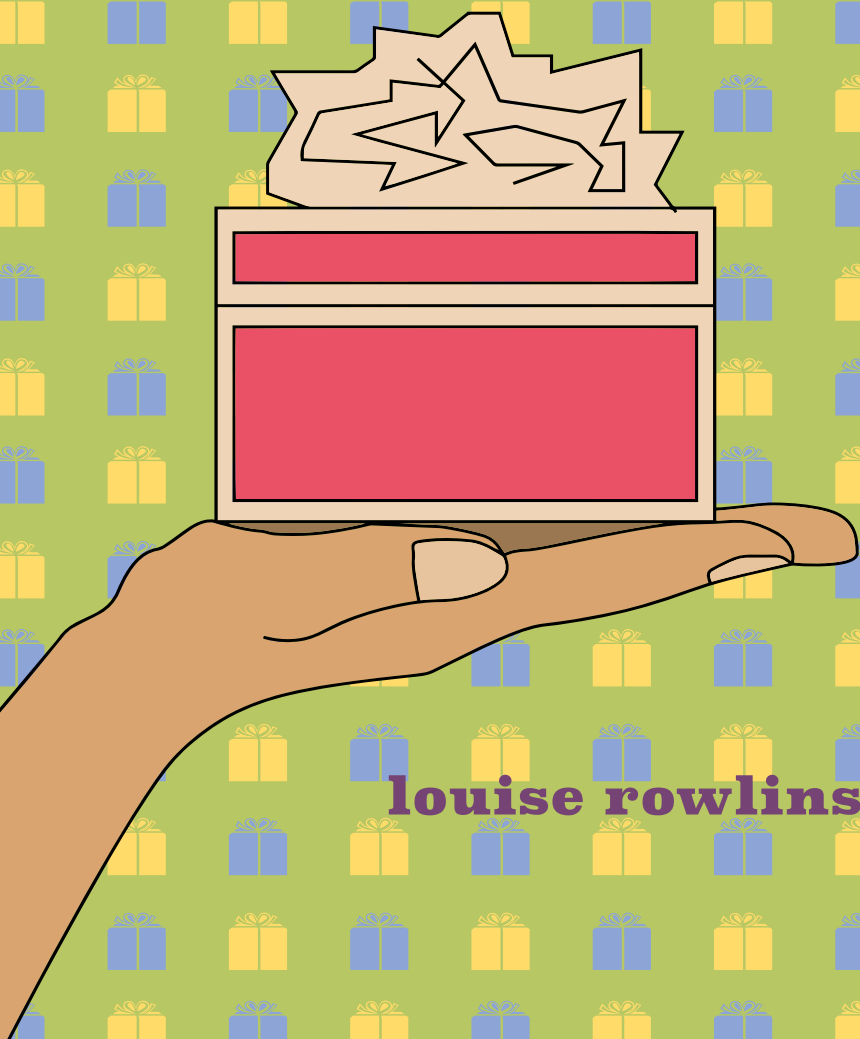


**a
hangover
free life**



louise rowlinson

hangover free: your first steps to quitting for good

The information contained in this booklet is based on the UK healthcare system and personal and professional experiences of the author. It is not intended as a substitute for consulting with your GP/primary health care physician. The author is not responsible for any adverse side effects or consequences resulting directly or indirectly from the use of any of the suggestions discussed in this booklet.

Design by Paul Rowlinson

well done you!

A Hangover Free Life provides advice, support and encouragement to help people manage their drinking and quit for good. This booklet was developed by Louise Rowlinson, a health care professional within the UK NHS healthcare system, and someone who tried to moderate their drinking for years and eventually decided that it was just easier to stop completely. And so she did on 21st September 2013 and wrote about her journey on a blog which you can visit at www.ahangoverfreelife.com.

She would like to thank the NHS Stop Smoking Service and 'Smokefree' campaign for providing the template for this booklet design. She would love to see this service one day be offered completely free of charge by the NHS. Until that time comes this booklet is offered to help you.

do I really have a problem with alcohol?

This was a question that I asked myself repeatedly when I was still drinking. Usually when I had said or done something that left me feeling embarrassed or when I was very hung-over. By the time the hangover was disappearing the question would be forgotten and another drink would be poured.

