

Sober October Challenge

A Guided Month of
Taking a Tolerance
Break from Alcohol



NORWICH[™]
UNIVERSITY
COUNSELING AND
WELLNESS CENTER

Welcome! Let's Get Started.

If you drink alcohol with any regularity, it is important to consider the fact that like with any substance, the more your body gets used to it being in your system the more likely you are to develop "tolerance."

So, what's "tolerance"? Tolerance is when after a continued pattern of drinking where a person maintains a consistent or constant consumption of alcohol the effects of alcohol are lessened to the point that the person needs to consume more alcohol in order to feel the effects of drinking.

So, when we develop tolerance, we must spend more money on booze and take on the associated physical strain on our bodies that drinking more and more alcohol inevitably puts on us.

Taking A (Alcohol)-Break can save you some coin, give your body a chance to reset, and help you reflect on how you find a healthy balance in any future choice to drink.

This guide's intention is to help provide a structure to follow and offer some support to those looking to just take A-Break, or to move toward a more moderate pattern of drinking or perhaps even start on the path toward not drinking at all.

Making changes is not an easy thing to do and alcohol use sometimes can fulfill very specific needs in a person's life. Taking out the functional ways in which drinking supports you can be difficult without considering how to keep those needs being met through new behaviors or outlets.

Just like anything else, alcohol has its pros and...it also can have its cons. Taking a step back from drinking can often give us the perspective we need to evaluate both the pros and the cons of drinking more objectively. With that new perspective, you'll be armed with self-awareness when you return to drinking to better ensure you are finding a healthy balance for yourself.

Additionally, this resource guides you through some potentially tough topics so please **do not hesitate** to reach out for support from the Counseling and Wellness Center or staff and peers within your support system if you find yourself struggling along the way.

A final disclaimer, going "cold turkey" (stopping altogether) from drinking, particularly if you are drinking in large amounts and/or regularly can be extremely dangerous, even life-threatening! Please use the self-screening tool on the next page and if you score a 5 or higher consult with your health provider and or a clinician at the CWC before suspending your drinking.

I hope you find this resource helpful and if you don't find it helpful, I would welcome your feedback

Much Respect,

-Will Kraman

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Patient name: _____

Date of birth: _____

Alcohol screening questionnaire (AUDIT)

Drinking alcohol can affect your health and some medications you may take. Please help us provide you with the best medical care by answering the questions below.

One drink equals:



12 oz.
beer



5 oz.
wine



1.5 oz.
liquor
(one shot)

1. How often do you have a drink containing alcohol?	Never	Monthly or less	2 - 4 times a month	2 - 3 times a week	4 or more times a week
2. How many drinks containing alcohol do you have on a typical day when you are drinking?	0 - 2	3 or 4	5 or 6	7 - 9	10 or more
3. How often do you have five or more drinks on one occasion?	Never	Less than monthly	Monthly	Weekly	Daily or almost daily
4. How often during the last year have you found that you were not able to stop drinking once you had started?	Never	Less than monthly	Monthly	Weekly	Daily or almost daily
5. How often during the last year have you failed to do what was normally expected of you because of drinking?	Never	Less than monthly	Monthly	Weekly	Daily or almost daily
6. How often during the last year have you needed a first drink in the morning to get yourself going after a heavy drinking session?	Never	Less than monthly	Monthly	Weekly	Daily or almost daily
7. How often during the last year have you had a feeling of guilt or remorse after drinking?	Never	Less than monthly	Monthly	Weekly	Daily or almost daily
8. How often during the last year have you been unable to remember what happened the night before because of your drinking?	Never	Less than monthly	Monthly	Weekly	Daily or almost daily
9. Have you or someone else been injured because of your drinking?	No		Yes, but not in the last year		Yes, in the last year
10. Has a relative, friend, doctor, or other health care worker been concerned about your drinking or suggested you cut down?	No		Yes, but not in the last year		Yes, in the last year

Have you ever been in treatment for an alcohol problem? 0 1 2 3 4
 Never Currently In the past

I II III IV
0-3 4-9 10-13 14+

How to Use this Guide

The guide is broken down into days so that you can have some specific guidance in preparing for and moving through “A-Break” from drinking.

Each week will provide you with some thematic perspective to keep in mind as you go through your own journey with “A-Break”. Below is a break-down of what the themes of each week revolve around. So, while there has been a lot of thought put into the order and content of the days and weeks and being sure they build on each other, feel free to move around the guide and use the resources as you may feel you need them.

You know what you need! Trust yourself to use the guidance as you need it!

Week 1- Physical

Week 2- Social

Week 3- Emotional

Week 4- Values

Day 0- Preparation and Withdrawal

Step 1- Pick a time to start. It may never feel like the “right time” to take A-Break. However, setting a limit and seeing how you respond to that limit can be a great way to get an early read on how well-balanced your relationship to drinking is. If you set a limit but push it off, make excuses as to why it’s not a good time to start, or just simply procrastinate around the decision to start that’s good information to have.

If you find you are having any of these challenges to start the process, be curious and ask yourself, “What is behind my reluctance to start?”. You may find there are a host of benefits or rituals and routines that are wrapped up in your pattern of drinking that could be hard to let go of. Understanding what stands in the way of starting and how to move around that obstacle is often the first step everyone must take.

Step 2- Once you’ve got a date picked out to start, it’s important to remove temptations. If you have booze stashed in your room, it’s best to remove it from where you can access it. If you are planning to stop drinking all together just get rid of it or if you are just taking a tolerance break and/or a reflective break from drinking perhaps ask a friend to hold onto it for you.

Step 3- Letting people know that you are taking A-Break can be helpful to do so that you can get out ahead of the questions that likely will come from making this choice for yourself, like “Why are you not drinking?” or “Are you going sober?”... Knowing how to respond to these questions and providing the rationale for your choice will in most cases provide you with support from others, heck you might even get a few people to join you on the journey.

This will also allow you to assess which people are in your corner and will support you as you take “A-Break” and which ones might make the choice harder and may even try to convince you to step back into the fold of drinking.

When making the choice to step back from drinking you may find there are some people you have to take a step back from as well.

Physical withdrawal can be a thing. If you have made alcohol a habit that reflects a pattern of heavy and prolonged drinking you may experience withdrawal symptoms like insomnia, hand tremors, nausea and vomiting, anxiety and general feelings of agitation in your body. At the worst, there can be seizures or even hallucinations.

What’s important to remember is that you first consult with a primary care doctor and/or a Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor to discuss your recent pattern of drinking before you stop drinking and to determine the safest way to detox.

Withdrawal symptoms most often peak during the second day of abstinence and usually improve drastically by days 4 and 5. However, setting good habits of physical self-care will be essential as less acute withdrawal symptoms can linger beyond that timeframe.

<p>Benefits of Continuing Drinking as Before</p>	<p>Drawbacks of Continuing Drinking as Before</p>
<p>Benefits of Making a Change in Drinking Pattern</p>	<p>Drawbacks of Making a Change in Drinking Pattern</p>

Acknowledgements:

A big shout out to Tom Fontana and the students of the University of Vermont for the inspiration in creating this resource for the students here at Norwich University. With the input and support of students at UVM, Tom created the resource “T-Break Guide: A guide to help support you on a cannabis tolerance break”. This original resource served as a guiding foundation upon which the “A-Break” resource stands.

I am very grateful for his ongoing support and guidance as a colleague in the field of substance misuse prevention and treatment.

If you are interested in the “T-Break Guide” as another supportive resource please reach out to me directly at wkraman@norwich.edu or come by the office and I can provide you with a copy for your use.