HALT Check-in

> *"There are more things, Lucilius, likely to frighten us than there are to crush us; we suffer more often in imagination than in reality."*
>
> Seneca, Letters 13 (tr. Gummere)

Use it the moment an urge arrives, or at a set time each day. Score each state honestly, then deal with the highest score first. An urge is often a real need asking for the wrong thing.

STATE	RIGHT NOW (0 = NOT AT ALL, 3 = VERY)	WHAT WOULD ACTUALLY HELP IN THE NEXT 10 MINUTES?
Hungry *Last proper meal? Water today?*	0 1 2 3	
Angry *At whom? Is it in my control?*	0 1 2 3	
Lonely *Who have I actually spoken to today?*	0 1 2 3	
Tired *Sleep last night? Rest today?*	0 1 2 3	

Strength of the urge

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

The need underneath

Which state scored highest? What is it really asking for: food, rest, company, or to be heard?

Is it in my control?

If I am angry about something outside my control, what part of it is still mine to decide?

One thing I will do now

Afterwards

Urge strength 20 minutes later: _____ / 10 Did I drink? ☐ No ☐ Yes - that is information, not a verdict.

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The Dichotomy of Control

> *"There are things which are within our power, and there are things which are beyond our power. Within our power are opinion, aim, desire, aversion, and, in one word, whatever affairs are our own."*
>
> Epictetus, Enchiridion 1 (tr. Higginson)

Write down the situation in one line. List everything about it that is on your mind, putting each item in one column or the other. Be strict. Other people's choices, the past and how you feel at this second all go on the right.

The situation

Up to me

My actions, my words, my effort, my judgements, what I do in the next hour.

Not up to me

Other people, outcomes, the past, my reputation, whether the urge comes.

Where my effort goes today

Pick one or two items from the left-hand column.

What I am setting down

From the right-hand column. Not forgetting it. Just no longer trying to carry it with will alone.

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My Urge Plan

> *"Every habit and faculty is maintained and increased by the corresponding actions."*
>
> Epictetus, Discourses 2.18 (tr. Long)

Fill this in on a good day, not a bad one. The Stoics rehearsed difficulties in advance so that they would not be met unprepared. An urge is much easier to handle when the next five steps are already written down.

My warning signs

Thoughts, feelings, times, places, people.

My highest-risk moments

e.g. Friday after work, after calls with family.

When the urge arrives, I will

1. Name it: *"This is an urge. It is not an order."*
2. Start a 15-minute timer and stay where there is no alcohol.
3.
4.
5.

People I can contact

NAME	NUMBER

Things that fill 15 minutes

A walk, a shower, food, a call, a task with my hands.

Why I am doing this

Three reasons, in my own words. Specific beats noble.

If I slip, I will

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Urge Log

> *"Do not disturb yourself by thinking of the whole of your life… but on every occasion ask yourself, What is there in this which is intolerable and past bearing?"*
>
> Marcus Aurelius, Meditations 8.36 (tr. Long, adapted)

Log each urge as soon as you can, whether or not you acted on it. Strength is 0 to 10. "What I told myself" is the exact sentence, such as "I deserve it" or "just one". After a week, read it back and circle what repeats.

DAY / TIME	WHERE / WHO WITH	WHAT SET IT OFF	STRENGTH	WHAT I TOLD MYSELF	WHAT I DID	HOW LONG UNTIL IT EASED

At the end of the week: what repeats?

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The Evening Review

> *"What bad habit of yours have you cured to-day? what vice have you checked? in what respect are you better?"*
>
> Seneca, On Anger 3.36, quoting Sextius (tr. Stewart)

Answer plainly, as if writing a report rather than a verdict. Seneca's point was that a review is information, not punishment. Whatever you find, the next step is a small adjustment tomorrow.

Date: _____ Strongest urge today: _____ / 10 ☐ Alcohol-free today

What did I handle well today?

Where did I fall short, and what was going on at the time?

What will I do differently tomorrow?

Date: _____ Strongest urge today: _____ / 10 ☐ Alcohol-free today

What did I handle well today?

Where did I fall short, and what was going on at the time?

What will I do differently tomorrow?

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Morning Preparation

> *"Begin the morning by saying to yourself, I shall meet with the busybody, the ungrateful, arrogant, deceitful, envious, unsocial."*
>
> Marcus Aurelius, Meditations 2.1 (tr. Long, adapted)

Two or three minutes with your first coffee. Marcus was not being gloomy. He was getting ready, so that the day's irritations would not catch him off guard. Use it the same way for the day's risks to your sobriety.

Today's likely difficulties

People, places, times, tiredness, feelings. Where could the day get hard?

How I will meet them

For each one: what I will do or say, and what I will not do.

