

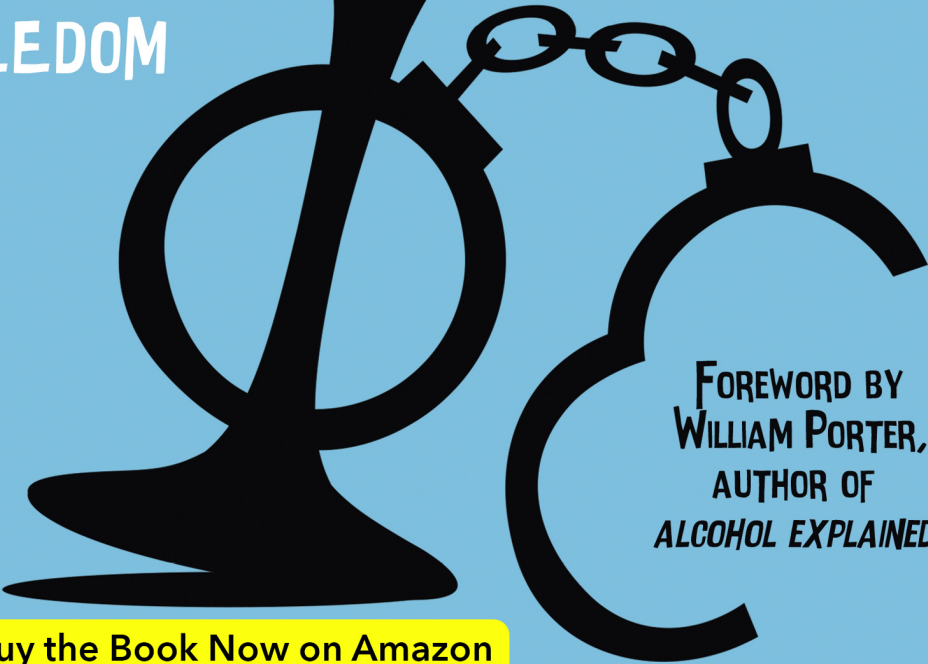
'An
inspirational
manifesto'
Annie Grace

SIMON
CHAPPLE

HOW TO
QUIT
ALCOHOL
IN 50
DAYS



STOP
DRINKING
AND FIND
FREEDOM



FOREWORD BY
WILLIAM PORTER,
AUTHOR OF
ALCOHOL EXPLAINED

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How to Quit Alcohol in 50 Days

Stop drinking & find freedom

Simon Chapple

sheldon^{PRESS}

*This book is dedicated to my mum, Pauline Chapple, and my dad,
Michael Chapple.*

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About the author



For over two decades Simon Chapple was the classic example of a heavy daily 'at home' drinker, enduring daily hangovers, engaging in regretful behaviour, and suffering from severe anxiety and a complete lack of energy and motivation as a result of his inability to stop drinking.

Despite all of this, he was somehow able to function, and built a successful business, ran marathons and tried his best to be a father and a husband. But something was lacking in his life. He knew he wasn't the best version of himself, and felt like his life was hollow and slowly falling apart around him.

He chased happiness, and no matter where he looked, or how much more he achieved, it seemed to elude him. All the while his anxiety became worse and his mood became lower, so he drank more in an attempt to deal with discomfort.

It took time, but he eventually realized that his love affair with red wine had become toxic. It was destroying his life and no longer serving him in a way that was positive. He knew that something needed to change, but didn't know what to do for the best.

Eventually Simon managed to quit alcohol and went on to discover a life of peace and happiness. Joy flowed back into his life for the first time since he was a child, all as a result of ending his unhealthy relationship with booze.

What Simon experienced after he quit drinking was so profound that it became his mission to raise awareness about the dangers of alcohol and to spread the word about the huge benefits that an alcohol-free life can bring.

Simon is a Certified Sobriety Coach and also the founder of Be Sober, one of the largest quit drinking communities in the world. He has appeared on television and radio and spoken at live events in the US and the UK about his very personal journey from heavy daily drinking to becoming passionately sober.

He has worked with thousands of people from all over the world in coaching programmes and helped them make a powerful and lasting change to the way that alcohol features in their lives. His entire approach to quitting drinking is that it should be a positive experience and a life choice that we feel empowered in making for ourselves. He does not ascribe to the outdated methods of 'recovery' and 'alcoholic' that keep many people stuck for the rest of their lives, but instead works with his clients to help them find true freedom and peace in sobriety by making choices that they feel passionate and empowered about.

Simon has written this book to help anyone who is worried about their own relationship with alcohol and wants to make a change. He draws on his considerable life experience and of those he has helped in order to provide a structured path to freedom from alcohol over a period of 50 days.

Join the alcohol free movement at: <www.besober.co.uk>

Join the quit drinking programme at: <www.joinbesober.com>

Reach out: <info@besober.co.uk>

Follow Simon on Instagram: @besoberandquit

Foreword

I first 'met' Simon Chapple during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. I had been asked to join a live panel for a sober event in London which Simon was also due to be a guest on. This was early spring 2020, and sadly the event was cancelled due to the country being restricted by the lockdown, but instead of cancelling the event we used the opportunity to create an online weekly feature which went on to become known as The Sober Sessions.

What struck me most about Simon was his approach to sobriety; it was unlike anything I'd ever come across before, and that is saying something bearing in mind the sober movement is fast growing momentum and there is no end of inspiring and enthusiastic proponents of the cause. He's genuinely passionate about the topic, enthusiastic and articulate. But so are many others. What I found most impressive about Simon was the manner in which he attacked the topic; he is like a determined entrepreneur who rises to every problem and finds a solution to it.

The main challenge with trying to quit alcohol is that it's such a wonderful substance. It tastes incredible, it's healthy, it makes you feel great and it's not addictive for most people. It has very few downsides – it helps you sleep, you need it to have a good time, to socialize, to celebrate, to commiserate, to bond, to enjoy life to the full. That's why it's so hard to quit.

Imagine how much easier it would be to stop drinking if it was, instead, an absolutely horrible substance; if it tasted vile, if it made you feel heavy, lethargic and tired, if it made you feel anxious, if it ruined your sleep and left you feeling drained all of the next day, if it made you feel irritated and argumentative, if it ruined friendships and broke down marriages, if it caused violence and cancer and ruined lives. Imagine if there was very little real pleasure in drinking at all, that the true joy in it was actually in the situations we tended to drink in; when we are relaxing at the end of the day or out with our friends and not in the act of drinking itself.

In fact the reality is that alcohol is the vile substance, not the wonderful one we believe it to be. This is, in essence, what the 'quit lit' writer's job is. It's to show you the truth about alcohol and sobriety and to strip away the nonsense and the hype which leads us to believe that alcohol is something it isn't, which in turn makes quitting not only easy, but enjoyable.

