

# 'I don't drink!' How to quit alcohol - a drinker's tale

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## August 2018

It is nearly a year since I last produced a newsletter and the only excuse I have is that I am so busy. It is also a long newsletter, but it contains [key messages](#), so I hope you find it useful and of interest. As always, I value your feedback.

Why so busy? When I started writing my 'Idontdrink' blogs I was still living by the sea in Selsey on the South coast of England, I was semi-retired, and although living an idyllic and sober life I was also becoming bored and restless. My new-found energy, lease of life and a mind brimming with ideas was too much for a sedentary existence and something had to change. It did, and eighteen months ago we moved to Beckenham, twenty minutes from the heart of London.

## Sober in the City

Although I already had one City-based client I helped with marketing, the nightmare of commuting from Selsey (over 2 hours each way) and the complete unreliability of Southern Rail had meant I only travelled up when necessary. But now being based less than 20 minutes from London Bridge, means I am able to pop into the office on a far more regular basis. Revisiting my old haunts and meeting up with 'drinking buddies' soon opened up other opportunities and I now have an additional client which puts me back to working on a full-time basis. I happy with that, not just because it means more income, but because I am deeply involved with developing some very exciting new technology opportunities, gathering a wealth of new knowledge, and being able to put to good use all the skills and experience I have gathered in over forty years of employment.



In fact, I realise I am now business-wise where I should have been in my mid-thirties, helping drive new initiatives, having fun, being full of energy, meeting interesting people, travelling, and helping to create something I can be proud of. Instead, all those years ago, all I could think of was where to go and get pissed at lunchtime. If I had never been a drinker I expect that by now I would be a very wealthy and successful man, and I would probably be exploring a new career or pursuing a hobby or doing voluntary work but with a great deal of financial security behind me. Instead I became beholden to alcohol and I let countless opportunities pass me by or I stupidly wrecked them by getting drunk and losing people's trust. I am lucky that quitting the drink has made me feel so young and alive again, or I would have serious regrets over all this waste, instead of such a positive outlook for the future.

The truth is I do get angry with myself over those lost opportunities. The more 'sober' meetings I have the more I realise how useless I used to be. I am now meeting interesting people, having useful conversations and then going back and doing something positive about them. On the way home, I then imagine that younger me having similar meetings, but then going to yet another wine bar, getting pissed, convincing myself I was some hero and then doing nothing at all with the opportunity. It is that feeling like being a hero that annoys me so. Drink makes you think you have already achieved something. You must also recognise the feeling when you are pissed of imagining you are already successful, are a famous hero, adored by all and that you can achieve the world. Alcohol creates that frame of mind and that is why it is so hard to imagine life without alcohol. The reality is you are achieving nothing, just deluding yourself and I see that now. That's what makes me so cross.



### **But do I find it difficult going to those old haunts and seeing my drinking mates?**

Not at all, I just drink Lime and Soda and even seeing my pals knocking back what used to be my favourite wines never phases me at all. But then I don't spend that much time in the City wine bars as I can't wait to get back to the office and achieve things (unlike the old me who would go from bar to bar all afternoon), and I also get bored as soon as the others start to get drunk and

that always signals time to leave. But at least no-one troubles me to have a drink, I certainly don't miss out on any of the fun and merriment as I have learned that you don't have to have a drink to enjoy yourself, and unlike the others, I remember everything that is said or planned. I also no longer embarrass myself or forget anything or whom I have met, and instead, my mind has become like a Hoover, sucking up ideas and opportunities as I come across them and turning these to advantage. It is amazing how much you can pick up from other people's drunken

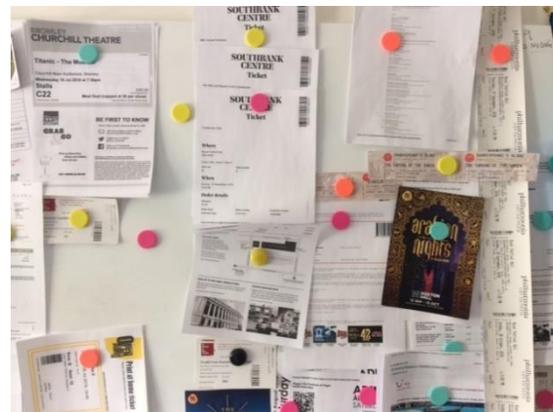
conversations, and quite startling how loose-tongued some people become even after just one drink!