If you are asking yourself this question then this questionnaire might help. It is called the **CAGE** Questionnaire and consists of 4 questions:

Have you ever felt you should **Cut** down on your drinking?

Yes

No

Have people **Annoyed** you by criticizing your drinking?

Yes

No

Have you ever felt bad or **Guilty** about your drinking?

Yes

No

Have you ever had a drink first thing in the morning to steady your nerves or get rid of a hangover (**Eye** opener)?

Yes

No

A total score of 2 or greater is considered clinically significant. The [Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test](#) (AUDIT) is a longer screening tool recommended by the WHO.

reading this is possibly your first step to quitting drinking for good

But if you aren't yet ready to quit, this booklet will help you think about ways that you could manage your drinking so that you can work on drinking less, both in terms of the amount you drink and the frequency you drink. Maybe like me you've tried that already and you're here to stop completely. There are actually many more of us out here doing this than you would think and if you take a look at online communities like www.soberistas.com, www.HelloSundayMorning.org, www.joinclubsoda.co.uk or www.livingsober.org.nz or Sober Women Awareness Network (SWAN) on Facebook you will see thousands of us all putting down the drink, either temporarily or permanently.

These are the four steps that we all take:

Think

Prepare

Quit

Stop for Good.

You can use the **4-step Planner** to help you get there. The first half of the booklet provides information and the second half is your 4 step planner for you to complete (and based on these four steps).

You've nothing to lose but your habit.

**“Sobriety, the world's best kept secret.
Very true.”** Amy, Canada July 2014

1 think about quitting

Get ready to quit by starting to see yourself as a non-drinker. Think how great you would feel if you stopped drinking for good, and what it would be like to wake up every day feeling completely clear headed and hangover free, with more energy, more money, more life. Follow these steps to make this happen.

Think positively

Quitting's not easy, especially when it looks like so many other people drink. But the truth is that 61.7% of the world population aged 15 years or older have not drunk alcohol in the past 12 months (World Health Organisation, 2014) and within the UK 15% of the population do not drink (Office of National Statistics, 2011) with more quitting every day.

While it's your choice and your journey, so many others benefit too. Like your family. You'll be able to spend more quality time with them, and be around longer to see your kids grow up and have children of their own. You might have lost someone to drinking, and want to be sure this is the last time it happens in your family. Thinking about others when you decide to quit can give you extra strength to see it through, and they can all share in your success.

remember you're not alone when you quit

Think about your health

Quitting will increase your chances of living a longer life. If you are drinking more than 15 units a day you should consult your GP/primary health care physician to ensure that you do not need medical support with quitting drinking.

Drinking impacts upon all of your body's systems including:

Your brain

Your liver

Your digestive system

Your ability to absorb vitamins and minerals

Your immune system

Your heart and blood pressure

Your blood's ability to clot

Alcohol is also carcinogenic so will increase your risk of developing certain types of cancers, specifically the upper respiratory tract, liver, colon, rectum and breast ([source](#)).

2 prepare for a better future

Preparing to quit is about being practical. It's not just a test of your willpower. It's about having a plan, understanding why you drink, finding an option that's best for you, having people support you and setting a date to quit drinking.

Prepare a good plan

It helps to set a date to quit drinking and be ready for it:

- You could use [Go Sober for October](#), [Dry January](#) or [Dryathlon](#) as a starting point. However if that is months away then just start now!
- Identify your drinking triggers and plan ahead
- Change your routine so that at trigger times you are doing something different
- Take it one day at a time and feel good about what you are doing
- Buddy up with a friend so you can support each other
- Have a selection of tasty alcohol free drinks available to drink at trigger times
- Avoid situations where you might be tempted to drink again
- Note how much cash you're saving — plan to treat yourself regularly.
- If drinking was your reward then you need to make sure you have other treats organised so that you do not feel you are going without — simple things like flowers, a magazine, going to the cinema, a book, chocolate or a cake.

And remember to tell yourself:

“I can do it, I can do it, I can do it, I can do it,
I can do it, I can do it.”

3 quit with the support that's right for you

Many drinkers want to reduce the amount they drink or quit drinking but aren't sure where to turn. Professional help can help increase your chances of success.