When you take that all-inclusive holiday, and you see all the so-called normal drinkers sitting around 'relaxing' early in the day, having their fill of alcohol from sunset until sunrise, and you look at them with a feeling of pity and sheer relief that you are no longer being conned into pouring a sticky, cancerous poison down your throat for the dubious pleasure of feeling heavy and lethargic for a

few minutes, before feeling a corresponding increase in anxiety, then suffering a ruined night's sleep and a following day of tiredness and exhaustion, that is when you know you've really made it. There is no resisting temptation because there is no temptation.

In reality, the sober life is so far superior to the drinking life that there is no contest. But the problem lies in taking the individual from the 'sweetness and light' view of alcohol to the harsh reality, and that part isn't so easy. Even though we proponents of sobriety have the truth on our side, most drinkers have been drinking for umpteen years or even decades and find long-standing habits hard to change.

They've dealt with every problem, every upset, every life event, with a drink. Their personal relationships, their careers, their social life, their hobbies, all revolve around alcohol and drinking. Although their lives will improve dramatically when they stop drinking, it can be scary for them. They are like prisoners who have been institutionalized, who hate their prison but fear release even more.

So the job of the sober coach or 'quit drinking' writer is to take the hand of the reader and show them the beautiful truth: that alcohol is, in reality, a pathetic and unpleasant little drug. That it gives so little and takes so much. That even the so-called normal drinker is being robbed of their energy, health, sleep and peace of mind by chemical poisoning. And, above all, that a sober life is a far better and far more enjoyable life in every way.

This is where Simon comes into his own. He's gone from heavy daily drinker to totally embracing the sober life. He has gone from one to the other, thinking, analysing and solving problems along the way.

Each and every challenge he's come across he's attacked with his usual determination and enthusiasm, and he's come up with techniques and methods that work. In stopping drinking he's uncovered and got to grips with his own mental health issues. I've never known him to be at a loss for an answer.

The old way of quitting drinking was to grit your teeth and just do it. It's hard work, and many people fail. If they do stick with it, then over time they will find their sleep improves, that social occasions aren't the horror they feared it would be, and that sober life in general isn't actually the misery they thought it would be. It takes time, and it takes effort, but given enough of both they eventually prove to themselves that life doesn't end when the drinking stops.

But there's a far easier way to quit, and that's to do the groundwork either before you quit or directly after. If you can get some way down the line to at least begin to entertain the possibility that quitting drinking will open up a far, far more enjoyable life, then the time and work required to reach your goal are correspondingly reduced. This is where the quit lit author and the sober coach come in; they can take your hand and show you a far better world for you to inhabit. To do this they need enthusiasm, imagination and determination.

This is where Simon truly comes into his own. Think of being lost in a strange and unpleasant land, a land that you don't like but you're half afraid to leave in case the country you end up in is even worse than the one you're currently existing in. What you really need is a guide, someone who has been exactly where you are now and has found a way to a far better land, someone who can take you by the hand and lead you somewhere far, far better.

This is where you are now. You've had enough of feeling tired and drained, of living a half-life. You've found your guide. All you need to do now is hold tight and enjoy the ride!

William Porter, author of *Alcohol Explained and Alcohol Explained 2*

July 2020

Introduction

'Dad, can we go to the bowling alley?'

'Dad, can we go to the cinema?'

'Dad, will you come and listen to me playing the piano?'

These are all things that my daughter asked me to do, and I firmly said no. These are the fun activities that I avoided because I wanted to drink instead. For years I chose to put alcohol ahead of the most important things in my life, ahead of my daughter, ahead of my wife, ahead of my career and even my own health. I often ask myself what kind of person would do that, and then I realize it was me. I did that.

Thankfully, it was the old version of me who did those things. Once I finally found freedom from alcohol I reconnected with my daughter, my wife, my family and my friends, and since then I have experienced a true change in my relationships. Without alcohol around I have found myself far more present and engaged and, most importantly, excited to be involved in any activities or outings. In fact, these days it is often me who organizes the activities as I am so keen to enjoy them.

After more than 20 years of daily heavy drinking, I now realize that alcohol completely sucked the joy out of everything in my life. Normal pastimes seemed so boring and a huge drain on my time, I just didn't want to be there. I was far too busy obsessing about wine and wondering how much I should buy at the shop, what time I could start drinking and how much I would have when I finally got to pour my beloved booze. There was always a justification to drink: was it the weekend yet? No, it's Thursday today. Well, that's practically Friday, so two bottles will be fine tonight.

I clearly recall going to a firework and bonfire evening at my daughter's school. She was so excited and proud to be there with her mum and dad. But Dad wasn't really there. Dad was there in body, but not in mind. He wanted to drink and this wretched bonfire night was clashing with wine-o'clock. I made my frustration glaringly obvious, and my wife quickly spotted that I was in a childish mood because I couldn't drink. I hated the fact that I was stuck there, and I ruined the evening. We argued, and as soon as I returned home I drank as much wine as I could in a futile attempt to escape the emptiness I felt inside.

Two years later we returned to the same event. This time I had been sober for around six months. What a difference! There was no preoccupation with alcohol, my mind was only focused on one thing – I was fully present, and guess what? I was enjoying myself. I felt joy. It was a wonderful night, and when my little family and I finally returned home with our ears ringing from the noise of the children

and the bangs from the fireworks and our clothes smelling from the smoke of the bonfire we all had huge smiles on our faces.

I started exploring alcohol in my teenage years. I was around 14 years old when I had my first sip of wine. It tasted revolting, but I stuck with it and pestered my parents to allow me to have a regular drink with my evening meals. My dad drank red wine almost every evening, and I thought it was grown-up and sophisticated. I looked up to my dad and wanted to be just like him when I was older. My parents were quite permissive in terms of allowing me to do pretty much what I wanted. I imagine this came from a place of wanting me to grow into an adult with broad horizons, but I quickly realized I could take full advantage.

I didn't really pay attention to the effects of alcohol until I started taking the remains of my dad's wine to my bedroom without him knowing. It was at this point that I was starting to drink more regularly. I began to look forward to the sense of euphoria and relaxation that washed over me from the first glass. Little did I know this was the start of a very slippery slope that would see me heading downhill for over 20 years.

Around the same time, my friends and I started to do all we could to get our hands on our own alcohol. I can remember many occasions where we would huddle in a group outside the local off-licence and send the oldest-looking member of our little gang inside to buy the booze. We would then hole up at one of our houses while their parents were out at work and spend the entire day getting drunk, listening to music, dancing and talking nonsense.

This became a school holiday routine, and I can remember multiple occasions where I ended up being sick after sinking numerous cans of beer during the afternoon. It still surprises me that my parents never said anything about my drinking when I returned home from one of these all-day benders. Maybe they didn't notice or maybe they weren't that bothered because everybody drinks – it is what we all do, right?

My friends and I were also visiting local pubs underage. It was easy to get served, and before long we were drinking in them several times a week. I was often staggering home from the pub after multiple pints of beer and strong chasers and crashing out in my bed. The room would spin as I closed my eyes, but it never felt like a problem. It was my idea of fun times and growing up.