Up to me today

Not up to me today

My plan for the riskiest hour

Today I want to be someone who

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After a Slip

> *"Be not disgusted, nor discouraged, nor dissatisfied, if you do not succeed in doing everything according to right principles, but when you have failed, return back again."*
>
> Marcus Aurelius, Meditations 5.9 (tr. Long, adapted)

Wait until you are sober and have slept. Write as if you were describing someone else's evening, with the facts and no adjectives. Shame wants a verdict. This sheet only wants information you can use.

What happened (facts only)

The chain

Work backwards from the first drink.

How I was (hungry, angry, lonely, tired?)	
What set it off	
The thought that gave permission	
The moment I could have chosen differently	

The story my mind is telling now

e.g. "I've ruined everything."

What is actually true

e.g. "I drank once. The days before still count."

What I will change

The next 24 hours

Who I will tell, where I will be, what I will remove from the house.

If you have been drinking heavily for several days, do not stop suddenly without medical advice. Speak to a GP, NHS 111 or a local alcohol service.

The Honest Ledger

> *"State that drunkenness is nothing but a condition of insanity purposely assumed."*
>
> Seneca, Letters 83 (tr. Gummere)

The Stoics practised looking at things as they really are, stripped of the glamour we give them. Fill in both columns slowly and specifically. When the urge starts arguing, read the right-hand column back.

What drinking promises

Relief, sleep, confidence, fun, a reward.

What it has actually cost

Health, sleep, money, work, people, self-respect.

The next drink, played forward

Tonight, after the first one	
Tomorrow morning	
A week from now	

A year from now, if I keep going

A year from now, if I stop

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Step 4: A Fair Inventory

> *"And indeed this very fact is proof that my spirit is altered into something better, - that it can see its own faults, of which it was previously ignorant."*
>
> Seneca, Letters 6 (tr. Gummere)

Write as a fair witness would - honest, specific, without cruelty. One line per resentment, fear or harm. "My part" is not about blame; it is the piece that was yours to choose. Use as many sheets as you need, and finish with your strengths, because an honest inventory includes those too.

WHO OR WHAT	WHAT HAPPENED	WHAT IT TOUCHED IN ME (PRIDE, SECURITY, FEAR, RELATIONSHIPS)	MY PART - WHAT WAS MINE TO CHOOSE	R / F / H *resentment, fear, harm*

Patterns I notice

Strengths I can build on

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Step 8: The List

> *"If it is not right, do not do it: if it is not true, do not say it."*
>
> Marcus Aurelius, Meditations 12.17 (tr. Long)

Step 8 is the list, not the amends. Write everyone down, including the ones you would rather leave off. "Willing yet?" can honestly say "not yet". Mark anyone an amends could harm, including yourself, and talk those through with a sponsor or counsellor before acting.

PERSON	WHAT I DID	HOW IT AFFECTED THEM	WHAT PUTTING IT RIGHT MIGHT LOOK LIKE	WILLING YET? ANY RISK OF HARM?

Who did I leave off, and why?

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Step 10: The Daily Spot-Check

> *"Examine yourself; scrutinize and observe yourself in divers ways."*
>
> Seneca, Letters 16 (tr. Gummere)

Step 10 is a short, regular version of Step 4. Each night, one line in each column. "Did I put it right?" means promptly admitting it - an apology, a correction, a message. If not yet, note what you will do tomorrow. Finish the week by reading it back.

DAY	WHERE WAS I WRONG TODAY?	DID I PUT IT RIGHT? HOW?	WHAT DO I STILL OWE, AND TO WHOM?	WHAT WENT WELL TODAY?
Mon				
Tue				
Wed				
Thu				
Fri				
Sat				
Sun				

Reading the week back: what repeats?

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If-Then Plans

> *"Our minds should be sent forward in advance to meet all problems, and we should consider, not what is wont to happen, but what can happen."*
>
> Seneca, Letters 91 (tr. Gummere)

Write the "if" as specifically as you can: a time, a place, a feeling, a person. The "then" should be one small action you could actually do in that moment. Add a back-up in case the first plan is not possible. Read the sheet through each morning for a week.

IF... (TIME, PLACE, FEELING, PERSON)	THEN I WILL...	AND IF THAT IS NOT POSSIBLE...

The three situations most likely to come up this week

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Before an Event

> *"Remember that you must behave as at a banquet. Is anything brought round to you? Put out your hand and take a moderate share. Does it pass by you? Do not stop it."*
>
> Epictetus, Enchiridion 15 (tr. Higginson)

Fill this in a day or two before, when you are calm. Keep it on your phone or in your pocket. The hardest moment is usually predictable, so plan that one in the most detail.