There are different ways to quit:

- with the support of your GP*
- with the support of your local Drug and Alcohol Treatment Service
- with the support of [Alcoholics Anonymous](#) UK National Helpline 0845 769 7555 or email help@alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk
- with the support of [Smart Recovery](#)
- with the support of audio podcasts such as the excellent [Bubble Hour](#)
- with the support of online communities, such as [Club Soda](#), [Soberistas](#), Sober Women Awareness Network (SWAN) on Facebook and sober blogs.

*I appreciate that as a parent approaching your GP can be anxiety inducing because of the concerns that your ability as a parent may be questioned. As a healthcare professional myself, who works within the multi-agency setting, I can reassure you that all agencies primary focus is to work with you to resolve the issue that you have with alcohol and to support you and your family during this process.

Quit with the help of medication

The first few weeks without drinking can be the hardest. This is when your body is fighting the physical addiction. This passes, but you might find some additional medicinal support helpful to get you through these early stages. Once the physical cravings pass you'll find it much easier to stay the course. You will need to consult your GP/primary health care physician or specialist services to access these.

There are drugs that are used in acute alcohol withdrawal such as diazepam, also known as Valium, or chlordiazepoxide, known also as Librium. These are long acting benzodiazepines, anti-anxiety medications, which manage the hyper-excitability response of the central nervous system when alcohol is withdrawn and prevent epileptic fits. These are normally prescribed over a fixed 5 day reducing dose schedule.

There are also drugs used to manage alcohol dependence namely acamprosate or disulfiram. These are both effective treatments for relapse prevention in alcohol dependence.

- **Acamprosate**, also known as Campral, is useful for those who are concerned that strong cravings will result in a relapse. It should be initiated as soon as possible after abstinence has been achieved and continued for 1 year. It should be maintained if there is a temporary relapse and is not effective for everyone so its efficacy should be regularly assessed and the British National Formulary (BNF) recommend that it should be used in combination with counselling.
- **Disulfiram**, better known as Antabuse, gives rise to an extremely unpleasant systemic reaction after the ingestion of even a small amount of alcohol and needs to be taken daily to be effective. Symptoms can occur within 10 minutes of drinking and include flushing of the face, throbbing headache, palpitation, increase in heart rate, nausea and vomiting and with large doses of alcohol even more severe cardiac symptoms including collapse that can last several hours.
- **Nalmefene** (trade name Selincro) has been approved for moderately dependent heavy drinkers. This drug is an opiate antagonist which if taken while continuing normal drinking decreases the craving for alcohol over time. It relies upon a mechanism called pharmacological extinction, which works by blocking the positive reinforcement effects of alcohol triggered by endorphins in the brain. The drug is recommended only when combined with a psychological intervention.

Quit with a range of alternative drinks

- Tea, coffee, herbal teas
- Soft drinks and cordials - elderflower cordial is really popular and delicious
- Mixers — if you liked a G&T like I did, then just have the tonic water, ice and a slice
- Mocktails — there are a wide range of virgin versions of all your favourite cocktails available today
- Alcohol-free beers and wines (these are usually either 0% or 0.05% Alcohol By Volume or ABV) — this is a contentious subject and I can only speak for myself but I like the option of these. Others are understandably cautious about drinking these and I completely respect that. You should do what is right for you and err on the side of caution if unsure. I have tried different brands of alcohol free and low alcohol beers and some supermarket own brand and other brands of de-alcoholised wines, either in red, rose, white or sparkling. The drinks industry are waking up to the fact that there is a growing alcohol free market and are beginning to cater for it. Good websites for a wide selection of beers, ciders, wines, spirit and cocktail substitutes can be found [here](#) , [here](#) , [here](#) and [here](#).

4 stop for good by believing you can do it

**even if it
takes multiple
attempts**

If you start again, don't despair. It can take a few attempts to quit. There are lots of ways to quit drinking and success comes from finding the way that's right for you. Every quit attempt teaches you new things. And because you've tried before, you can use that experience and try a different route.

This 4-step Planner belongs to:

Name:

Keeping a record of your progress can really help you succeed. Your 4-step Planner is filled with useful exercises to help you through your quitting journey. You're already on step 1

1 **think hard about quitting**

Everything else follows from that.