When I was 15 I went on a school trip to Paris. My friends and I had been discussing long in advance how drunk we planned to get when we finally arrived. We weren't interested in museums and art galleries—we were on a mission to get smashed. This is exactly what we did. We had parties in our hotel every night and would sneak into the bars at every opportunity. We thought we were so grown up and clever. Our plan worked perfectly until we had an early-morning excursion which involved a long coach trip on windy roads. I felt really rough from the late-night drinking and before long I knew I was going to be sick. The coach was

packed full of my classmates and I was always very self-conscious – vomiting in front of them all was my idea of the ultimate shame, but there was no way that this French wine and beer was staying down.

As the journey continued, my efforts to fight the Parisian puke were failing and eventually it reached the point of no return. I had prepared well by holding on to a carrier bag I had found nearby with my sweating hands and knew that I had no option but to let it go. The bag filled with what looked like two litres of beer, and my friends, who were falling about with laughter, took great delight in pointing out that it even had a foam head on the top. This was the point that I realized the carrier bag I had vomited into was totally transparent and I now had to somehow dispose of it in front of the entire coach full of laughing teenagers.

Eventually I took the warm, see-through bag to the teacher at the front of the coach and explained that I had travel sickness. Unbelievably, he brought my story even though I was holding on to what looked like a plastic pouch of France's strongest ale. Thankfully, the driver pulled over so I could dispose of the disgusting bag, and I shuffled back to my seat knowing that the rest of my school life would involve constant reminders of this embarrassing episode.

Even this shameful situation wasn't enough to stop me. Far from it – I was just getting started. The following evening I helped organize a big party in my hotel room. We had stocked up on as much alcohol as we could lay our hands on, and planned to drink into the early hours. Before long the room was packed and the drinks were flowing. In an attempt to look cool I decided to shake up a bottle of cheap sparkling wine before popping the cork. As I released the cork it shot out of the bottle with an almighty pop and struck the ceiling of the room, the bubbling cascade of low-cost booze sprayed all over the place.

Unbeknown to me the room above was occupied by our head of year. He was a pretty nasty character at the best of times and seemed to enjoy punishing pupils for even the most minor of offences. A few minutes later there was a loud bang on the door and he was standing at the entrance to the room looking extremely angry. He told everyone who had been stupid enough to attend our illegal event how disappointed he was and took delight in grounding us all in the hotel for the next 24 hours, which meant we would all miss a trip to the theatre to see *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* the next evening. Once again, my friends were less than impressed with me.

After they had left, I saw the cork on the floor, I picked it up and kept it. I still have it to this day – it serves as a poignant reminder of the damage that alcohol caused to my life.

There were a couple of incidents in my teenage years and my twenties that I believe contributed to the anxiety that I would battle over the next two decades. The first involved a much older boy who I considered a friend. He lived close by and I looked up to him – he was popular, good-looking and incredibly cool. I was

around 13 and he was six years older. He took it upon himself to gain my trust, groom, coerce and sexually abuse me.

I have only recently found the strength to speak openly about this episode because I felt shame and a sense of needing to take responsibility for my own actions. But now, with a clear mind and peace in my life, I feel strong enough to share what happened, and it has helped me feel as though I have claimed back the power in this episode. It is my story now, nobody else's. I realize I did nothing wrong and was taken advantage of, and I can also find forgiveness as the older boy who did it probably had issues of his own that led to his behaviour. Not that this makes what he did OK, but I have no desire to see him punished; for now, I have peace.

When this incident happened, I didn't really give it much thought. I was a carefree teenager and didn't dwell on it too much. This meant that I never took the time to search for any closure on it. I just shut the entire thing away deep in the back of my mind to fester like an untreated wound. It clearly scarred me, and I now know that it contributed to the state of my mental health as the years passed.

The second incident was when my parents got divorced. My 'dad' is actually my stepdad and had been my 'father' since the age of two after my birth father walked out on my mother and me. I have since been informed on good authority that this departure left me with childhood PTSD alongside rejection and abandonment issues, so please don't stop reading this book until the end or you will add to my trauma! I will talk more about this later in the book as you may find that issues from your own childhood have played a part in your own addictive behaviour and you didn't even realize it.

My stepdad brought me up as a true father and I think the absolute world of him. My mum was overprotective of me when she was around, but allowed me to do what I wanted when she wasn't. Sadly, she was not always there for me emotionally when I needed support or acknowledgement. I didn't give this any thought at the time. I thought having so much freedom was wonderful, and I felt fairly safe and secure in my home. However, I now recognize that the emotional neglect I suffered caused issues that would mean I would struggle to form true emotional bonds with people in my later life.

Unbeknown to me, my parents had realized early on in their marriage that they didn't love each other and had made an agreement when I was just eight years old that they would stay together until they felt it was safe to separate without it having an impact on me. This probably worked for them on a financial and practical level, too, and they no doubt assumed it would be beneficial for me after having one dad walk out on me already.

They effectively lived their own lives from then onwards. They saw other partners but played pretend happy families when I was in the vicinity until I was in my mid-twenties. They did a pretty good job because I didn't ever realize this was going on, but subconsciously I must have been affected by the complete lack

of love within the family unit. It took until I was 25 years old before they finally informed me that they were getting divorced. It rocked my world. My stepdad moved to the Greek island of Corfu to start a new life, and my mum stayed in the same home where she still lives to this day.

Looking back, the warning signs had actually been there for years. I had overheard arguments between my mum and dad, and I knew they had their fair share of problems. My dad had been living out of the spare bedroom for as long as I could remember. I had been told it was because he worked unusual hours and he slept in there so as not to wake my mum up early in the morning. Of course, none of this was true.

Their separation was like a hammer blow for me. I couldn't believe they were breaking up. I was being abandoned again. It was my worst fear coming true. They had stayed together for my sake and only announced they were separating after I had told them I was planning to move into a new home with my girlfriend. This should be a time for celebration, not tears take up onto line above.

While their 'sacrifice' seemed like an act of kindness, it tore me apart inside. They had pretended everything was fine to avoid further disruption in my life. Why had they not been honest and authentic? Had this done more harm than good? I must have subconsciously picked up on the signals and noticed the coldness and distance between them both. No wonder we rarely had family days out or holidays together. But at least their decision was based around my needs regardless of whether it was the right thing to do or not. I don't hold any resentment – they were doing the best they could with what they had to work with at the time.

I didn't do anything to get closure on their break-up. I just accepted it for what it was and parked it away in the back of my mind along with the sexual abuse. My parents' separation left me heartbroken, but I knew there was nothing I could do to change the situation and just tried to let it be and get on with building my own life. I developed an attitude of looking forward and avoiding the past as it all seemed to hurt too much when I looked backwards.

I can see with complete clarity now how these episodes in my early life played a part in shaping me into the anxiety-ridden adult who self-medicated with booze that I went on to become. I was constantly afraid of people leaving me, I couldn't face conflict and I could never say no. I became a huge people-pleaser, and it was all from a fear of abandonment and a lack of emotional connection that was instilled in me from an early age.