Event: _____ Date: _____ Arriving: _____

What I will drink

Have it in your hand within two minutes.

What I will say

One short line for "aren't you drinking?"

When I will leave

Set it now. Leaving early is allowed.

How I will get home

Driving, a booked taxi, a lift.

Who I can text

Someone who knows and will reply.

Who I will stay near

The person who makes it easier.

The hardest moment, and my plan for it

The first offer, the toast, the late evening, the second venue?

Straight after - what I will do when I get home

- [ ] Ate properly beforehand
- [ ] Told one person my leaving time
- [ ] Urge Timer on my phone
- [ ] A way out if it gets too much

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What I'll Say

> *"And let silence be the general rule, or let only what is necessary be said, and in few words."*
>
> Epictetus, Enchiridion 33 (tr. Long)

Keep each line short, friendly and final. Say it once, smile, and change the subject. If someone pushes, a second line is enough; you never owe an explanation. The last column is a reminder of what is private.

WHO	WHAT I WILL SAY	IF THEY PUSH	WHAT I DO NOT OWE THEM
Partner or family			
A friend who drinks			
Boss or colleague			
Someone who keeps pushing			
A stranger offering a drink			
Someone who knew me drinking			

Lines that work for almost anyone

"I'm good with this, thanks." "Not tonight." "I'm driving." "I'm having a break from it." "Honestly, I'm fine."

Circle the one that sounds most like you.

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My Trigger Map

> *"Do you ask me what you should regard as especially to be avoided? I say, crowds; for as yet you cannot trust yourself to them with safety."*
>
> Seneca, Letters 7 (tr. Gummere)

Seneca was honest about the places that still unsettled him. Do the same. Write freely in each box, then circle the three that come up most often. Those three are the ones to make if-then plans for.

People

Who do I tend to drink with, or after seeing?

Places

Pubs, shops, rooms, routes, the chair at home.

Times

Days, hours, paydays, anniversaries, seasons.

Feelings

Stressed, lonely, bored, angry, ashamed, happy?

Thoughts - the exact sentences my mind uses

For example: "I deserve it", "just one", "I'll start again Monday".

My top three, and where I will plan for them

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A Week with Fixed Points

> *"Lay hold of to-day's task, and you will not need to depend so much upon to-morrow's."*
>
> Seneca, Letters 1 (tr. Gummere)

Fill this in on a Sunday. For each day, note the time you are most likely to want a drink, one fixed point that is yours, a plan for the risky hour, and someone you could contact. Keep it somewhere you will see it.

DAY	MY RISKIEST TIME	ONE FIXED POINT	MY PLAN FOR THE RISKY HOUR	WHO I COULD CONTACT
Mon				
Tue				
Wed				
Thu				
Fri				
Sat				
Sun				

Looking back on Sunday: what helped most?

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Thought Check

> *"Men are disturbed not by things, but by the views which they take of things."*
>
> Epictetus, Enchiridion 5 (tr. Higginson)

Write the thought word for word, as your mind said it. Then question it like a fair witness: is it true, all of it, every time? What is actually in your control here? Finish with a sentence that is honest - not forced positivity, just more accurate.

THE THOUGHT, WORD FOR WORD	IS IT TRUE? WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE?	WHAT IS IN MY CONTROL HERE?	A TRUER SENTENCE

Thoughts that often argue for a drink

"I deserve it." "Just one won't hurt." "I can't cope with this sober." "I've already ruined today." "Nobody would know." "It's a special occasion."

Which of these sound familiar? They are the habit talking, not the truth.

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Rehearsing a Hard Moment

> *"Therefore, nothing ought to be unexpected by us."*
>
> Seneca, Letters 91 (tr. Gummere)

Choose one moment coming up - a party, a family visit, a payday, an anniversary. Write it as a short scene. Then rehearse your response until it feels familiar. This is preparation, not pessimism.

The moment

Where, when, who will be there?

What will probably happen

The offer, the comment, the feeling, the urge. Be specific.

What my mind is likely to say

The exact sentence that will argue for a drink.

What I will do and say

Step by step. Short and realistic.

If it goes worse than expected

What will still be true afterwards

Afterwards: how did it compare with what I rehearsed?

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The View from Above

> *"Look down from above on the countless herds of men and their countless solemnities, and the infinitely varied voyagings in storms and calms."*
>
> Marcus Aurelius, Meditations 9.30 (tr. Long)

Write the problem at the centre as it feels right now. Then move outwards one ring at a time, writing a line at each. The problem does not disappear. It returns to its real size, and real size is easier to deal with.

What feels overwhelming right now

ZOOMING OUT	WHAT I NOTICE FROM HERE
This room	
This street or town	
This country, today	
A year from now	
A hundred years from now	

Back at full size: what is the one part of this that is mine to deal with?