***A distinct warning there for any of you still drinking alcohol and having business meetings, and assuming you are still in control of yourself and that no-one is observing you.***

### **Making up for lost time.**

One of the things my wife and I determined to do when we moved to London was to make up for the lost years we spent long ago, when we also lived in London but we never went anywhere because I was always too tired (drunk) or I had spent all our spare money on booze and fags.

Now we go to all the museums, especially on the open evenings when they host lectures and events, we go to plays, to concerts, we have discovered Shakespeare at the wonderful Globe (and been to seven of his plays already this year), we enjoy films, we go to all the free events in Trafalgar Square and we love just walking along the Thames Southbank at night and enjoying the lights, sounds and smells of this wonderful City. So far this year alone we have been to 100 different events (the picture is of part of my ticket-wall at home) and the cost of all this is a



fraction of what we were spending on fags and booze before. In fact, because I still maintain a log (see item below for more on this), we have so far this year saved between us an absolute minimum of **£4,200**. It is incredible how much we used to waste and that really is a very conservative estimate based on me spending £10.00\*per day on drink. If I had also smoked (I quit twenty-five years ago) and if my wife had drunk as much as I used to (she also no longer drinks at all) then we would have been spending over £20,000 a year on two substances that add no value, and in fact only cause massive harm and wreck your life. *\*The reality is I would spend in the region of £40.00 per day on booze, especially if I was having wine at lunchtime at well over £20.00 per bottle!*

Work out how much you are spending on drink and think what else you could be doing with the money. Even at the low estimate of £10.00 per day I personally have saved over **£20,000** since I quit and that is after income tax! That is a hell of a lot of holidays, fun, things I couldn't afford before, and all that on top of all the amazing health benefits.

***Why pay for good health when you can get 'paid' for being healthy!***

## Giving something back

Although I never wrote any of my books specifically to make money, they do sell well and so I decided to give the proceeds to a worthy charity helping the homeless. I am very cautious of charities in general ever since I found out the sorts of salaries paid to CEO's of charities and in some cases even to the trustees. Even Shelter pays its CEO well over £100,000 plus pension and benefits and some charities seem to be run like small fiefdoms.

However, as we regularly go to evening concerts at St Martin in the Fields in Trafalgar Square we were able to witness first hand the work with the homeless undertaken by their own charity, 'The Connection'. Having assessed and decided this is indeed a worthy charity all proceeds I receive from all my book sales now go to them. Even more reason to encourage your friends to read my books! You can find out more at [www.connection-at-stmartins.org.uk](http://www.connection-at-stmartins.org.uk)



We also raised over £500 for The Connection this May by going on their sponsored pilgrimage from Trafalgar Square to Canterbury Cathedral. This was a 74 mile walk over four days and camping or living rough in the evening. The reality was it was nearly 100 miles as many of the people on the walk had pedometers with them and we think the organisers had worked out the distance as the 'crow flies' and not told us -

fearful of putting us off! We did get worn out, we were shattered at the end and we did get blisters, but we met some amazing people, we had great fun, we ate monstrous amounts of cake and we helped the charity. It also amazed me that just five years ago I could hardly walk more than 100 metres because of the gout and other pains I had, and all associated with my drinking.



On that note I remember the doctor telling me I probably had arthritis when I used to go for a prescription for more gout tablets. Of course, I never told them how much I used to drink but I think even if I had they would have made the same diagnosis. It shows how little the effects of alcohol are understood and how many excuses are made for this bloody substance just because the government seemingly sponsor it as much as anyone else. All those pains I use to have went within weeks of quitting and were probably all due to dehydration – that is definitely something that alcohol causes and that can have serious consequences throughout the body.

***Drinking loads of water in addition to alcohol is not a cure by the way – I tried that too!***

## My no-drinking log

Someone asked me the other day why I still keep a no-drinking log after such a long time, and if it is to ensure I never drink again? That is a good question.

My immediate answer is that I don't need a log as I know for sure I will never drink again. Even as I write these words I can feel the awful stress I would feel knowing that if I have just one sip and enjoy it, I will be back to how I was. I would probably end up the same drunken mess, I expect my wife might well leave me this time and I know I would trash the respect of everyone who knows me. I would also be condemning myself to an early death and undoing all that great work I have achieved over the last five and half years. So why do I keep a log?