I often think about what I would say to my younger self if I had the chance to go back in time and talk face to face with him. I am pretty sure I would tell myself not to be afraid to do what I love instead of doing things to please people, and I would also give a stern warning that I was starting to head down a very slippery slope. But I don't think the teenage version of me would bother listening to this advice, even if it came from a time-travelling bald guy in his mid-forties.

As the years went by, my anxiety became worse and worse. I would worry about things that never happened and would get myself worked up over the slightest thing. I have had panic attacks and anxiety to the point where I have made a decision not to do something fun in favour of letting the anxiety win the internal battle. I even remember bursting into tears a few years ago because I couldn't face going out for a run. Anxiety had taken over my life.

I also suffered from intense embarrassment issues and an extreme phobia of blood (I am cringing now just from typing the word out). Any situation that drew attention in my direction or made me feel ashamed would result in a fight-or-flight reaction, much to the amusement of my schoolmates. The slightest mention of a nosebleed or blood would cause me to either pass out or end up in a recovery position having almost fainted. This phobia related to an incident where I broke my nose after falling from my new skateboard age seven. I was left alone in the street outside my house with blood pouring from my nose. Nobody came to my aid, and when they eventually did I felt embarrassed, not comforted.

To add to the trauma, neither my mum nor dad realized I had actually broken my nose. It wasn't until years later during an examination that a medical specialist informed me that my nose had previously been broken. I always wondered why it was crooked – now I knew.

By the time I reached my late teens I had found that drinking seemed to help in so many different ways. When I drank, my worries and the anxious feelings seemed to fade away. It was like a magic medicine that made everything seem fun. After a couple of glasses of wine I would become carefree and would feel as though I was full of laughter and joy in a world that was otherwise starting to feel rather dark.

At the same time as my parents announced they were divorcing, I moved into my first home with my then girlfriend (and now wife) Michelle. We had scraped together enough of a deposit to buy our own small house, and we were so happy to have a home of our own. It was nothing fancy, but we didn't care. We felt free – it was our home and we were proud of what we had achieved.

Unfortunately, this new-found freedom also gave me the perfect excuse to drink more. Before long I was finding that I couldn't spend a single evening without drinking wine, often two bottles and sometimes more. On top of this, Michelle and I would regularly visit the pub and return home worse for wear before I would start on the red wine until either the room started to spin or I made myself sick.

In 2006 we got married. It was a brilliant day from what I can remember, and it was so lovely to spend it with friends and family. I was so happy – I hadn't felt joy like this in my life before. When I look back at the wedding photographs it is clear how drunk everyone was. There is one photo of me that sums up the day – I am dancing on a table, much to the disgust of the venue staff who were trying to get me down. There is also a video of our first dance as a married couple; in

the background someone can be heard saying, 'They're so drunk they're holding each other up', as we drunkenly shuffled around the dance floor to 'You Do Something to Me' by Paul Weller. At the time I thought this was hilarious; looking back now it makes me cringe.

Michelle rarely mentioned my drinking. To her it wasn't really a problem. I was always conscious that she might work out I had a problem and would try my best not to act too drunk and normalize my behaviour around her. I would also often encourage her to drink with me to take the spotlight off of myself.

It astounds me that I managed to function and hang on to a half-decent career. At the time I was working for an insurance company and I was in the office ready for work every morning by 7:30am. Over the years I progressed my way up through the firm and ended up landing a management role. As the money improved so did my ability to buy more expensive wine in even greater volumes. I believed that if the wine was more expensive it was somehow more sophisticated and therefore less harmful. Clearly, all the marketing messages had worked on me – a connoisseur is surely the complete opposite of an alcoholic, so of course I didn't have a problem!

So the daily wine intake continued and the amounts I was drinking each day rose to ever greater levels. When I hit 30 my wife fell pregnant and we had our first (and only) child, Robin. She changed my world in so many ways. Of course, our lives were turned upside down during those early baby years, and we were both tired from the midnight feeds and the early-morning routines, but it was all so worthwhile. It felt magical having our own daughter to bring up, and I clearly remember thinking that I was going to do all I could to be a great dad.

We had recently sold our first business, and this enabled me to take 18 months away from work and spend it with Michelle and Robin. This period of my life was one of the happiest times I had ever experienced, and I look back on those long and lazy daytime walks as I pushed my daughter and walked hand in hand with Michelle through the countryside with a real sense of happiness and contentment.

But I didn't stop drinking – all this change was just an excuse to carry on. If I had a stressful day, I needed wine; if I had a good day, I needed wine. No matter what kind of day I had, I needed wine. There was always a reason and there was always a bottle (or three) ready and waiting in the kitchen cupboard, I made sure of that.

We moved home twice in the years that followed, until we finally settled in our current family home. We have been here in Surrey in the UK for over 15 years and have made some great memories. I used to enjoy throwing wild parties that wouldn't end until the early hours. These involved some seriously regrettable drunken behaviour that left me with memories of cleaning up the next morning with the hangover from hell. Not only would I have to clean up the mess from the spilt drinks and discarded food, I also had to deal with the mess I had caused by

saying or doing something awful. Yet I would still drink the next day even with a pounding head. Nothing could stop me and I had never even considered not drinking. Why would I do that?

For years it went on, the cycle of daily drinking. I would head to the shop during the day and pick up a couple of bottles of wine (or a wine box) and then every single night I would drink. There were only a handful of occasions over the entire period (which spans beyond two decades) where I didn't have wine and these were when I was in hospital after an operation or laid up in bed with an illness and I physically couldn't get my hands on alcohol.

In all those years Michelle and I never slept together once without me drinking. The booze also caused numerous arguments and disagreements when my mouth got out of control or I did something stupid. But I always believed I had a special love affair with red wine and it was truly helping me get through each and every day by injecting happiness into my life that was otherwise lacking. Plus, if I said or did something wrong, it wasn't my fault – I was drunk so I could blame the wine.

In the five years before I quit drinking I had started to have worries about how much alcohol I was putting into my body. I had begun to google things like 'Am I an alcoholic' and 'How much alcohol is safe' and then skim past any search results that would scare me until I found something that would put my mind at ease. I used to do this all the time and have since learned that this behaviour is called 'confirmation bias'. This causes us to choose to look at only what we want to see in order to reinforce our beliefs, even if those beliefs are actually wrong (we will explore this in more depth later in the book).

These days my wife and I run our own business, a marketing company which we had started together back in 2004. We have a team of staff based in an office in Hampshire, and it can be a challenge managing the team at the same time as ensuring our clients get the very best levels of service. In 2016, it all started to get too much for me. My anxiety had reached new levels and I was finding it a struggle going into the office. The slightest hint of a complaint or an issue with a staff member or client would trigger my abandonment and rejection issues and set me off into a childish meltdown. I was worrying all the time about things that usually didn't even happen, and I realized that I wasn't enjoying life. I just wasn't happy – there was no joy and I felt stuck in a huge rut.

