didn’t think you could do, but then surprised yourself and did.

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 
6. 
7. 

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Step 4. Become a confident thinker

One of the most powerful determinants of whether or not you will reach your goal is optimistic, positive, confident thinking. If you change doubtful thoughts to confident ones, you will be much more certain to reach your goal.

Now is the time to get rid of negative, critical, thoughts and to start speaking positively to yourself. For the rest of this week, every time you think a negative personal thought try to consciously restate that thought as a positive.

For example you can change negative, critical self-talk such as “I am too weak to quit drinking” into positive, confident, optimistic self-talk (e.g. “I have not been successful at quitting in the past but this time things will be different because I’m going to do different things to reach my goal”).

Don’t wait until a negative thought creeps into your head before you give yourself some encouragement. Here are some examples of confident, positive, optimistic thoughts:

- “I can do this.”
- “I’ve accomplished great things in the past when I put my mind to it. This will be the same.”
- “I can quit drinking.”
- “Practice makes perfect.”
- “Drinking is a choice. I choose not to drink.”
- “Now that I know better, I can do better.”

Choose at least one positive statement that you can tell yourself several times a day. It could be from the list of examples, or something you create for yourself. Whatever you choose to say to yourself, make sure it is personally meaningful, positive, confident, and optimistic.

Record your thought somewhere that you will see it every day and repeat this thought to yourself several times a day.

Step 5: Build support

The support of others is a crucial asset for anyone wishing to make major life changes. Some people find it helpful to announce plans to change drinking habits to close friends or a relative. Most people who do that get a very good response—their loved ones are usually supportive.

Think of someone who can encourage and support you.

Important: Your source(s) of support must be someone that you DO NOT DRINK with. You cannot get support to stop your drinking from someone who is not in control of their own drinking. If there is no one in your life, make sure you get an AA sponsor and consider talking with an EFAP counsellor.

Step 6: Know your triggers

Your desire to drink heavily probably changes for all sorts of reasons. For example, your level of stress, (happy or sad), the people you are with, and whether or not alcohol is easily available. Each of these is a ‘trigger’…they ‘trigger’ (elicit, activate, set off) your drinking.

If you know what triggers drinking, you can stop drinking before it starts and find a healthier alternative.
Identify your triggers
Think about your life and experiences from a number of different dimensions to help pinpoint your individual triggers for drinking.

1. Timing
List the time(s) of day, days of week, or events that are associated with drinking. Examples could be “every evening after work”, “Fridays on the way home after work”, or “whenever I get my paycheque.”

My ‘timing’ triggers:
1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 

2. Locations
List places where you drink, such as at home, at a bar, sports arena, etc.

My ‘location’ triggers:
1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 

3. Activities
List the particular things you’ve been doing at the time you drink, such as reading, cooking, eating in or out, watching TV, etc.

My ‘activity’ triggers:
1. 
2. 
3. 
4.
4. People involved
List the types of people or the particular people present when you drink, such as coworkers, a spouse, or friends. If you drink alone, include that here.

My 'people' triggers:
1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 

5. Work-related circumstances
List things directly or indirectly related to work that are associated with your drinking, such as after monthly deadlines, when things are slow and boring, after fights with coworkers, criticism by boss, etc.

My 'work-related' triggers:
1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 

6. Finance-related circumstances
List things involving you and your family's finances that are associated with drinking, such as when paying bills, when short of funds, when there is extra money, after an argument with spouse about money, after financial losses, etc.

My 'financial' triggers:
1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 

7. Your physical state
List things involving your physical state that are associated with drinking (e.g. feeling tired, to help you sleep, when feeling pain, when thirsty).

My physical triggers:
1. 
2. 
3. 
4.
8. Feelings

List emotions that precede drinking (not feelings that arise during or after drinking). For example, is drinking associated with emotions like joy, elation, anxiety, depression, burnout, boredom, etc.?

My emotional triggers:
1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 

9. Relations with others

Focus on your exchanges with people, not the people themselves. Which of these are associated with drinking (e.g. feeling misunderstood, when criticized, to be one of the gang, to lower inhibitions when meeting someone, when angry at someone)?

My triggers:
1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 

10. Major life events

For this area, you may have to think back many months or longer. What major life events are associated with drinking for you? For example, deaths of someone close to you, marriage or separation or divorce, change or loss of job, moving residence, significant health changes, retirement, legal difficulties, etc.

My triggers:
1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 

Summarize your triggers

Once you have finished listing your triggers, take a look at your lists and look for your most problematic areas. In other words, what is the number one trigger for your drinking (i.e. what trigger is associated with your heaviest or most frequent drinking)?