One small thing I will do about it

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The Four Virtues

> *"If thou findest in human life anything better than justice, truth, temperance, fortitude, and, in a word, anything better than thy own mind's self-satisfaction in the things which it enables thee to do according to right reason..."*
>
> Marcus Aurelius, Meditations 3.6 (tr. Long)

For the Stoics, these four were the only true goods; everything else was secondary. Look back over your week honestly. Small examples count: a drink refused is self-control, a hard conversation is courage.

VIRTUE	WHERE I SHOWED IT THIS WEEK	WHERE I WILL PRACTISE IT NEXT WEEK
Wisdom *seeing clearly, good judgement*		
Courage *facing what is hard, honesty*		
Justice *fairness, kindness, putting things right*		
Self-control *moderation, delay, restraint*		

The virtue I most want to grow, and why

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Who I Am to Others

> *"Consider who you are. In the first place, you are a man; and this is one who has nothing superior to the faculty of the will."*
>
> Epictetus, Discourses 2.10 (tr. Long)

Epictetus taught that our duties can be discovered from our roles. List the roles that matter to you. Be honest in the middle column, and practical in the last. This is about who you want to be, not about guilt.

MY ROLE	WHAT THIS ROLE ASKS OF ME	HOW DRINKING HAS GOT IN THE WAY	ONE THING I CAN DO THIS WEEK

The role I most want to grow into

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My Support Circle

> *"Be not ashamed to be helped; for it is thy business to do thy duty like a soldier in the assault on a town."*
>
> Marcus Aurelius, Meditations 7.7 (tr. Long)

Marcus reminded himself that needing help is no disgrace - a lame soldier still climbs the wall with a hand from another. Write down at least three people. It helps to tell them they are on your list.

PERSON	HOW TO REACH THEM	BEST FOR (A CHAT, A CRISIS, A LIFT, PRACTICAL HELP)	WHAT I MIGHT SAY

Services and helplines

My GP: _____ Local alcohol service: _____

Meeting I can go to (AA, SMART or other): _____

UK: Samaritans 116 123 (free, 24 hours) · Drinkline 0300 123 1110 · NHS 111. US: call or text 988. In an emergency call 999 (UK) or 911 (US).

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A Plan for Hard Nights

> *"Let not future things disturb thee, for thou wilt come to them, if it shall be necessary, having with thee the same reason which now thou usest for present things."*
>
> Marcus Aurelius, Meditations 7.8 (tr. Long)

Write this on a good day, so it is ready on a bad one. Work down the page in order: start with what you can do alone, and move on to people and services if you need them. Keep it by your bed or on your phone.

My warning signs

Thoughts, feelings, times or situations that tell me a hard night is coming.

Things I can do on my own

Urge Timer, a shower, food, a walk, music, breathing, bed.

People and places that take my mind off it

People I can ask for help

Names and numbers.

Making my space safer

Removing alcohol from the house, staying away from the shop, giving my card to someone.

If I feel unsafe

Samaritans 116 123 (UK and Ireland, free, 24 hours) · Call or text 988 (US) · Emergency 999 (UK) or 911 (US)

My GP or mental health team: _____

If you drink heavily every day, do not stop suddenly without medical advice. Alcohol withdrawal can be dangerous.

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Pocket Cards

> *"Each day acquire something that will fortify you against poverty, against death, indeed against other misfortunes as well."*
>
> Seneca, Letters 2 (tr. Gummere)

Fill in each card, cut along the dashed lines and fold in half if you like. Keep one where the urge usually finds you. Reading a card takes ten seconds, which is often enough to change what happens next.

Why I stopped

When the urge comes

1. Wait fifteen minutes. Do not decide anything yet.
2. Hungry, angry, lonely or tired? Fix that first.
3. Move: leave the room, go outside, drink water.
4. Message someone on my other card.
5. My own step:

My people

If I feel unsafe

Samaritans 116 123
UK and Ireland, free, 24 hours

988 call or text
US

999 / 911 emergency

My GP:

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Why I'm Stopping

> *"How long, then, will you delay to demand of yourself the noblest improvements, and in no instance to transgress the judgments of reason?"*
>
> Epictetus, Enchiridion 51 (tr. Higginson)

Be specific and honest. "My health" is a start; "I want to stop waking at 4am with my heart racing" is a reason. Then write to the version of you who will be standing at the shop door. Be kind, and be direct.

What drinking has been costing me

Health, sleep, money, work, people, self-respect.