So I decided to take some time out to try to find some much needed headspace. We hired a brilliant manager to run the business alongside Michelle and agreed that I would be much less involved in the day-to-day running of the company. My plan was to venture forward on a journey towards beating anxiety, understanding why I felt so empty and ultimately finding happiness. The only problem was that I had no clue where to start.

In this book I will share with you everything I learned on that journey, and I am certain that as you turn the pages you will find yourself relating to some of the

experiences I describe that also feature in your own life. My goal is to help you find the answers you need to become free, happy and at peace.

On my quest to deal with my anxiety I visited doctors, counsellors and even a hypnotherapist. None of them were much help and – incredibly – none of them dug into my drinking. One doctor did ask how much I drank, and obviously I lied. I have heard that doctors usually double the amount patients tell them to get to the true figure. Have you ever done that?

After I stepped away from the business, my days had become a routine of lying in bed until whenever I wanted, checking my emails and then heading out for a coffee (via the shop to buy wine), and then off to the gym before my wife returned home from work. It was a pretty lonely existence, but to me it beat all the stress and drama of being in a work environment. I was still drinking two or three bottles of wine every day, even though my life should have been way less stressful. I was also worrying more about my drinking. I had more time on my hands and was looking much closer at every area of my life. It was starting to bother me, but I kept pushing the thoughts to the back of my mind.

Then one morning I was at my computer and noticed my hands were shaking and I couldn't stop them. It was awful and I wondered what the hell was going on. This had never happened before and it really worried me. It happened several times over the next month and before long (and after a few searches on the internet) I realized it was probably my drinking that was causing it. This was the moment where I knew something had to change. I didn't want to end up in an early grave, but I also didn't know how or even what to do for the best.

I also recall watching a feature on the television news where an expert was talking about the dangers of alcohol. They went into detail about how damaging drinking was to physical and mental health and I couldn't stop watching. Usually, I would have changed the channel because I didn't want to hear what they were saying, but I listened and paid attention. In the following days I felt like a seed had been planted in my mind and I could sense an internal conflict starting to brew as my conscious mind began to give me messages about reducing or quitting drinking at the same time as my subconscious wanting me to continue believing that I didn't have a problem and carrying on with my drinking habit wasn't an issue.

I couldn't stop thinking about it, but the thought of not having alcohol in my life filled me with a sense of complete and utter dread, so I started to look for ways to cut down or change my drinking habits without feeling like I was being deprived or missing out. I tried only drinking on certain days of the week. This lasted for a few days before I was back drinking at my usual levels again. I also tried watering my wine down with some success, but again after a short period of time I was back to my old habits.

The shaking hands and the news feature had given me a real wake-up call and I continued to search for some kind of solution. Eventually, I stumbled across

a book called *This Naked Mind* by author Annie Grace. I felt like I had nothing to lose so I got myself a copy and started reading.

As I worked through the chapters of the book I felt like all my beliefs about alcohol were being examined and challenged and I could feel some of them unravelling. I learned things that I could never unlearn, and I knew that after reading that book I would always have a different view about alcohol.

After reading Annie's book, I started to get quite excited about what a sober life might look like for me. I had read so many articles and blog posts about the positive effects of not drinking that were making me become more and more motivated to explore the alcohol-free world. I wouldn't say I was ready to quit drinking at this point, but I had certainly become very 'sober-curious'. In particular, I had been astounded to read that alcohol can make anxiety much worse and given how much I was drinking it was no wonder mine was starting to head off the scale.

I kept reading books about quitting drinking, signing up to online programmes and joining Facebook sober groups. The more I read, the more my knowledge expanded and the closer I came to feeling strong enough to make a commitment to walking away from alcohol for good. I had considered committing to taking a break from drinking, but I am an 'all or nothing' type of person and felt that I needed to make one firm decision to end the toxic relationship with Ms Shiraz and never look back.

It felt much easier to say it than it did to actually do it though, and once I had decided I wanted to experience what a life without drinking felt like I began making attempts at getting through one or two days without wine. I ended up failing every time and found myself right back at the start with a glass in my hand. There were plenty of tears and I would beat myself up with negative self-talk, telling myself I could never quit and that I was an alcoholic and should just accept it, this was who I was and change was impossible for me.

But it wasn't 'who I was' as a person – that wasn't me. It was 'where I was' at that point in my life, and I needed to move forward to grow stronger so I could become the authentic version of myself. So I kept picking myself up, dusting myself down and learning from the setbacks just like the books had told me to do. I also continued to put the work in. I was journaling my experiences and learning from all the resources I could find to expand my understanding about how to successfully quit drinking.

Eventually, I made it through the first couple of days booze free. I was feeling really positive about myself and wanted to keep building on my success. Those couple of days turned into weeks, and before I knew it the weeks became months and then the months became years. Eventually, after numerous setbacks, I was finally able to make it through the first couple of days. Since then, I have not had one alcoholic drink and I have also never looked back. It was the best decision I have ever made. If I can do this after drinking heavily daily for such a long time, I firmly believe anyone can break free if they really want to.

Not long after I managed to quit drinking, I decided to start my own website www.besober.co.uk. I used it as an online version of my journal and also wrote articles about the techniques and tactics that had worked for me. After a couple of months of updating the site, I started to get comments from visitors who were finding the information helpful on their own sober journeys. I found this a huge motivator and decided I would also set up a private Facebook group and start an online community for people who wanted to help each other become free from alcohol.

The Facebook group is called Be Sober and it quickly became one of the fastest-growing sober communities in the world. I couldn't believe that so many people were in the exact same trap that I had been stuck in. I wanted to help everyone in the group and connect personally with all the members, but with the group growing so fast it was impossible, so I enlisted the help of a couple of other members to assist in running the group and ensuring everyone felt supported and looked after.

If you aren't already a member of the Be Sober Facebook group, you can join using the link on my website – it is free to join and you will be welcomed with open arms. It will allow you to discover a whole community full of support, advice and encouragement.

As the months went by I thought it would be a great idea to ask Annie Grace (the author of *This Naked Mind*) to do an interview for my newly created Youtube channel. She kindly agreed, and after the interview Annie invited me to America to train as an alcohol coach so I could join her team. What an opportunity – I couldn't believe it! She clearly saw something in me that made her believe I could help and inspire other people in sobriety.

Since then I have gone on to help thousands of people change their relationship with drinking. I regularly coach in online groups and have spoken on stage at This Naked Mind Live in Denver, Colorado, and at the Club Soda Mindful Drinking Festival in London. Bear in mind this was the guy with awful anxiety who used to have a meltdown at the thought of standing up in a small staff meeting at work. Hopefully, this shows you what can happen when you discover the best version of yourself by cutting alcohol out of your life.

The anxiety is now a thing of the past. I will talk more about anxiety and depression later in the book, but I am free from it now and find myself in a place of peace, calm and happiness, all from making a firm and final decision to quit drinking.

Stepping away from my business has enabled me to do what I love and discover what I am truly passionate about. My life mission has become all about sharing the benefits of an alcohol-free life and helping anyone who wants to make a positive change.