Once you have selected your number one trigger, repeat this 4 more times to create a list of 5 problematic triggers.

Note: The description of your most problematic drinking situations may be a combination of several triggers rather than one single trigger. That’s okay. Just make a short written description (e.g. “my most problematic trigger is when I finish a hard work week, I am tired and emotionally drained, and I have nothing planned for the week end.” This is a combination of work-related circumstances, physical state, feelings, and timing).
My most problematic ‘triggers’

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Step 7. Cope with unwanted emotions

Despite your best efforts, you may sometimes consume more alcohol than you intend. Don't give up your moderation goal! One of the reasons for this kind of slip-up or relapse is because of unwanted (or negative) emotions, like boredom, depression, stress, or anger.

If you use alcohol to escape or numb certain negative issues in your life, you will become increasingly unable to find good answers to those issues. Heavy drinking simply postpones and confuses these issues and feelings and, worse, compounds them with drinking-related problems.

If you drink because you want to suppress things like fears and hostilities and hurts and shortcomings, we strongly urge you to attend the 12-step program of Alcoholics Anonymous and seek counseling. These are parts of your experience that deserve attention and care.

However, if you want to try adding some ideas yourself, the following information may help. It may be that all you need is something as simple as going to the gym, relaxing more, or getting involved with activities. These suggestions can strengthen your ability to change when combined with AA and counseling.

Note: If any of your negative, unwanted feelings causes you so much distress that you feel compelled to drink to avoid these feelings, if your work, relationships, or personal life are threatened by these feelings, or if you have thoughts of harming yourself or others, we strongly urge you to contact a counselor. The suggestions in this course are only helpful for mildly negative feelings that contribute to overdrinking. These suggestions, alone, may not be helpful enough to change your outlook. Counseling CAN help.

As well, consider an eLearning course that focuses on these topics, such as ‘Taking Control of Mood’ or ‘Taking Control of Stress.’

Boredom

If you drink because you are bored, or if boredom contributes to slips and relapses, you need to get more active.

Think of as many activities as you can that might hold your interest and then select two of them to try. Use the following questions to help produce this list.

• What types of things have you enjoyed learning in the past (e.g., sports, crafts, languages)?
• What types of trips have you enjoyed in the past (e.g., to the ocean, to the mountains, to the country)?
• What types of things do you think you could enjoy if you had no worries about failing (e.g., painting, dancing)?
• What have you enjoyed doing alone (e.g., long walks, playing a musical instrument, sewing)?
• What have you enjoyed doing with others (e.g., talking on the telephone, playing a game)?
• What have you enjoyed doing that costs no money (e.g., playing with your children, going to the library, reading)?
• What have you enjoyed doing that costs very little (e.g., going to a park)?
Write down the two activities that you can use to counter any feelings of boredom you may have in upcoming weeks:

1.

2.

**Depression and sad mood**

Negative feelings frequently involve feeling sad or down or depressed. Some of the things you can do to counter feelings of depression include:

- Eat well. Fuel your body with proper nutrients and eat a good, balanced diet.
- Develop good sleep habits. Avoid caffeine-containing foods and beverages at least 4 hours before bedtime, do not use alcohol late in the evening.
- Get active. Even though you may not ‘feel’ like doing anything, ask yourself ‘what can I do right now despite my temporary feeling of sadness.’
- Use your positive self-talk. Recall the positive self-talk you created for yourself in Session 3 and repeat this to yourself frequently.
- Talk to someone who supports you.

Write down the two activities that you can use to counter any feelings of depression you may have in upcoming weeks:

1.

2.

**Stress reduction**

Negative feelings frequently involve stress or feeling overburdened. The following simple activities can help you reduce stress.

Here are some ideas that can help counter stress:

- Get outside and go for a walk.
- Try slow, deep, relaxed breathing. Inhale slowly to the count of 3, pause for a moment, and then exhale slowly to a count of 3. Repeat this several times.
- Read a book. This helps distract you from the stresses you may be worrying about, and calms your mind and body.
- Talk with friends (but where there is no alcohol involved).
- Visiting a new part of town or try an activity that you haven’t tried before.

Write down the two activities that you can use to counter any feelings of stress you may have in upcoming weeks:

1.

2.
Anger

Anger is one of the most common negative feeling states and often happens in combination with other negative emotions.

One technique for handling anger is simply to become aware of anger when it arises inside you, and do something that calms and cools you off a bit.

Some quick tips for dealing with anger:

- Leave the situation (if you can) and count to 10 before taking any other action.
- Take three full, deep, calm breaths.
- Use your positive thinking skills to tell your positive, coping statements.