What do you stand to gain?

- More money for you and your family
- An improved sense of happiness and wellbeing
- Less stress and anxiety
- Keeping healthy for the sake of your children
- Better sleep

What are your top five reasons for quitting?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

1 How much does drinking cost you?

Add up what you spend on drinking. You may find it costs you more than you think.

Cost per day: £ a day

What you spend on drinking a week: £ a week

Multiply by 52 for a cost per year: £ a year

So, think ahead – if you don't quit now

In another three years you would spend: £

In five years: £

In ten years: £

You can download the 'I'm done drinking' app from iTunes and you can find it [here](#).

How will you treat yourself with the money you save?

New clothes? A weekend break or nice holiday away?

1 think hard about why you drink - are they good reasons to carry on?

Why did you start drinking?

To look older

To be tough

To be cool

To be accepted

To copy friends or family

Just curious

To feel grown up

Just felt like it

Anything else?

Which of the above still applies today?

What's keeping you drinking?

Drinking is a habit. Certain times of the day can be triggers. Recognising them can help you beat them.

When are you most likely to drink?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> When you get home from work | <input type="checkbox"/> A social event |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Watching TV | <input type="checkbox"/> With a meal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Preparing dinner | <input type="checkbox"/> With friends or family |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reading a book | <input type="checkbox"/> On the computer |

Any others?

Why quit?

Reasons to drink

Reasons to quit

2 **prepare** for the day you quit - the day you quit, you'll change your life for the better

Know why you drink

To understand when you drink and the triggers, fill in the planner below over a day or two.

What time did I drink?	What was I doing?	How much I wanted to drink (1-10)

2 **Managing your triggers**

Here are some ways of coping with the difficult moments:

- Stay busy
- Change your routine
- Think about something else
- Go out for a walk
- Watch TV
- Drink a non-alcoholic drink
- Have something to eat
- Take a bath
- Go to bed
- Look back at your list of reasons for quitting (try keeping this with you)
- Reach out to your support community online or attend a meeting

Write down your ideas on how to deal with your triggers:



Avoid temptation

- Choose a quit date that's unlikely to be stressful
- Avoid having any alcohol around you
- Avoid places where others may be drinking
- Think of how you will politely decline when offered a drink. You do not have to give a reason why so 'no thank you' is okay.

2 Get support

- Talk to someone who's successfully quit
- Team up with someone else who wants to quit too
- Get online support via sober support communities such as the Booze Free Brigade on Yahoo Groups or Facebook, Soberistas, HelloSundayMorning or LivingSober.

Remind yourself why you're quitting

- That there's never 'just one drink'
- That you want to be in control
- That you'll be much healthier
- And much wealthier!

During the first three weeks

- Keep busy
- Find a different regular daily routine
- Stick to non-drinking environments
- Get plenty of fresh air
- Have a treat every few days to reward yourself for not drinking
- Keep telling yourself, I can do it!

Set the date you will begin to quit drinking:

/ /

Who could support you?

Quit because you're ready to - the day you quit, you'll change your life for the better

See and feel yourself getting better

Keep a log of how you're feeling both physically and emotionally to track your progress:

Date	How you are feeling?

4 **stop** for good by being one step ahead - understand what you're going through and deal with it better

Handling your emotions and stress

It takes time to get used to not drinking alcohol, and for new habits to feel normal. You may have to find different ways to deal with your emotions whether it is stress, anxiety, anger, boredom, sadness or joy that you are feeling.

- Be honest with yourself, what's triggering these emotions?
- Talk problems over with someone you trust
- Do one thing for you, every day
- Take time to relax and get plenty of sleep
- As a non-drinker, you will be able to find ways to manage your emotions more healthily

Coping with difficult situations

Look back at the list of the things that kept you drinking, and remember to avoid these if you can.

4 Coping with withdrawal symptoms

Lots of people start drinking again because they feel they can't cope with the withdrawal symptoms. The first few days to weeks can be hard, but the symptoms are a sign of the body starting to recover. If they do not improve please seek medical support.