In 2019 I released my first book, *The Sober Survival Guide*, and Annie Grace wrote the foreword. There are plenty of books that provide tactics and techniques that

help people quit drinking (including this one), but there was very little to help set people up for the months and years ahead. So I wrote the book as a guide to provide tools that readers can dip in and out of as and when they need them. The book was a huge success, and I have had amazing feedback from readers all over the world telling me how much it has helped them on their path to freedom from alcohol. (I actually think that this book should have come first and *The Sober Survival Guide* should have been the second one. If you haven't read it yet, it is the perfect follow up to this one and I recommend getting yourself a copy.)

What I am trying to say in all of this is that I know where you probably are right now in your life and I understand exactly how it feels, because I have been there. I was stuck in an alcohol trap and I didn't know what to do to get out of it. But I did it. I found complete freedom and turned my life around – I have never been happier. The great news is that you can quit alcohol, even though it might feel really hard right now. You need to know that it really isn't as difficult as you might think and I am going to show you how. In the next section I will explain how to use this book before we get started on our 50-day journey to freedom together.

Part 1

First steps to stopping drinking

How to use this book

I wrote this book to provide you with a structured way to find complete freedom from alcohol, if that is what you decide you want by the time you reach the final page. My approach uses proven techniques that have helped thousands of people change the way that alcohol features in their lives. My strategy is different to others you may have experienced, I want this to be an experience that you enjoy and a choice that you feel empowered in making, above all I want it to feel like an enjoyable and fun journey towards changing your life for the better.

If you have already stopped drinking, well done. My hope is that everything contained in this book will serve to make you stronger and help you build on what you have already achieved.

If you are still drinking, there is no need for you to stop at this point unless you wish to do so. However, if you wanted to make a commitment to stop right now as you start to work your way through the book, it would be fantastic. But I also don't want you to feel under any pressure to stop drinking until you feel completely ready. You might choose to make a commitment not to drink for the period that you are reading this book and then look at what has changed and improved in your life before making a choice as to whether you want to continue being alcohol-free or not, but the decision is entirely yours. I want you to feel empowered in your choice, not pressured.

If you want to carry on drinking as you read through the book, that's fine, but I would like you to start to be much more mindful about it. Start to take note of when you are drinking, how much, how often and how it feels for you. If you have a journal, start writing in it and exploring the feelings you experience before, during and after drinking. Get really curious and inquisitive about your drinking habits so you can begin digging into them in more depth.

This book is split into two parts. In Part 1 we will look at the reasons why you want to quit, the impact alcohol has on your life and most importantly the best strategy for quitting drinking successfully.

As you move into Part 2, I will ask you to consider making a commitment to taking a break from alcohol. But for now I just want you to commit to reading one chapter a day and answering the questions that will come up each day.

If you don't have a journal, I recommend getting one and using it to track how you feel. Write down your mood, your emotions and what feelings you experienced during the day. Start to notice as much as possible and log all the data you can. You can also use it to write about any changes you experience along with new achievements and learning points. Keeping a journal will allow you to look back at your entries and learn from them. You can also reflect back on anything you write to see how far you have progressed.

An excellent structure for journaling is to write down your intentions for the day ahead each morning. This might include any tasks you need to complete, work-related commitments and leisure activities. I also recommend writing down your intention to read a chapter of this book each day to ensure you make a firm commitment to your personal development every morning for the next 50 days.

This book has areas where you can make notes after relevant chapters, but a journal can be one of your best friends on this journey. It doesn't need to be anything fancy; a simple notepad will do.

There are exercises for you to complete after most of the chapters in the book, so you will need to keep a pen handy. If you don't want to write your answers in the book or if you are reading on an electronic device or listening on audio, you can download the accompanying PDF workbook to use as you move through the daily chapters. Simply visit <www.besober.co.uk/workbook>. It also includes space for you to make journal entries over the coming 50 days.

Ensure you commit to reading one chapter a day and stick with the book until the end. If you find yourself skipping days, simply recognise that this has happened, reset and dive back in with a new sense of momentum. Each day will address different topics that will help expand your knowledge, change your mindset and allow you to learn how to look within to discover the answers to questions about how you want your relationship with alcohol to change.

If you wanted to move through more than one chapter a day during Part 1, it's not a problem, but do make sure you are not rushing. I would like you to allow the information to sink in and also take the time to consider and reflect on the responses you provide where you are asked to do so. In Part 2 please stick to one chapter a day. The book has been carefully structured to help you, and it is important you follow the process to ensure you achieve the best outcome.

By the time you reach the end of the book, my hope is that you will be in a place where you can make a firm decision as to how alcohol will feature in your life going forward. If you decide you no longer want to drink alcohol, this book will provide you with all the tools and tactics you need to remain alcohol-free, thrive and enjoy life long term.

If you like to share, I would love you to upload a picture of yourself with your copy of this book on Instagram. Follow and tag @besoberandquit in your picture so I can be part of the amazing journey you are embarking on. You can also:

- **join the alcohol free movement at:** <www.besober.co.uk>
- **reach out:** <info@besober.co.uk>
- **find Be Sober on Instagram and Facebook:** <[@besoberandquit](https://www.instagram.com/besoberandquit)>.

Before we move on to Day 1, it's important to be clear that this book isn't a replacement for professional medical advice. If you're physically addicted to alcohol, or experiencing severe withdrawal symptoms such as shaking, tremors,

hallucinations or any other side-effects that cause you concern, please visit your doctor and seek medical advice.

However, if you're either ready to start thinking about what a life without alcohol might look like for you. Or if you have already quit drinking and are looking for further support, inspiration and tactics as you move forward on your alcohol-free journey, this book is for you.

Let's get started...

Day 1 | Why are you reading this book?

You picked up this book for a reason, and I would like you to think about exactly what that reason was. Maybe you were curious? Maybe you have been worrying about your drinking and the cover of the book caught your attention? Or maybe you know you need to change the way alcohol features in your life and searched online for a book that might help?

When I brought my first 'quit alcohol' book it was because I had become sick and tired of the hangovers, the regretful behaviour and the whole routine associated with drinking every day. I was also being torn apart by my anxiety and constant worrying, as well as feeling guilty for putting alcohol ahead of the most important things in my life. On top of this, my hands had started to shake and I was worrying about my health and the impact booze was having on me. I was looking for guidance and advice to help me make a change.

At the end of this chapter there is space for you to write down the reasons why you are exploring your relationship with alcohol. Give it some real thought. Is it because there is something you want in your life that alcohol is preventing you from having? Or is it because you are worrying about, or suffering from, the effects of drinking? Or maybe it is a combination of both? There are no right or wrong answers, but it is important for you to look closer at why you are questioning your relationship with alcohol.

As well as exploring the reasons why you are examining your relationship with alcohol, I would also like you to think about the reasons why you believe you like to drink. Maybe it is the taste or the sense of relaxation you feel? Or maybe you think you can't have fun or be happy without it? Again, have a really good think about why you believe you like to drink.

Be open and honest with yourself. Nobody is judging you. This is simply a process of self-examination and beginning to explore exactly how alcohol features in your life.