**The simple answer is the enormous satisfaction I get every day from adding yet another day to my new life.**

In my book 'How to quit alcohol' I mention making a star chart and a spreadsheet log and you will find a template copy of my spreadsheet to download on my website. I wrote that chapter four years ago and so to think I still enjoy completing that log every day really says what a personal sense of achievement you get from quitting alcohol forever. It also enables me to realise specific milestones such as 1000 days sober or more recently for me, my recent 2000 days landmark. In my log I also record how many times I exercise per year, for me that is mainly swimming (147 swims as at 1<sup>st</sup> August this year), other activities I do such as kayaking and karate, and because we are saving so much money (also logged), how many free and paid events we go to such as concerts, the theatre, lectures, exhibitions and the like. We also record holidays, and all of this so my wife and I can look back at the end of each year and wonder at how much both our lives have changed since I stopped drinking. If you haven't got a spreadsheet or star chart working for you I would start one today. It really is a great incentive and support.



NUMBER OF ACTIVITIES		
Month	S miles	K
January	18	13
February	24	17
March	23	20
April	27	14
May	16	10
June	21	10
July	18	10
August		
September		
October		
November		
December		

swimathon : 1:53:13

Total kilometres swum 204

## 2000 days



In my book I also list milestones with suggestions as to how you might feel at for example 100 days, 250 days and one year. At the time of writing of course, I had no idea how I would feel at 2000 days and so that was included on a day '?' page. So, the most sensible thing is to include below the blog I actually wrote on that 2000th day last month in case you didn't see it, and because it relays a really important message. The question I asked myself was, **'Have I cracked it?'**

'Having just completed the amazing milestone of **2000** days without a drop of alcohol does it mean I am completely 'cured' and can risk having the odd glass of wine or beer without going back to my old ways? The definite answer is a massive **NO**.

With all this lovely weather we are having, I was in a supermarket the other day and saw an attractively packaged tin of cider. The can itself looked refreshing and inviting and if it had been zero alcohol cider I would have bought a pack there and then. I knew however that just one sip would make me drink the whole can in seconds and I would be back to wanting a constant supply until drunkenness took over. **Why is that?**

I am obviously not dependent on alcohol otherwise I couldn't have managed well over five happy years without it. I never crave alcohol and don't even think about the stuff except with disdain when I see it wrecking other people's lives as it did mine. I also know that alcoholism is not a disease as some would tell you or I would still have the disease and still be crying out for my next fix, or I would have needed professional help to quit. **So, what makes me know with a certainty that one drop would lead me straight back to be the wreck I once was?**

It has to be because I enjoyed drinking so much. Yes, it was a habit, and a habit that got out of control, but I loved drinking and the relaxed feeling I used to get from having that first glass of wine in my hand, or that first cold lager. The problem is it would never stop there and once having had that habit, if I tried drinking again I know that same habit would return immediately.

**So, does this matter to me?** The answer again is a big **NO**.

I really and honestly don't miss alcohol at all so despite the fancy packaging or the inviting advertising, I am never going to be tempted to have that sip. I have almost (but not quite) given up praising myself for having quit and reflecting on the wonderful life I live because I am sober, because that has become a natural habit for me too. The only reason I keep a log of how many days is to use the data to help others in my blogs, and to record with delight the things I am achieving in life because I am so much healthier and of course wealthier. I do often reflect on the old drunken me however. Probably every week I will say to my wife 'the old me wouldn't have been doing this because I would have been drunk', or 'five years ago we couldn't have afforded this', or 'I would have missed this experience because I would have been in some stinking pub instead', or 'I had that opportunity but I blew it because of drink'.

So, for anyone reading this who secretly thinks they **can** quit 'forever' but then safely go back to having the occasional drink and truly control how much they imbibe, I don't believe that works or will ever work. If you quit forever it **has to be forever** and that is why the commitment has to be that **genuine** and **concrete**. If you allow even the smallest chink in your resolve you will fail. Not only will that destroy the self-belief you have built up, but also the confidence and belief that others have in you. So, if you are planning to quit forever make it mean forever. The good thing is that with that attitude you really won't miss alcohol because there is no point, you really will look back and wonder what all the fuss was about and why you deliberated for so long, and like me you will every day celebrate the new you because of the freedom and self-ownership you have discovered. You can get to 2000 and beyond just like me.'

***Forever means forever***

## A very serious message to binge-drinkers

The next item I debated long and hard about including but as it includes a very serious message about trust (or destroying trust) I decided to leave it in.



