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.

Before you change your drinking

If you drink heavily or regularly, need alcohol to feel steady, or have had withdrawal before, speak with a doctor before stopping or sharply reducing. Alcohol withdrawal can be life-threatening. Shaking, sweating or feeling unwell after cutting down needs prompt medical advice. Call 000 for seizures, severe confusion or hallucinations.

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.

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...

You do not have to do this alone.

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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.