Below I have shared my answers to these questions from my own journal, which I wrote around the time I quit drinking. I would like you to do the same in the space at the end of this chapter.

These are the reasons I believed I liked to drink:

- Wine stops me feeling stressed out and anxious. It helps me forget my problems.
- Wine makes me relax.

- Wine is something I can look forward to at the end of each day. It feels like a reward.
- I have drunk wine every night for so long that it is a daily habit. It is just what I do.
- Wine is a sophisticated drink. I enjoy buying an expensive bottle and giving myself a daily treat.
- I enjoy trying and tasting different wines, the fuller bodied the better.

And these are the reasons I gave as to why I was wanting to examine how alcohol was featuring in my life:

- I am sick of having hangovers and headaches that I can't seem to shake off.
- My hands have been shaking and I am certain alcohol is causing this.
- I worry about being over the drink drive limit, especially on the morning school run.
- I often can't remember what happened the evening before as I have been too drunk.
- I often get out of control and do things I regret when I drink too much.
- I am often grumpy, irritable and moody. It feels like the more I drink the less happy I become.
- My anxiety is becoming out of control and I am wondering if alcohol is playing a part in this.
- I often put alcohol ahead of the most important things in my life like my daughter, my wife, my health and my career.
- I don't like a substance having control and power over me. I would like to claim this back, but it feels like my drinking is out of control and I am addicted.

Write down the reasons why you have started to look at your relationship with alcohol in the space provided.

Use the space provided to write down the reasons why you believe you like to drink alcohol. Consider what you believe alcohol gives you and the positive benefits you receive from drinking in your answers.

When you write down your answers to the questions you will be asked throughout the book, it is important that you take some time to reflect on them and start to think about how the issues they raise impact your life. Do your answers represent the person you truly are? You don't need to act on anything yet, just start digesting the material and get curious about the answers you provide.

So what are the real reasons we drink alcohol?

The decision to drink is largely formed by the value that we place on it. The value we give alcohol can be strongly determined by how we believe it impacts on things like mood, anxiety, relaxation, stress or confidence (to name just a few). Once we have formed beliefs that we will get positive outcomes from alcohol, it then becomes our expectation that this is what will happen when we drink.

We can subconsciously treat alcohol like a medicine for achieving these outcomes, and over time we start to believe that drinking is the route to achieving these changes in how we feel. We form neural pathways that train our brains to believe that drinking is the only way to achieve the desired state, and once these pathways are formed it can take time to create new ones and allow the old pathways to fade away. When we use alcohol this way we can also neglect how we might feel without drinking and whether we can achieve the same changes and feelings naturally.

The value we place on drinking is often elevated by our past experiences. We tend to remember the good times with fondness and laugh about the drinking stories and memories, continually reinforcing our belief that alcohol equates to fun times. We often choose to forget the arguments, the fights, the hangovers and the regretful behaviour. But when we do recall the bad experiences or experience something traumatic as a result of drinking it can impact negatively on the value we place on alcohol and cause us to consider stopping. If we have formed beliefs that drinking alcohol brings with it positive and enjoyable experiences, we are likely to feel more motivated to drink more in the future.

I found that my impulsive personality was another reason I drank alcohol. I wanted to feel good fast and wanted to get rid of any internal pain right then and there, and alcohol promised to solve this problem quickly. I didn't think about

the long-term consequences, I just wanted the rewards and instant gratification. Heavy drinkers are usually more impulsive than moderate drinkers.

Our society and culture also play a huge part in the reason we drink. It has become the social norm that we drink alcohol. We are bombarded by messages on every form of media that alcohol is just 'what we do' and is the route to fun and happiness in our lives. Alcohol is the only drug you have to justify not taking, and people who don't drink are often viewed as the odd ones out. Although culture is shifting (I will talk more about this later in the book), our current culture has set an expectation that drinking alcohol is how we behave and this contributes to the value we place on drinking. A great example of this is the tradition of after-work drinks on Friday nights. This ritual makes us feel connected and part of our tribe, and making the choice not to drink on a work outing to the pub might make us feel like an outcast and experience a sense of missing out.

Alcohol is addictive, and research has shown that addiction to booze stems from the effect that alcohol has on the reward centre of the brain. When we drink alcohol it causes a release of endorphins, the naturally occurring feel-good opioids that lead to a short-term sense of happiness, euphoria and a loss of inhibition. Recent studies have shown that heavy drinkers release more endorphins than light drinkers after drinking the same amount of alcohol, and this amounts to a higher sense of pleasure. The bad news is that after the unnaturally high rush of endorphins the brain and body will attempt to return to homeostasis, the natural state of equilibrium between being too happy and too sad. Because the overload of endorphins creates an unnaturally high response in the pleasure centre of the brain, we then release a chemical called dynorphin, which is essentially a downer that is designed to block the pleasure responses and bring the unnatural feelings back down to normal levels.

When we take another drink more endorphins are released, but not as much as the first drink, followed by yet more dynorphin. This cycle of artificially stimulated highs followed by the release of dynorphin to block the pleasure response and bring us back down explains why, when we are drinking, we can feel happy one moment, and then anxious, emotional and even angry the next. This cycle can also lead to a slippery slope of continually seeking the pleasure reward (or outcome) and placing a very high value on achieving it.

So the simple reasons we drink alcohol are twofold. The first is the value we place on it, and the second is the expected outcome we get from drinking it. But when you look in more detail at the reality of the outcomes you get from drinking you will likely find that you have given too much value to the part that booze actually played and will begin questioning how you allowed it to happen. I gave alcohol so much value – to me it was one of the most important things in my life. By exploring the truth around the value I placed on it and the reality of the outcomes it was giving me, I was able to start understanding more about how it should feature in my life.

Day 2 | What are your hopes and expectations?

Yesterday we talked about the reasons why you decided to read this book and looked at why you believe you like to drink alcohol. Today I want to explore your hopes and expectations for the future in a bit more depth.

As you start to explore what life without alcohol might look like, you may find that you have conflicting feelings. You might have questions and worries at the same time as feeling positive, excited and motivated about making a big life change. This is perfectly normal, so don't worry. But I do want to make sure you answer any questions and address any concerns to ensure you feel confident as you move forward.

If you can gain clarity on the areas where you have concerns or questions, you can take steps to address the specific issues. Bringing your worries out into the light is an excellent process. Equally, by writing down the positive hopes and expectations you have it will serve to reinforce those beliefs and shape the whole experience in the best possible way as you begin your journey.

It is important to understand that you may have given yourself unrealistic expectations in the past. Quitting alcohol is a bit like learning a new skill – it takes time and there are almost always setbacks along the way. If your expectations are unrealistic or possibly unachievable (for example: 'I want to never drink again as of now'), I hope that as you work through the book you will become aware of this and realign them accordingly. In other words, be gentle with yourself and take it one step at a time.

This is not to say that it is not possible to quit drinking right now; spontaneous sobriety can happen, although I know of only a handful of people who have made that decision and never touched alcohol again. I would prefer you to have hopes and expectations that you are confident will be met.

