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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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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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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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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