Write down the two activities that you can use to counter any feelings of anger you may have in upcoming weeks:

Step 8. Counter the urge to drink

The ability to cope with drinking urges is an important skill. In the past you may have submitted to these urges. Use the following skills to counter your ‘triggers’ and help you cut back on your drinking.

Avoid

The first skill to cope with urges is to avoid.

- Avoid getting in the situation where you are tempted in the first place.
- Avoid making alcohol easy to attain. Get rid of it.
- Avoid your drinking friends, at least until you have some stability.
- Avoid passive activities that have naturally accompany drinking, like watching television or lounging at home. Stay busy, make plans, and get out of the house and into a nondrinking situation.
- Avoid your triggers. You know what will trigger your drinking. Avoid these situations.
- Be proactive and plan for when they might occur so that you can handle them in a healthy way, without turning to drink.
- And avoid letting yourself get run down. If you are Hungry, Anger, Lonely or Tied (HALT), your inner strength, and awareness will be compromised. You need to nourish yourself and your spirit with healthy living and healthy choices.

Confront

The second skill to cope with urges is to confront.

- You cannot always control whether or not you will have an urge to drink. But you can control how you respond to that urge. Rather than worry about the urge, take a step back and let it happen. See it for what it is: a temporary feeling of desire or need. It won’t last long and it cannot control you unless you allow it to.
- Confront your self-talk. Urges often come in the form of self-talk that gives you permission to drink. For example “I’ll just have a short one, that’s not really drinking”.
- When you encounter your urges as self-talk, you have to confront this self-talk immediately and forcefully. Say to yourself “I will not stray from my plan” or “I know better so I can do better.”
- Confront your urge with your long-term goals. Think about how you will feel tomorrow if you give in and how you will feel you if you do not. Consider the list of reasons you’ve created for why you want to stop drinking.
Distract

The third skill for coping with urges is distraction.

Distractions are things that you do to take your mind off the urge and point it in a healthier direction.

Here are a few examples of some distractions:

- take a walk
- take a drive
- do exercises at home or go to the gym
- go jogging
- listen to favorite music
- telephone a friend
- clean out the garage
- cook something interesting
- go to the library or bookstore
- work in the yard
- clean and polish the car
- take a shower or bath
- read the newspaper, a magazine, or book
- drink something nonalcoholic
- rent a video or DVD
- write a letter or email
- plan your next vacation
- make a shopping list
- clean out the refrigerator
- plan future finances
- surf the internet

The list of potential distractions is endless.

Remind

The fourth and last skill presented here for coping with urges is to remind.

Remind yourself…

- of the reasons why you want to stop drinking and what you specifically hope to gain from this new pattern.
- that you want better relations with friends.
- that you want better health.
- that you want to treat your family with the love and respect that they deserve.
- that you want to work to your full potential at your job.
- that you want to sleep better.
- that you want to look better and age beautifully or handsomely.
Exercise: Practice identifying risk factors and dealing with them immediately

Write down some identifying information about a trigger situation and the skill(s) that you will use to counter that trigger if and when it arises. You will likely want to pick triggers from your ‘most problematic trigger’ list. Be certain to pick at least a few triggers that you expect will occur in the next week.

My trigger situation: The skill I will use to counter the trigger

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 

Step 9. Review the skills to control drinking

1. Eat before or during drinking
Having something to eat before or with alcoholic drinks delays the rate at which alcohol gets into the bloodstream.
   - always drink on a full stomach
   - always drink water or soda between alcoholic beverages. This will help slow you down

2. Quench your thirst
Don't go into a drinking situation thirsty.
Quench your thirst with water, juice, or a soft drink before the drinking situation or start out with a nonalcoholic drink when you arrive.

3. Delay
Postpone the time when you allow yourself to have your first drink.
Take time to settle into the situation, get comfortable with it, and start out with a nonalcoholic drink or start sipping a drink very slowly. You've told yourself by these actions that you are going to be moderate.

4. Dilute
Alcohol is absorbed more quickly by the body the higher its concentration, so a drink with a lower percentage of alcohol will get into your system more slowly.

There are many ways to dilute a drink. For example, instead of liquor on the rocks, try a highball. Wine can become a spritzer.

Another trick is the following: with a mixed drink such as a gin and tonic, when the glass is half empty, refill it with just a little more ice and tonic. Then when it is half empty again, repeat. You have a drink the whole night but end up drinking just one standard drink.


5. Alternate nonalcoholic and alcoholic drinks
Try alternating nonalcoholic drinks with alcoholic drinks.
Some people find just having something in their hand to hold while talking with others helps, even if it’s a nonalcoholic drink.