We tend to get what we expect, so if you explore an alcohol-free life with a negative approach and feeling like you are having your best friend taken away from you, then you will probably have a pretty negative experience. Whereas, if you approach this process with an open mind, a positive outlook and a sense that you are not losing anything but gaining back control and happiness in your life, then you will likely find the journey much more enjoyable.

I honestly don't feel as though I have lost anything by choosing not to drink. In fact, I feel as though I have joined a very exclusive community. The sober world feels like a hidden secret to me – it is as though I have now been given access to a new

and wonderful world and become part of an incredible club. This is something I am very proud of, and I would love for you to experience it and join me.

Use the space provided to write down your hopes and expectations as you approach this process, along with any worries, fears and questions you have.

Start to become mindful about trusting yourself. Are you willing to believe that you can achieve what you want? Do you feel your hopes and expectations are realistic?

Think about whether you are prepared to work for what you want, and consider if you are willing to be patient at the same time as accepting that setbacks are likely to happen. Make sure that you understand that setbacks serve only to help you learn and grow stronger, and that it takes time to get to a place where you are truly free from the grip of alcohol.

You also need to ensure you can invest time in learning your new skill. Nobody becomes an expert overnight. The more time you put into learning and expanding your knowledge about quitting drinking, the more you will get out of it. Try to allow at least 30 minutes each day to read a chapter of this book and write in your journal.

We will address your worries, fears and questions as we go forward. Make sure you keep a note of them as I want to ensure that you feel really confident and have no doubt about the choices you make. In the unlikely event any of them are not covered in the contents of the book, you can search for answers in the Be Sober Facebook group or look on my website <www.besober.co.uk>.

Day 3 | Just because you believe it

Until I started exploring my relationship with alcohol, I didn't realize that what I believed about drinking might actually be wrong. It wasn't just my beliefs about alcohol either; it was the same with many areas of my life. I always thought that, if I believed it, it must be right and had to be true. These days I have a much more open mind and have learned that, just because I hold a belief about something, it might not be true and I try to keep myself open to new ways of thinking and my beliefs being challenged so I can allow them to adapt accordingly.

I used to believe that I couldn't have fun without drinking, that I couldn't relax or be happy without booze, and I strongly believed that alcohol was calming my anxiety rather than making it worse. I now know that all these beliefs (and a whole lot of others) were totally wrong, and I am so happy that I took the time to explore them, challenge them and ultimately change them.

On Day 1 you wrote down some of your beliefs about why you think you like to drink alcohol. Take another look over your list. If you need to add or change anything, you can go ahead and do it right now.

My mind was full of beliefs that were serving me in a negative way, and the more I carried on drinking, the more I created a false reality that supported these beliefs being true. This resulted in me being stuck in the alcohol trap for years.

Our beliefs are formed from our past experiences and influences throughout our lives. Everything from the society we live in through to our parents, friends and peers can have a huge influence over what we believe. Once we have formed a belief, it can become firmly ingrained and we take it as an absolute fact and usually for granted. We rarely stop to consider whether it might be true or not. What we believe gives us our view of the world, and we use our beliefs to decide if we think something is right or wrong, good or bad, safe or dangerous or possible or unachievable.

Most of the beliefs we hold serve us well; they allow us to assess risk and danger and avoid potentially uncomfortable situations. But other beliefs can be limiting and hold us back from reaching our true potential. The following is an example of a belief that limits someone from reaching their full potential:

Limiting belief: 'I will always be overweight, my body is just fat and I can never lose weight no matter what I do.'

And here is a belief that allows someone in the same situation to reach their full potential:

Full potential belief: 'I can lose weight and become slim and healthy if I change my diet and exercise regularly. This is in my control.'

My first big step to becoming unstuck from the alcohol trap was searching for the real truth in what I believed about how drinking was benefiting me. The way I did this was by writing down all of my limiting beliefs and replacing them with new and empowering belief statements that were still totally factual and true.

I want to invite you to undo any limiting beliefs you have and replace them with new ones that will empower you. Your limiting beliefs have very likely become ingrained and reinforced over the years, so this task can require some effort and repetition. I would urge you to keep coming back to this chapter and looking at your beliefs on a regular basis. You may even want to put your new belief statements somewhere prominent so you are regularly reminded of them as new 'belief affirmations'.

As you encounter new experiences and find your beliefs changing, make sure you write them down and take steps to reinforce only the beliefs that empower you. Try to avoid feeding the beliefs that are not serving you in a positive way, and become mindful about what you are choosing to believe as you go forward. Paying attention to your beliefs is an incredible exercise in personal growth and will allow you to begin a journey to opening your mind as well as your heart.

Once I had carried out the exercise that follows, I started to become really mindful about the limiting beliefs I held, and whenever I considered acting on one of them I would make a conscious choice to act against it. For example, my belief may have been 'I can't have fun at a party unless I drink alcohol', so I would consciously act against it by saying 'I can have fun at a party without drinking and I am going to prove it to myself'. Then I would go and do it. Once I had been to the party and experienced fun without drinking, my original belief was no longer looking so solid and a new belief had started to form based on the fresh evidence and the new experience I had.

I would like you to complete the following exercise in the space provided. You can do it with as many beliefs as you wish, although you may need a separate piece of paper if you run out of space.

Pick a belief that you believe is holding you back, for example 'I can't relax without drinking alcohol'.

Write down how this belief has worked against you in the past. In this example, it could be 'I use alcohol to try to relax but it causes me to say and do things I regret'.

Then find some evidence that proves this belief is actually untrue. It is important to ensure your answers are completely factual. In this example it could be 'Alcohol may relax me for an hour or two, but I never feel relaxed in the morning when my anxiety is raging and I have a hangover and fuzzy head'.

Finally, write down a new and empowering belief to replace the original one. Again, it needs to be completely true for you, so have a good think about what would be

right. In this example it could be 'I believe I would probably be more relaxed if I didn't drink alcohol and I would like to experience how that feels for me'.

It is important to regularly remind yourself of your new beliefs, rather than just writing them down and forgetting about them. I know some people who have stuck a list of them on the door of their fridge and others who have put them on their smartphone lock screen so they see them each time they pick up their phone.

Think about how you can keep on reminding yourself of your new, empowering beliefs every day and write it down in the space provided.

What we believe is incredibly powerful and it impacts the way we think and act. If you can make the effort to get really curious about your beliefs and examine them closely you can single out the ones that are holding you back and take steps to change them. You can then move towards living the life you deserve and finding freedom from alcohol for ever.

Become mindful of what you believe, start paying close attention and begin questioning whether specific beliefs serve you, whether they are boosting your self-esteem and if they are allowing you to be the very best version of yourself.

If you find a limiting belief, take the time to explore it and form new and healthy belief statements so you can begin to change your belief and prevent it from holding you back. So much freedom awaits in unlocking your unhelpful beliefs. I want you to become really curious about what you notice as you move through this book.

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