What I want back, or want to build

The moment I knew something had to change

A letter to me, on a hard night

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The Boredom Menu

> *"Always bear this in mind; and another thing too, that very little indeed is necessary for living a happy life."*
>
> Marcus Aurelius, Meditations 7.67 (tr. Long)

Boredom and empty evenings are some of the most common pulls back to drinking. Fill every box, even with small things. When the evening stretches out, pick one from the right column without thinking about it.

	FIVE MINUTES	HALF AN HOUR	A WHOLE EVENING
On my own			
With someone			
Out of the house			
That costs nothing			

Something I used to enjoy before drinking took up the time

Something new I would like to try

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Winding Down Without a Drink

> *"Such as are thy habitual thoughts, such also will be the character of thy mind; for the soul is dyed by the thoughts."*
>
> Marcus Aurelius, Meditations 5.16 (tr. Long)

Sleep is often unsettled for a while after stopping, and usually improves. Plan the last two hours of the evening so there is a calm routine in place of the drink. The notes are for noticing patterns, not for scoring yourself.

My wind-down: two hours before bed

Screens off, a warm drink, a bath, reading, stretching.

If I cannot sleep

Get up, low light, something dull, back to bed when sleepy.

NIGHT	IN BED	WOKE	WHAT HELPED	NOTES
Mon				
Tue				
Wed				
Thu				
Fri				
Sat				
Sun				

If poor sleep goes on for weeks or is affecting your daily life, talk to your GP. If you drink heavily every day, do not stop suddenly without medical advice.

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What a Week of Drinking Costs

> *"Nothing, Lucilius, is ours, except time."*
>
> Seneca, Letters 1 (tr. Gummere)

Think of a typical week, not your best or worst. Be honest about amounts. The aim is not to shame yourself, only to see clearly. The last section is the useful part: what you would rather do with it.

DAY	WHAT I USUALLY DRINK	COST	TIME SPENT DRINKING OR RECOVERING	MORNINGS AFTER
Mon				
Tue				
Wed				
Thu				
Fri				
Sat				
Sun				

Week: £ _____ Month: £ _____ Year: £ _____ Hours a week: _____

What I would rather spend the money on

What I would rather do with the time

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Early Warning Signs

> *"Nothing great, said Epictetus, is produced suddenly, since not even the grape or the fig is."*
>
> Epictetus, Discourses 1.15 (tr. Long)

Recovery grows slowly, and so does a slide back. Think about times you drank after a break: what was happening in the days and weeks before? Write your signs in your own words, and one action for each.

	MY EARLY SIGNS	WHAT I WILL DO WHEN I NOTICE THEM
Feelings *irritable, flat, restless, resentful*		
Thoughts *"I've got this", "one won't hurt", "what's the point"*		
Behaviour *skipping routines, isolating, keeping secrets*		
Situations *stress, celebrations, money, conflict*		

Someone who could tell me if they notice these signs

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Step 1: An Honest Look

> *"There are things which are within our power, and there are things which are beyond our power."*
>
> Epictetus, Enchiridion 1 (tr. Higginson)

Step 1 is about seeing clearly. Write the facts as a fair witness would. Admitting what has not worked is not weakness; for Epictetus, knowing what is and is not in your power is where freedom begins.

WAYS I TRIED TO CONTROL MY DRINKING	WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED

AREA OF MY LIFE	HOW DRINKING HAS MADE IT HARDER TO MANAGE
Health and sleep	
Work or study	
Relationships and family	
Money	
Self-respect	

What I am ready to admit today

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Step 9: Preparing an Amends

> *"Accustom thyself to attend carefully to what is said by another, and as much as it is possible, be in the speaker's mind."*
>
> Marcus Aurelius, Meditations 6.53 (tr. Long)

An amends is about your part, not theirs. No "but". Keep it short and listen more than you speak. Their response is not in your control. If making contact could hurt them or anyone else, find another way to put it right.

Person: _____ Talked through with: _____

What I did - the facts, without excuses

What I will say

I did..., it was wrong because..., I am sorry. Nothing that shifts the blame.

What I can offer to put right

What is not in my control

Their response, forgiveness, timing.

Could this harm them or anyone else?

If so, what is another way to make it right?

Afterwards: what happened, and how am I?

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Step 11: Ten Quiet Minutes

> *"For nowhere either with more quiet or more freedom from trouble does a man retire than into his own soul."*
>
> Marcus Aurelius, Meditations 4.3 (tr. Long)

Marcus did not need a retreat in the country; he found quiet in his own mind. Each morning, one line on how you want to meet the day. Each evening, one line on how it went. The quiet minutes can be any practice that suits you.