6. Sip
Slow down your alcohol intake by consciously taking smaller sips and spacing them. Or, allow more time per drink. See how many sips and how long an interval of time you can get out of one drink.

7. Put the glass down
Put your glass down during drinking occasions. Don’t keep the glass in your hand except when you are drinking from it.

8. Time your drinks
Try taking note of the timing of your drinks. The simplest way is to plan in advance the number of drinks you will have and the interval between the start of each drink such as an hour or 45 minutes.

9. Talk your way through it
Have an internal dialogue with yourself before each drink. This makes the act of having a drink more subject to your conscious control and helps you keep your goal of moderation firmly in mind.

Bring to mind the consequences of overdrinking. Try to picture yourself saying things you don’t mean or finding yourself unable to keep up with the conversation.

It can be helpful while you are in a drinking situation to literally consider what you have to do the next day. Consider your obligations and goals when the thought ‘having just one more’ pops into your head.

10. Direct your focus
Try not to center on the alcohol as the main or only source of enjoyment in a drinking situation. Focus on what else is going on that is pleasurable. For example, you could focus your attention on the people you like, the conversation, the music, or whatever other activities are going on.

11. Don’t keep alcohol at home
Keep a small amount of alcohol, or none at all, in your home. Don’t keep temptations around.

12. Get support
Cutting down on your drinking may be difficult at times. Ask your family and friends for support to help you reach your goal. Talk to a counselor if you are having trouble cutting down. Get the help you need to reach your goal by reaching out to others.
Step 10: Create healthy habits

As a moderate drinker you need to create new habits to give you the pleasure and routine that you once got from drinking.

In the table below, the left side column lists some desired effects people try to achieve by drinking (you can add more of your own).

In the right side column, list the alternatives. What are some other ways to achieve the desired effects you used to get from drinking? For example, if you used to drink heavily to relax and you no longer drink that way, how are you going to relax? If you don't develop alternatives, then the next time you want to relax, you may end up exceeding the drinking limits you have set for yourself.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The effects I like from drinking</th>
<th>An alternative way to get that effect without drinking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• To relax</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To escape</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To have fun</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To adjust my attitude</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To be more sociable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To feel free</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To be more creative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To numb my feelings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To forget</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To feel better</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To decompress</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To get high</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To be more assertive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Having trouble coming up with ideas of alternatives? Here are some specific ideas.

Try exercising. Exercise can give you a tangible feeling of increased health and well-being, relieve stress, and aid sleep. You can bicycle, walk, run, swim, do aerobics or yoga, lift weights, and more.

Make new connections that don't take you into situations where others are drinking. For example, join a religious organization, political organization, health club, special-interest club, or a sports team.

- Do something fun and outlandish, like taking a ceramics class, going to a movie, going to a live show, or seeing a football game
- Do something with your children or your spouse or partner
- Dance
- Learn a new recipe or try a new restaurant
- Visit an art gallery
- Write in a journal every day to express your feelings and clarify your ideas
- Try meditation or daily prayer
Taking Control of Alcohol Use

Your action plan

This is your master plan. You must go over this plan each day otherwise you will forget about it and fall back into old drinking patterns.

To keep your plan in mind, use these suggestions (adapted from the World Health Organization's suggestions for reducing alcohol intake):

- Think of an activity that you do many times a day (e.g. drinking a cup of coffee or watching a particular TV program).
- Whenever you start that activity, think about the plan in your mind. Think about why you are cutting down, your trigger situations and how you plan to cope with them, etc. As well, think about your healthy alternatives.
- If you have a support person, talk to them about your plan at least 3 times each week.
- Whenever you feel distressed or unhappy or uncomfortable, use your positive self-talk and practice the suggestions you recorded for coping with negative emotions.
- Finally, remember that this will get easier with time. If you drink more than you intend, don't give up.

Your action plan

My reasons for cutting down or stopping drinking

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

My strengths and how I can use them to cut down or stop my drinking

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

My most dangerous ‘trigger’ situations and how I can cope with them

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
The ways that I can counter feelings of discomfort, boredom, stress, tiredness, etc.

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 

What I can do to counter the urge to drink

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 

Ways that I can control my drinking

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 

Healthy alternatives that I can do instead of drinking

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5.
Taking Control of Alcohol Use

How I will remember this plan

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

When will you know it is time to seek professional help?

If your best friend were about to embark on this same plan (to cut back on drinking) what would you tell them that they should keep telling themselves to keep their motivation and spirits alive?

What could go wrong or undermine your plans? How can you stick with your plan despite these setbacks or problems?

What are some of the good things that you expect will happen if you reach your moderation goal?

What are some of the good things that you expect will happen if you reach your moderation goal?