Symptoms	What's happening	How to cope
Intense desire to drink	Brain missing the alcohol fix	Remember this goes after a few weeks
Sugar cravings	Body missing the sugar in alcohol	Eat natural sugars if you can
Trouble sleeping	Due to alcohol leaving body	It will pass in 2-3 weeks
Mood swings, irritability	Signs of alcohol withdrawal	Use coping strategies

If I'm tempted to drink again I will:

4 stop for good, really stop for good - if you drink again, don't worry, use your experience to try and quit again


Why did I start drinking again?

- Thought I could 'just have one'?
- Didn't prepare well or think about drinking triggers?
- Didn't work out ways of dealing with emotions and stress?
- Put on weight?

What do I do if I have a drink?

- Remind yourself why you want to quit
- Bin any alcohol that you've got
- Avoid the situation that made you start again
- Reach out for support
- Think positively and remind yourself that you can do it

**Use this space to
make any useful
notes**

A large, empty white rectangular box with a thin red border, occupying the majority of the page below the header. It is intended for taking notes.

Further reading:

Easy Way to Control Alcohol by *Allen Carr*

Kick the Drink Easily by *Jason Vale*

The Sober Revolution: Women Calling Time on Wine O'clock
by *Sarah Turner and Lucy Rocca*

Why You Drink and How to Stop by *Veronica Valli*

Between Drinks by *David Downie*

Sober is the New Black: A Then and Now Account of Life Beyond
Booze by *Rachel Black*

Almost Alcoholic by *Robert Doyle and Joseph Nowinski*

Journey Through Thinking about Drinking Towards a Safer
Relationship with Alcohol by *Stuart Linke*

Drink: The Intimate Relationship Between Women and Alcohol by
Ann Dowsett Johnston

Mrs D is Going Without by *Lotta Dann*

Drinking: A Love Story by *Caroline Knapp*

Dry by *Augusten Burroughs*

Staying Sober - How to Control the Demon Drink by *Binki Laidler*

Resources:

Department of Health/NHS Smokefree: <http://www.nhs.uk/smokefree>

<http://www.patient.co.uk/doctor/cage-questionnaire> :Ewing JA;

Detecting alcoholism. The CAGE questionnaire. JAMA. 1984 Oct 12;252(14):1905-7.

<http://www.patient.co.uk/doctor/alcohol-use-disorders-identification-test-audit>

www.joinclubsoda.co.uk

www.soberistas.com

www.HelloSundayMorning.org

<http://www.livingsober.org.nz/>

Sober Women Awareness Network (SWAN) on Facebook

http://www.who.int/substance_abuse/facts/alcohol/en/

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/healthnews/8286537/Britain-turns-teetotal-as-15pc-say-they-dont-drink.html>

<http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/>

<http://www.smartrecovery.org.uk/>

<http://www.thebubblehour.com/>

<http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/gid-tag442/resources/alcohol-dependence-nalmefene-appendix-b-draft-scope-prereferral-june-2013-2>

<http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/esnm29/chapter/evidence-review>

<http://www.alcoholfree.co.uk/>

<http://www.sansinwines.co.uk/>

<http://www.lono.co.uk>

<http://noughtywines.co.uk>

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/im-done-drinking/id452705683?mt=8> s

hangover free: well done! you did it!

**Now you've quit drinking for good,
you'll look back and just won't believe
all the time, money and life you've
wasted on the habit**

The information contained in this booklet is based on the UK healthcare system and personal and professional experiences of the author. It is not intended as a substitute for consulting with your GP/primary health care physician. The author is not responsible for any adverse side effects or consequences resulting directly or indirectly from the use of any of the suggestions discussed in this booklet.

Design by Paul Rowlinson

If you would like further support, please visit www.ahangoverfreelife.com where additional tips and tools are shared on a daily basis.

Louise has also launched an online course to support you if you wish to cut down or stop drinking which you can find at: <https://www.udemy.com/ahangoverfreelife>

**Louise also runs How to Quit Workshops in London in collaboration with Club Soda. Please check go here to find out more:
<https://www.joinclubsoda.co.uk/workshop-how-to-quit-drinking>**

Follow me on Twitter @hangovrfreelife

Follow me on Facebook at [ahangoverfreelife](https://www.facebook.com/ahangoverfreelife)