DAY	MORNING: HOW I WANT TO MEET TODAY	QUIET MINUTES	EVENING: WHAT I NOTICED
Mon			
Tue			
Wed			
Thu			
Fri			
Sat			
Sun			

Something I understood this week

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Step 12: Passing It On

> *"Welcome those whom you yourself can improve. The process is mutual; for men learn while they teach."*
>
> Seneca, Letters 7 (tr. Gummere)

Service does not need to be grand. A text, a lift, a cup of tea at a meeting, an honest share. Start by remembering who helped you. Finish with your limits - your own sobriety comes first.

Who helped me, and how

Something I have learned that might help someone else

Small ways I could help this month

- [ ] Message someone newer than me
- [ ] Give a lift or meet someone at a meeting
- [ ] Share honestly when the time comes
- [ ] Make the tea, set up the room
- [ ] Pass on a worksheet or reading that helped me
- [ ] My own idea: _____

My limits - what protects my own recovery

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My Boundaries

> *"Everything has two handles: one by which it may be borne, another by which it cannot. If your brother acts unjustly, do not lay hold on the affair by the handle of his injustice, for by that it cannot be borne."*

Epictetus, Enchiridion 43 (tr. Higginson)

A boundary describes what you will do, not what they must do. "You must stop" cannot be enforced; "I won't get in the car if you've been drinking" can. Only write boundaries you are ready to keep.

Not mine to control

Their drinking, their choices, their moods.

Mine

My words, my boundaries, my support, my evenings.

MY BOUNDARY (WHAT I WILL DO)	IF IT IS CROSSED, I WILL…	SUPPORT I NEED TO KEEP IT

Support for me

Al-Anon (al-anonuk.org.uk) · Adfam (adfam.org.uk) · Nacoa 0800 358 3456 (anyone affected by a parent's drinking) · my GP

If you are afraid for your safety: 999 (UK) or 911 (US). UK National Domestic Abuse Helpline 0808 2000 247.

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Sponsor and Sponsee: First Conversation

> *"Ponder for a long time whether you shall admit a given person to your friendship; but when you have decided to admit him, welcome him with all your heart and soul. Speak as boldly with him as with yourself."*
>
> Seneca, Letters 3 (tr. Gummere)

Fill this in together. There are no right answers; the point is that both of you know what to expect. Revisit it after a month. Either of you can change it, and either of you can end it.

How and when to get in touch

Calls, texts, times that work, times that do not.

If you can't reach me

Other members, a meeting, a helpline.

What I hope for from you

What you can expect from me

How we will work the Steps (or other programme)

If I slip

What I will do, what you will do. Honesty first.

If it isn't working

Either of us can say so, and finding another sponsor is fine.

When to get professional help

Withdrawal, crisis, safety, mental health.

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My Christmas Plan

> *"It shows much more courage to remain dry and sober when the mob is drunk and vomiting; but it shows greater self-control to refuse to withdraw oneself and to do what the crowd does, but in a different way."*
>
> Seneca, Letters 18 (tr. Gummere)

Fill this in at the start of December. For each event, decide the drink, the leaving time and the person you will text. Seneca's advice was not to hide away, but to take part in a different way - and to skip what is too much.

EVENT AND DATE	HARDEST MOMENT	MY DRINK	LEAVING AT	WHO I WILL TEXT

Christmas Day: my anchors

A walk, the daily reading, jobs to do, a call.

The days in between

One fixed point each day.

Leftover alcohol in the house - what happens to it

If I feel lonely or low

Who I will contact; Samaritans 116 123 every day.

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Before I React

> *"The greatest remedy for anger is delay: beg anger to grant you this at the first, not in order that it may pardon the offence, but that it may form a right judgment about it."*
>
> Seneca, On Anger 2.29 (tr. Stewart)

Fill this in before you reply, call back or reach for a drink. Write the facts separately from the story. Then look at what is actually in your control, and what you would think about it tomorrow.

What happened - just the facts

The story I am telling myself about it

In my control

Not in my control

How will this look in an hour? Tomorrow?

What would the calmest version of me do?

What I will do now

- [ ] I am not going to drink over this
- [ ] I have waited at least twenty minutes
- [ ] I have spoken to someone, or will

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Step 2: Coming to Believe

> *"Constantly regard the universe as one living being, having one substance and one soul."*
>
> Marcus Aurelius, Meditations 4.40 (tr. Long)

You do not need to settle any big questions to work Step 2. Marcus saw himself as one part of a larger whole, and found steadiness in that. Start with what you have seen with your own eyes, and stay open about the rest.

What my drinking has looked like, again and again

The same thing, expecting a different result.

What a sane ordinary day would look like

Not a revelation. A Tuesday that goes well.

A power greater than me could be...

- [ ] The group, and the people in it who have recovered
- [ ] Reason, nature or the order of things
- [ ] God, as I understand God
- [ ] The people who love me and want me well
- [ ] I do not know yet, and I am willing to stay open

Evidence I have already seen that people recover

People I have met, heard or read about.