I was recently extremely disturbed by an event that involved a binge-drinker. Quite why I let it get to me I don't know, but I did, and I think it's because of through that event I lost the trust I had in someone.

**Trust** is a crucial factor in any relationship, even a casual one, and once that trust is lost it is incredibly hard to get it back again. I am lucky I never lost the trust of my loved ones when I was a drinker. However, I may well have lost the trust of countless other acquaintances and business associates, I may never know for sure.

The reason I am sharing this story with you is because it covers some essential points that drinkers are probably unaware of but need to know:

- Bing drinking is also alcoholism – you don't have to be drinking every day to be an alcoholic!
- Your drinking has a very **distressing** effect on those around you – once you quit you will realise this only too plainly.
- Your drinking to excess can and almost certainly will **wreck your life**.
- Your binge drinking could wreck other lives, create misery, and will certainly damage the trust others have in you.
- This is something you can end yourself by quitting alcohol forever. You are in control, not the alcohol. It is no-one else's fault or responsibility.

***Because this is a very important story I stop here and there to ask questions and to discuss the salient points. These parts I have put into grey italics.***

There is a chap I know, I will call him Sam, who is a self-confessed binge drinker. By this I mean he is proud of the fact that he doesn't drink all the time and so sees himself as different from a 'normal' alcoholic, but he does recognise he drinks to excess on occasion and he admits that he wants to be able to control his drinking. He also admits that when he is really in his 'cups' he can get a little out of hand but never dreadfully so. After what I witnessed I beg to differ!

I should also say that Sam had reached out to me for advice and help and I gave him a copy of my book 'One Less for the Road' to read. What he clearly hadn't taken to heart is the firm message that quitting alcohol 'has to be forever' - Nothing else works!

### ***If you binge drink, can you bring this under control?***

*I wasn't a binge drinker, instead I drank every day. There were however occasions when I would drink to the point I know I was out of control, and many is the occasion I couldn't remember what had occurred the night before or even earlier that day if I had started drinking at lunchtime. So, although I haven't been a binge drinker (able to stay off the booze for perhaps days at a time and then go mad), there is one distinct similarity - anyone who drinks too much is being controlled by alcohol. They have allowed a drug to take over their normal mental faculties and drive their actions along an unknown and often dangerous path. If **you** do this, you are addicted to the affect alcohol has on you and you are therefore beholden to alcohol. The only way to avoid this is to do what I did, and quit completely, forever. There simply is no 'safe' bingeing limit. Let the story unfold and you will see why.*

I was at a conference in the North of England. It was a three-day conference for very senior representatives of the finance industry, and although a serious affair, it is also known to be a very boozy one especially in the evening, with nearly everyone drinking copiously. (Despite being sober, I still manage to have a great time at these events by the way, and even enjoy watching the drunks making fools of themselves, knowing that most of them won't remember much about their behaviour the following day.)

This time I went for dinner with some colleagues on the first evening and Sam was there as well. Sam by the way is self-employed and highly regarded in the industry as a professional. That evening most people around the table were drinking red wine and I noticed that Sam was having more than his fair share. Knowing him to be a binge drinker, and as he had already reached out to me I could have said something, but in company with others and not knowing Sam overly well I decided not to interfere. I also didn't want to embarrass him.

### ***Should I have warned him off having too much?***

*I don't think so. But if the same situation were to arise again, and after what you will shortly read occurred I would definitely intervene in future.*

The following morning I was in the exhibition hall attached to the conference venue when I met Sam. Despite the early hour he looked quite drunk to me and he certainly stank of booze. He was also being overly attentive to the many women present, embarrassingly so for them and for me as an observer, but once again not knowing him that well I assumed that was just his way. I did however try to steer clear and avoid any further contact with him. I found his behaviour obnoxious.

Later that morning I was attending a seminar when at about 11.30 I received an urgent email from one of the event organisers to contact her immediately.

It turned out that Sam had been extremely rude to one girl in particular; making overtly sexual overtures, using foul language, and after she duly complained to the organisers, Sam had been

ejected from the exhibition hall and conference. This after much threatening, abuse and further outrageous behaviour by Sam.

It should be noted that in twenty-five years of running this conference and despite all the drinking that occurs, Sam is the first person ever to have been evicted!

