My first 30 days without alcohol

A flexible guide for after medical safety has been assessed

Before day one: make a safe plan

Speak with a doctor before stopping or sharply reducing if dependence or withdrawal may be involved. These weekly ideas are not a detox schedule or a prediction of how you should feel. Follow your treating team's advice.

Week one: focus on support and the basics

Arrange regular contact with someone supportive. Plan manageable meals, rest and recommended appointments. Example: "My job today is to attend my appointment and ask for help with tonight."

Weeks two and three: learn and practise

Notice situations linked with drinking. Try one coping action and build a simple routine around support. Example: when the after-work urge appears, call a recovery contact before deciding what to do.

Week four: review rather than graduate

Ask what helped and where you need more support. Look beyond the number of days: honesty, connection and safer choices matter too. Keep care and support in place. Your pace may be different, and that is worth discussing rather than judging.

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Australia: Alcohol and Other Drug Hotline 1800 250 015 (free, confidential advice). Lifeline 13 11 14 (24/7 crisis support). Call 000 if there is immediate danger or a medical emergency.

Make it personal

Write a few words. You can leave questions blank or talk them through with someone.

My medical advice, support people and contact details...

Week one: the basics I need help with...

Week two: a difficult situation and my response...

Week three: a routine I want to practise...

Week four: what helped, and my next support plan...

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Understanding my triggers

Notice the pattern and plan a different response

A trigger is information

A person, place, thought, feeling or situation may bring up an urge to drink. Noticing this gives you something to plan for. A trigger does not mean drinking is inevitable, or that you have done something wrong.

Look at what happened before the urge

Consider where you were, who was there, what you were thinking and what you needed. Keep it specific. Example: "I was alone after work, had not eaten and felt hurt by a message."

Match the response to the need

In that example, food and a call with someone supportive may be useful first steps. You might also step away from an alcohol-focused setting, postpone a difficult conversation or attend a meeting.

Plan before the next difficult moment

Write a simple if-then plan: "If I feel lonely on Friday evening, I will call Sam and use my backup support if Sam is unavailable." Review it with your counsellor or recovery contact. This exercise supports planning; it is not a test.

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Make it personal

Write a few words. You can leave questions blank or talk them through with someone.

My situation, person, place or feeling linked with drinking...

What I was thinking and what I needed...

My early signs that an urge is building...

If this happens again, my first action will be...

My support person, backup and review date...

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When my emotions feel too much

Pause, find support and choose one next step

Name what is happening gently

Try: "I feel angry," "I feel frightened," or "I am overwhelmed." You do not have to solve the feeling immediately. Put safety first and step away from an escalating situation if you can do so safely.

Try a simple grounding action

Notice your feet on the floor, name a few things you can see or hold a familiar object. Keep your eyes open if that feels better. If an exercise increases distress, stop and choose another action or contact support.

Pause before responding

Example: a message hurts and you want to send an angry reply or drink. Put the phone down, move somewhere comfortable and say: "I need a little time before I answer." A pause can make room to ask for help.

Ask what would help now

Do you need food, quieter surroundings, rest, company or professional support? Try: "I am overwhelmed. Can you talk with me?" If you feel unsafe or might harm yourself, contact crisis support; call 000 if there is immediate danger.

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Make it personal

Write a few words. You can leave questions blank or talk them through with someone.

What I am feeling, without judging it...

What was happening when the feeling grew...

One grounding action I feel comfortable trying...

My words to pause a conversation or decision...

What I need now, and who I will contact...

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Setting boundaries in recovery

Ask for what you need and decide what you can do

A boundary guides your own actions

You can explain what you need and what you will do if a situation becomes difficult. You cannot control another person's response. Keep the action realistic and within your control.

Use simple, specific words

Example: "I want to see you, but I will not stay while people pressure me to drink. If that continues, I will leave." Or: "I can talk tomorrow. I need to rest tonight."

Practise without over-explaining

Try: "That does not work for me," or "My answer is still no." Feeling guilty or uncomfortable does not automatically mean the boundary is wrong. Talk it through with a trusted person if you are unsure.

Plan for safety and support

If you fear violence, intimidation or retaliation, seek specialist safety advice before raising a boundary. Do not practise confrontation in an unsafe setting. Ask a counsellor to help you plan an appropriate next step.

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Make it personal

Write a few words. You can leave questions blank or talk them through with someone.

The situation where I need a boundary...

What I need to protect or make space for...

The words I will use...

The action I can safely take if the boundary is ignored...

Who can help me practise or plan safely?

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Rebuilding trust, one day at a time

Honesty, consistency and realistic expectations

Trust can take time

Your loved ones may feel hopeful and cautious at the same time. You can work on your actions without asking them to feel differently before they are ready. Sobriety matters, and repairing relationships may need additional work.

Make promises you can keep

Example: instead of promising "Everything will be different," say: "I will attend my appointment on Tuesday and let you know if the plan changes." Small, consistent actions are easier to assess than big promises.

Listen and take responsibility

Try: "I understand that my actions hurt you. I am working on changing them." Listen without immediately defending yourself. Taking responsibility does not mean accepting threats, humiliation or unsafe treatment.

Ask what support would help

Discuss practical expectations together when it is safe and calm. Family or couples counselling may help where appropriate and safe. Respect another person's boundaries; they may need distance, and reconciliation cannot be guaranteed.

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Make it personal

Write a few words. You can leave questions blank or talk them through with someone.

An action I need to take responsibility for...