One open-minded step I can take this week

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Step 3: Turning It Over

> *"Demand not that events should happen as you wish; but wish them to happen as they do happen, and you will go on well."*
>
> Epictetus, Enchiridion 8 (tr. Higginson)

Step 3 is a decision, made again each day. Epictetus would recognise it: do your part fully, and let go of the outcome. The reserve clause - "I will do this, if nothing prevents me" - is a small way to practise it.

WHAT I AM STILL TRYING TO CONTROL	WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I TRY	WHAT LETTING GO WOULD LOOK LIKE

The reserve clause

"I will _____, if nothing prevents me." Write three for tomorrow:

My Step 3 sentence for each morning, in my own words

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Step 5: Telling Someone

> *"Why will no man confess his faults? Because he is still in their grasp; only he who is awake can recount his dream, and similarly a confession of sin is a proof of sound mind."*

Seneca, Letters 53 (tr. Gummere)

For Seneca, being able to admit your faults is a sign of waking up, not of weakness. Choose someone trustworthy and experienced. You do not need to rehearse every word; this sheet is for preparing your mind.

Who I will tell

Name: _____ **When:** _____

- [ ] **I trust them to keep it private**
- [ ] **They have experience of recovery, or of listening (sponsor, counsellor, faith leader)**
- [ ] **They will be honest with me, not just kind**

What I most fear saying

What I want them to understand

Patterns I have noticed from my inventory

Afterwards: how I feel, and what I learned

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Step 6: Becoming Ready

> *"Yet there is nothing so hard and difficult that the mind of man cannot overcome it, and with which unremitting study will not render him familiar."*
>
> Seneca, On Anger 2.12 (tr. Stewart)

Readiness starts with honesty about the payoff: most defects survive because they give us something. Be specific. Readiness is a scale, not a switch, and "not yet" is an honest answer.

DEFECT	WHAT IT STILL GIVES ME	WHAT IT COSTS ME AND OTHERS	READY? 0-10	THE QUALITY I WANT INSTEAD

The one I am most ready to work on, and a first small step

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Step 7: Humbly Asking

> *"If you would improve, be content to be thought foolish and dull with regard to externals."*
>
> Epictetus, Enchiridion 13 (tr. Higginson)

Humility, for the Stoics, meant not needing to look good. Asking for help is part of that. Write your request in whatever form suits you - a prayer, an intention, words to a sponsor - then practise the opposite quality each day.

The shortcoming I am working on

Asking for help, in my own words

The opposite quality, and what it looks like in practice

DAY	WHERE I PRACTISED IT TODAY	WHERE I FELL BACK, AND WHAT I LEARNED
Mon		
Tue		
Wed		
Thu		
Fri		
Sat		
Sun		

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Riding the Wave

> *"Be like the promontory against which the waves continually break, but it stands firm and tames the fury of the water around it."*
>
> Marcus Aurelius, Meditations 4.49 (tr. Long)

Do not fight the urge or argue with it. Just watch it, like a wave against the rock. Every five minutes, circle how strong it is and note what you notice in your body and mind. Most people find the wave turns before they expect it to.

Date and time: _____ Where I am: _____

MINUTES	STRENGTH	WHAT I NOTICE IN MY BODY AND MIND
0	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
5	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
10	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
15	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
20	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
25	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
30	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	

What helped me ride it

What I learned about this urge

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My Relapse Prevention Plan

> *"No longer talk at all about the kind of man that a good man ought to be, but be such."*
>
> Marcus Aurelius, Meditations 10.16 (tr. Long)

Pull together what you know from your other sheets. Keep it short enough to read in two minutes. Review it once a month, and after any slip.

Why I am doing this

MY RISKIEST SITUATIONS	MY PLAN FOR EACH

My early warning signs

What keeps me well, day to day

Sleep, food, meetings, people, movement.

My people

Names and numbers.

If I slip: my first 24 hours

Stop, tell someone, eat, sleep, review.

Samaritans 116 123 (UK and Ireland, free, 24 hours) · Drinkline 0300 123 1110 (UK) · 988 (US) · Emergency 999 / 911. If you drink heavily every day, do not stop suddenly without medical advice.

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The Person I Want to Be

> *"A man then must stand erect, not be kept erect by others."*
>
> Marcus Aurelius, Meditations 3.5 (tr. Long)

This is not a list of resolutions. It is a picture of who you are trying to be, so that in a hard moment you can ask: what would that person do now? Write in plain words, as if describing someone you admire.

