My relationship with alcohol

A gentle place to start

You do not have to wait for things to get worse

You do not need to choose a label or compare your drinking with anyone else to ask for help. If alcohol is taking more than it gives, that is enough reason to look at what is happening.

Notice the pattern

Think about when you drink, what you hope it will do for you, and how you feel afterwards. Be curious rather than critical. This is a reflection exercise, not a test or diagnosis.

Look beyond the money

Consider your time, relationships, energy, commitments and how you feel about yourself. You can still be working and caring for others while struggling with alcohol.

Choose one next step

Talk honestly with a GP, counsellor or alcohol support service. You can say: "I am worried about my drinking and I would like help understanding my options."

Before you change your drinking

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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.

What do I hope alcohol will give me?

What actually happens when I drink?

What is alcohol costing me beyond money?

What would I like more of in my life?

Who could I talk to, and when will I contact them?

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Safety and support sources: healthdirect.gov.au/alcoholism; adf.org.au/insights/safely-withdrawing-alcohol/; lifeline.org.au/131114; medicarementalhealth.gov.au/provider/national-alcohol-and-other-drug-hotline-16469. Checked 1 October 2026.

My craving plan

Something to reach for when the urge feels strong

An urge is a signal to use support

A craving can feel convincing. You do not have to make a decision about your whole future in that moment. Focus on your next safe action. These ideas are for cravings, not for treating withdrawal.

Pause and change the situation

If it is safe, step away from the place, person or activity linked with drinking. Set a short timer and postpone acting on the urge while you contact support. Repeat if needed; there is no fixed time a craving must last.

Check what you need

Ask: Am I hungry, upset, lonely or tired? Would food, water, rest, a quieter space or company help? Try a simple activity such as a shower, a short walk or noticing five things around you.

Connect before the urge grows

Call a trusted person, recovery contact or support service. Try: "I am having an urge to drink. Can you stay on the phone while I work through it?" If one person is unavailable, use your backup contact.

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Make it personal

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My common triggers or risky times are...

My first safe action will be...

Two activities I can try are...

My first support person and phone number...

My backup person or service and phone number...

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My recovery support plan

Small steps, steady support

Build a plan that fits your life

Recovery does not have to look the same for everyone. A useful plan includes people, practical actions and professional care where needed. Keep it realistic enough to use on a difficult day.

Make room for the basics

Plan regular food, rest and time with supportive people. Choose one manageable action each day. Rest can be part of recovery; you do not have to fill every hour to prove you are doing enough.

Plan for the difficult moments

Identify times when drinking feels more likely. Arrange support before those times, consider safer places to spend time, and decide how you will leave an uncomfortable situation.

Keep checking in

Support might include counselling, peer meetings, a GP and treatment recommended by a clinician. Review your plan when life changes. If you start pulling away from support, tell someone rather than waiting for a crisis.

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Make it personal

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My reasons for making a change...

My minimum daily plan: one action and one connection...

My professional or peer support, with appointment details...

My early warning signs and what I will do...

My next review date and who will help me review it...

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Getting through a hard day

You can have a difficult day and still be moving forward

Start where you are

Feeling overwhelmed does not erase your progress. You do not have to solve every problem today. Start with what will help you feel safer and more supported in the next hour.

Bring the pressure down

Sit somewhere you feel safe. Notice your feet on the floor and a few things you can see or hear. If a grounding exercise feels uncomfortable, stop and choose another activity. Food, water, a shower or quiet company may help.

Separate a feeling from a judgement

"I feel ashamed" is different from "I am a failure." Try speaking to yourself as you would speak to someone you care about: "This is hard. I can ask for help. I can take one useful step."

Reach out with a simple message

You do not need a perfect explanation. Try: "Today is a hard day and I am struggling. Can we talk?" If you feel unsafe or are thinking about harming yourself, use the urgent support contacts below.

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Make it personal

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

Right now I am feeling...

What I need in the next hour...

One thing I can put down or postpone today...

A kind and believable thing I can say to myself...

Who I will contact and my next small action...

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Supporting someone you love

Care, boundaries and support for you too

You matter in this too

Loving someone who is struggling with alcohol can be exhausting. You can care deeply and still need support, rest and boundaries. You cannot make another person recover by finding the perfect words.

Choose a calm, safe time

If it is safe, talk when the person is sober and you both have space. Use specific observations: "I am worried because..." followed by "Would you be willing to speak with someone?" Avoid arguments while they are intoxicated.

Offer a practical kind of help

You might help find a service, attend an appointment if invited, or listen without trying to solve everything. Ask what would be useful. You can offer support without covering up harmful behaviour or taking responsibility for their choices.

Set a boundary you can act on

A boundary describes what you will do: "If shouting starts, I will end the conversation and go somewhere safe." If you fear violence or retaliation, seek specialist safety advice before raising boundaries. Children should not be responsible for monitoring drinking.

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Make it personal

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

What I have noticed and what worries me...

What I would like to say in a calm conversation...

Support I can realistically offer...

A boundary I need and the action I can safely take...

Support for me, and who I will contact...

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If you have drunk again

A caring plan for your next step

You still deserve help

Drinking again does not wipe out what you have learned. It is a reason to reconnect with support and look at what needs to change. You do not have to wait until things get worse or hide because you feel ashamed.

Put immediate safety first

Do not drive after drinking. Arrange safe transport and support. If someone is unresponsive, breathing slowly or irregularly, or having a seizure, call 000. Do not assume they can sleep it off.

Tell someone and arrange care

Contact a trusted person or recovery professional. Try: "I have drunk again and I need help with my next step." If dependence or withdrawal may be involved, get medical advice before suddenly stopping or cutting down.

Review with curiosity, then change the plan

When you are safe and clear enough, look at what happened before the drink. Was there stress, isolation, a risky situation or a gap in support? Use what you notice to make one practical change with your support team.

Before you change your drinking

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Make it personal

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

Who I will tell and how I will contact them...

My immediate safety or medical needs...

What was happening before I drank?

What support was missing or hard to use?

One change I will make and my next support appointment...

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