What I can acknowledge without defending myself...

One realistic commitment I can follow through on...

A boundary or concern my loved one has expressed...

Support we may need, and my next action...

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When motivation fades

A smaller plan can keep you connected

Notice the change without shaming yourself

There may be days when meetings, appointments or recovery work feel like too much. Ask what is getting in the way: tiredness, low mood, transport, cost, conflict or feeling disconnected. The answer can help you adjust the plan.

Shrink the next step

Example: you keep putting off contacting your counsellor. Your first step could be one message: "I am struggling to stay connected. Can we work out a manageable plan?" You do not have to fix everything before reaching out.

Use support rather than waiting to feel ready

Arrange a reminder, ask someone to accompany you or choose an accessible support option. Agree on what is realistic with your support team. Recovery actions can sometimes begin before enthusiasm returns.

Take persistent changes seriously

If low mood, exhaustion or loss of interest continues, speak with a health professional. Ask for help with practical barriers too. If you are withdrawing from support or urges are growing, let someone know promptly.

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Make it personal

Write a few words. You can leave questions blank or talk them through with someone.

What feels harder than it used to...

The barrier I most need help with...

My smallest useful action today...

Who I will tell, and the message I can send...

How we will review this plan and when...

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Life after the 12-week programme

My plan for continuing recovery and asking for help

Finishing is a transition

Completing a programme does not mean you need to manage everything alone. Use this worksheet with your counsellor or recovery coach to agree on ongoing support before your final session.

Keep what works in your week

Identify the appointments, meetings, routines and relationships that help you. Example: "Wednesday is my support meeting, and I will arrange a regular check-in." Choose a plan that fits your access, finances and needs.

Know your early warning signs

You might notice avoiding contact, hiding how you feel or spending more time in settings linked with drinking. Your signs are personal. Decide who you will tell and how you will increase support if they appear.

Build a life and review the plan

Make space for rest, enjoyment and manageable goals as well as recovery support. Review your plan when circumstances change. If you drink again, seek support promptly and consider medical safety before suddenly stopping or cutting down.

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Make it personal

Write a few words. You can leave questions blank or talk them through with someone.

My ongoing support, contact details and appointments...

My weekly routine: recovery, rest and enjoyment...

My personal warning signs and the action I will take...

If I struggle or drink again: who I will contact...

My next goal and review date with my support person...

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Recognising progress

Look beyond the number of days

Notice the everyday changes

Progress can include asking for help sooner, being more honest, keeping a commitment or pausing before reacting. Some changes are small enough to miss unless you look for them.

Compare with your own starting point

Example: a difficult conversation still feels uncomfortable, but this time you call someone instead of drinking. The discomfort is real, and so is the different choice. Another person's milestones do not set your pace.

Be honest about what is still difficult

Sleep, mood, confidence and relationships may not improve together or straight away. You do not need to report benefits you have not felt. Ongoing difficulties deserve attention and appropriate support.

Use progress to guide your next step

Write one example you feel proud of and one area where you need help. Recognising progress can sit alongside continued recovery work. Keep the supports that helped you get here.

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Make it personal

Write a few words. You can leave questions blank or talk them through with someone.

One choice I make differently now...

A recent example of honesty or asking for help...

Something I have noticed in my everyday life...

What is still difficult, and support I need...

One next step and one achievement I want to acknowledge...

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Shame, guilt and self-kindness

Take responsibility without writing yourself off

Separate an action from your identity

"I did something I regret" is different from "I am a bad person." You can take harm seriously and still recognise your worth. Labels that condemn your whole self can make asking for help harder.

Use a kinder and honest sentence

Example: after missing an appointment, try: "I missed something important. I can contact them and make a new plan." Kindness does not remove responsibility; it can help you take the next constructive action.

Think about repair with support

Ask what you can change, apologise for or put right safely. Do not rush into contacting people when it could cause further harm or breach a boundary. A counsellor or trusted recovery guide can help you decide how to proceed.

Bring shame into a safe conversation

Try: "I feel ashamed and I have been avoiding talking about it." Share at your own pace with someone trustworthy. If reflection becomes overwhelming, pause and seek support rather than forcing yourself to continue.

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Make it personal

Write a few words. You can leave questions blank or talk them through with someone.

The action or situation I regret...

The harsh judgement I have been making about myself...

A kinder sentence that still takes responsibility...

A safe repair or change to discuss with support...

Who I can speak honestly with, and when...

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Getting ready to ask for help

You do not need the perfect words

Start with what worries you

You can ask for help without knowing what treatment you need. Example: "I am worried about my drinking. I have tried to change it and I would like support." Write a few notes if speaking feels difficult.

Bring the information that helps

Tell a GP or treating clinician about your drinking pattern, last drink, previous withdrawal, other substances, medicines and health concerns. Be honest about symptoms and safety worries so they can assess what care is appropriate.

Ask practical questions

Try: "What are my options?", "How do I change my drinking safely?", "What will this cost?" and "Who can help while I wait?" Ask for written next steps or bring a trusted person if you would like support.

Make the first contact manageable

Choose a service and a time to call or book. If the first option cannot help, ask where to try next. You deserve respectful care. Do not wait for an appointment if there is immediate danger or a medical emergency; call 000.

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Make it personal

Write a few words. You can leave questions blank or talk them through with someone.

What I am worried about and want help with...

My drinking, withdrawal history and health details to share...

Questions about safety, options, access and costs...

The person or service I will contact and when...

What I will do if unavailable, and support while I wait...

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