The reason I had been contacted is because the organisers knew I knew Sam and they needed someone to ensure he didn't try and return. This put me in a predicament. I was in no way responsible for Sam and yet I was being made to feel that in some way I was. I also felt tainted by his behaviour as if this would somehow rub off on me. I know that despite how much I had ever had to drink I would never have been rude to a woman in the way as was being described to me, it just isn't in my nature, so to feel in any way associated was very disturbing.

*There is no way I should have been affected by Sam's behaviour. He doesn't work for me, is unrelated, is actually only a remote work acquaintance, and so the fact I was embroiled in this issue was itself an outrage. I felt this especially so as I knew it was all because of drink, I also knew Sam wouldn't probably even remember what he had been doing, and I doubted he would learn from the experience. I felt very angry with alcohol as much as I did with Sam for letting it rule him so. After five years of being sober I truly hated being associated with an alcohol related issue.*

As I had been made to feel involved I personally sought out the victim of his advances and made an apology on Sam's behalf making out he had some issues that had made him forget himself.

***Why should I have to lie and apologise on someone else's behalf for behaviour I would never use myself or condone in any way?***

Later that day I saw Sam again. He was still drinking and obviously looking for me and my other colleagues. We tried to hide as we didn't want to confront him in his drunken state. We just wished he would vanish and leave us in peace.

***Is this what you want to ever happen to you? Your friends and colleagues embarrassed to be seen with you and hiding from you, wishing you didn't exist?***

That evening there was a drinks and music event and I attended until I saw Sam arrive – still drunk. At that stage I left. Fortunately, Sam also left soon after.

***Should I have challenged Sam and stopped him going to that evening event? Should I have confronted him then and there about his drinking and his behaviour?***

*No, I don't think so because he was still drunk, what is the point of trying to reason with a drunk. He is also a big guy so the last thing I wanted was a fight. One of my colleagues **had** tried to talk to him that afternoon but Sam was in denial and pretended he had no recollection of the event at all. I certainly didn't and don't want to waste my breath or energy on a drunk who wouldn't thank me for it. In any event I still felt too angry and having been tainted by association.*

**So, in summary,**

- Sam has upset at least one young lady by being outrageously rude, inexcusably so. She will doubtless have told her colleagues about the event and so word about Sam will have spread.
- Sam has lost the trust of the event organisers who will be wary of him attending in the future. This could have a serious impact on his future professional role in the industry. Business communities are often tight-knit, and you never know who will influence your future direction. It pays not to dirty your copy book.
- Sam has **lost my trust** and will only really gain it back by quitting alcohol forever.
- Sam must know deep down how serious his mistake has been and that will impact him personally perhaps for a long time to come. In my view, only a complete commitment away from drink would be sufficient to self-cleanse that stain that will play on his mind.



*What did others think? What do you think?*

The following day it was interesting to note that other colleagues, despite appreciating the seriousness of the situation were already excusing Sam's behaviour as 'not his fault', it 'was the drink'. Comments jokingly made such as 'Sam never knows what he is doing when he is on a binge' I might also have once found favour with. Perhaps it is being a fellow drinker that puts you in that same frame of mind.

But what if in that drunken binge state, instead of being massively rude and abusive Sam had instead gone for a drive and killed a child - would that be as funny or excusable? **Clearly not!**

*So, is it Sam's fault or the alcohol's fault?*



*There is no excuse for drinking alcohol. You drink because you want to not because you have to. Yes, it does become addictive because it becomes a habit, but once you recognise it as such you can quit if you really desire to and it is easy to do – it really is. But it needs that commitment.*

**If like Sam you recognise you drink too much then you have to sit back, take stock of your life and consider what the drink really is doing to you. Consider the other lives it is impacting, the other people you are affecting and annoying by your selfish behaviour, and the other lives you are destroying in addition to your own. In other words, take a really good hard look at your life and say STOP. Don't make pathetic excuses, just do it.**

## And finally...

Summer is well and truly here, the weather in the UK is amazing, you are overly hot, and you are in desperate need of some refreshment. But when you see your mates and others around you reaching for their next beer or glass of prosecco, remember why the words in this box are used to describe the drunken state. Far better to drink something equally refreshing but that leaves you clear-headed, full of energy and raring to go the following morning without having a head to nurse. Why not stay sober this summer and enjoy life far more! I will be.

## Until next time

God Bless,

*Julian*

[www.idontdrink.net](http://www.idontdrink.net)

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plastered  
Blitzed  
Hammered  
clobbered  
Smashed  
bladdered  
Legless  
Rat arsed