AREA	HOW I WANT TO BE	ONE SIGN I AM LIVING IT
At home		
At work or study		
With friends		
With myself		
In my community		

What drinking tells me I am

What I know I can be

Three words for the person I want to be

One thing that person would do this week

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Talking to Someone Who Drinks

> *"Consider that a good disposition is invincible if it be genuine, and not an affected smile and acting a part."*
>
> Marcus Aurelius, Meditations 11.18 (tr. Long)

Pick a calm, sober moment. Describe, do not diagnose. Say how it affects you, keep it short, and expect that they may not agree the first time. You may need to have this conversation more than once.

Before I start

- [ ] They are sober and not hungover
- [ ] We are somewhere private and calm
- [ ] I am calm enough to listen
- [ ] I have information about support ready

What I have seen - specific, factual

"You fell asleep at the table three times this week." Not "you're an alcoholic".

How it affects me

"I feel frightened when..."

What I am asking for

If they deny it or get angry, I will...

Afterwards, I will look after myself by...

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When I Feel Lonely

> *"Adapt thyself to the things with which thy lot has been cast: and the men among whom thou hast received thy portion, love them, but do it truly."*
>
> Marcus Aurelius, Meditations 6.39 (tr. Long)

Start small. A text counts; so does sitting in a cafe or library among other people. Fill in each box with real names and places, so that on a lonely evening you do not have to think - only choose.

When loneliness tends to hit me

Times, days, places, after certain events.

EASY CONTACT (A TEXT, A VOICE NOTE)	A CALL	SEEING SOMEONE

Places I can be around people without drinking

Cafe, library, gym, class, meeting, volunteering, a walk in the park.

A good evening on my own looks like...

A small kindness I could do for someone else this week

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Worry Time

> *"What I advise you to do is, not to be unhappy before the crisis comes; since it may be that the dangers before which you paled as if they were threatening you, will never come upon you."*

Seneca, Letters 13 (tr. Gummere)

When a worry arrives, write it down in a few words and tell yourself you will deal with it at worry time. At that time, go through the list: is it in my control? If yes, what is one action? If no, can I let it be? Later, tick the ones that actually happened.

My worry time each day: _____ Place: _____

THE WORRY, IN A FEW WORDS	IN MY CONTROL?	ONE ACTION, OR LET IT BE	DID IT HAPPEN?

Looking back: what did I notice about my worries?

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A Hard Day Ahead

> *"Let not the eyes be dry when we have lost a friend, nor let them overflow. We may weep, but we must not wail."*
>
> Seneca, Letters 63 (tr. Gummere)

Seneca did not ask people to hide their grief. He asked them to let it be felt without being swept away. Plan the day gently. It is fine for it to be sad. The aim is only that it is not also a day you drink.

The day: _____ Date: _____

What makes this day hard

A way to mark it or remember

A visit, a photo, a walk, a letter, saying their name, lighting a candle.

Who I will be with, or contact

My plan for the hardest hour

Something comforting for the evening

If grief is overwhelming, talk to your GP or a bereavement service (in the UK, Cruse Bereavement Support). Samaritans 116 123 (UK and Ireland) · 988 (US).

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My Dry January

> *"Set aside a certain number of days, during which you shall be content with the scantiest and cheapest fare, with coarse and rough dress, saying to yourself the while: "Is this the condition that I feared?""*
>
> Seneca, Letters 18 (tr. Gummere)

Seneca recommended setting aside days to practise doing without, to find out that the thing you feared is bearable. Treat the month as an experiment, not a test. Weekly notes, not a daily score.

Why I am doing this, in one honest sentence

Three things I want to find out

Getting ready

- [ ] Alcohol out of the house
- [ ] Drinks I enjoy stocked up
- [ ] Told one or two people
- [ ] First Friday planned
- [ ] First social event planned

WEEK	WHAT I NOTICED (SLEEP, MOOD, MONEY, MORNINGS)	HARDEST MOMENT	WHAT HELPED
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

February: what changed, what was hard, and what do I want now?

If you drink heavily every day, or feel shaky or unwell when you stop, speak to your GP before starting. Alcohol withdrawal can be dangerous.

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Daily Reading Notes

> *"We should follow, men say, the example of the bees, who flit about and cull the flowers that are suitable for producing honey."*
>
> Seneca, Letters 84 (tr. Gummere)

Read today's passage at stoic-sobriety.com/daily, or any Stoic text. Choose one sentence and carry it through the day, like a bee taking one flower. In the evening, note how it applied - or did not.

DAY	PASSAGE (WHO, WHERE)	THE ONE SENTENCE I AM KEEPING	HOW IT APPLIED TODAY
Mon			
Tue			
Wed			
Thu			
Fri			
Sat			
Sun			

The sentence from this week I most want to remember

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