

GOING FORWARD

FIRST STEPS IN CHANGING YOUR
RELATIONSHIP WITH ALCOHOL





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Acknowledgements:

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PREFACE

Welcome to **Going Forward**, your self-driven guidebook for thinking about and changing your relationship with alcohol.

The guidebook is designed to support your change efforts for six weeks and beyond. You can use it alone or with a helper.

Every two weeks we will invite you to engage in a productive compassionate dialogue with yourself through a process we call **PULSE**.

In between, you get to work on reaching your change goals that emerge through the PULSE process.



WEEKS 1-2

FOLLOWING PULSE



PULSE is a handy way of remembering five important steps:

- ▶ **Preparing** yourself for a compassionate conversation with yourself about drinking,
- ▶ **Unpacking** your own experiences with alcohol and drinking patterns so you can examine them,
- ▶ **Learning** from your experiences with alcohol and from earlier efforts to change,
- ▶ **Selecting** goals toward change from possible choices so you can have a plan for going forward, and
- ▶ **Empowering** yourself to make those changes as you go forward in the weeks ahead.

You are invited to have a thoughtful conversation with yourself in the pages that follow, to take your own pulse.

AND NOW, OVERTO YOU ...

WEEKS 1-2

PREPARE YOURSELF

The goal here is to guide yourself through a process that looks at your drinking and helps you line up any changes you want to make going forward.

Before you to get started, take a moment to prepare.

Which of the following statements comes closest to where you are at **this week**?

Put a check mark next to the statement that's closest to where you see yourself right now.

I see some good and not-so-good things about my drinking, and I'm unsure if I want to change.

I feel that I need to change my drinking and I want to start working on that.

I am already working on changing my drinking and want to keep working on it.

I have made some real changes in my drinking but things are slipping and I want to get back on track.

If these don't capture how you see your situation right now, please describe where you are at in your own words:

As you continue through the guidebook, here are some suggestions that can help you get the most out of it.

TIME

Find a time where you can give your full attention. It need only be 10 or 15 minutes. But make it time just for you to focus only on this activity.

PLACE

Find a place where you are not subject to distractions.

For most people that is a place where there are no competing demands or interfering stimulation.

Finding the right time and place that works for you is an important part of getting prepared.

FOCUS

Take a few moments to settle into the activity.

It can help to take a few calming breaths, get into a comfortable position, and make this a moment that belongs to you.

Using the guidebook is not about rushing ahead.

It's about taking time to hear yourself as you think about your drinking and what you want and need for yourself going forward.

WEEKS 1-2

UNPACK YOUR EXPERIENCE

Quality of Life

HOW AM I DOING THESE DAYS?

very well

fairly well

not so well

My **physical** quality of life

1. how well I sleep
2. how physically active I am
3. my avoidance of harmful drugs
4. how healthy my diet is
5. my overall physical health

My **social** quality of life

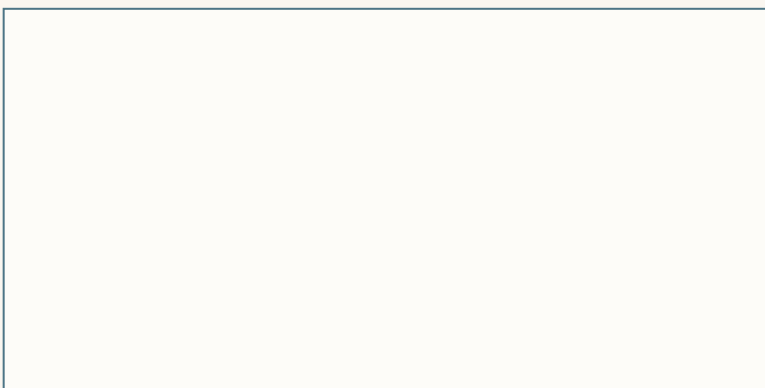
1. my family life
2. my friendships
3. how much others would help me
4. how close I feel to others
5. my overall social life

My **personal** quality of life

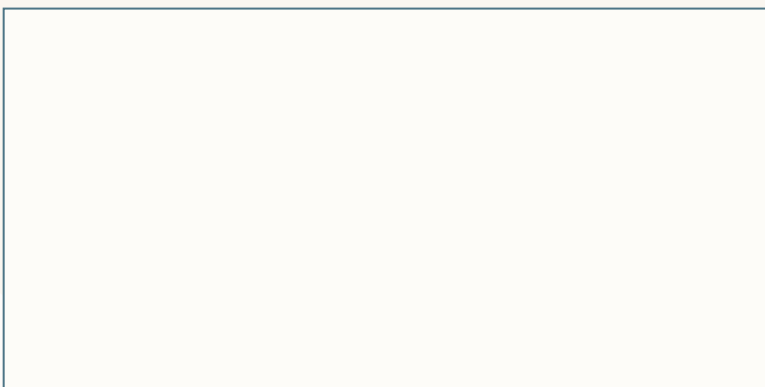
1. how I feel about myself
2. how free I am from stress
3. how free I am from sadness
4. how confident I feel
5. my overall sense of wellbeing

Strengths and Challenges

When I reflect on these and other aspects of my life, the following stand out as strengths that I can draw upon ...



When I reflect on these and other aspects of my life, the following stand out as challenges that I need to address ...

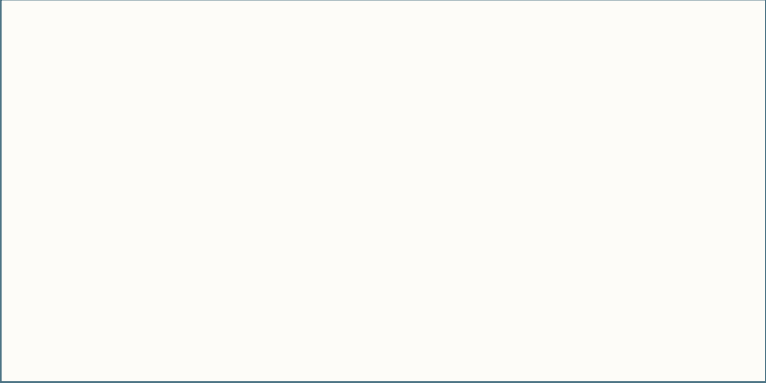




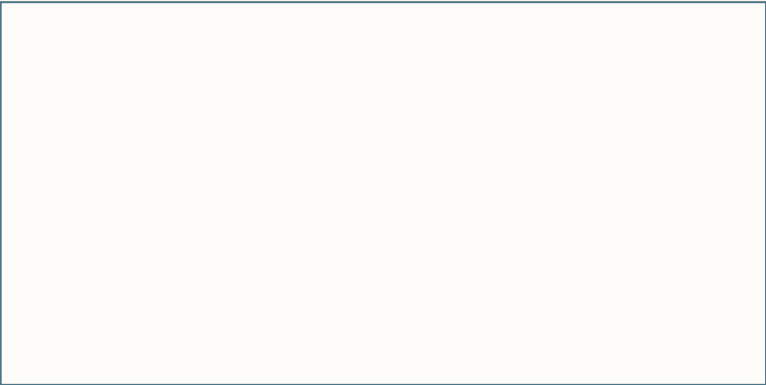
WEEKS 1-2

UNPACK YOUR EXPERIENCE

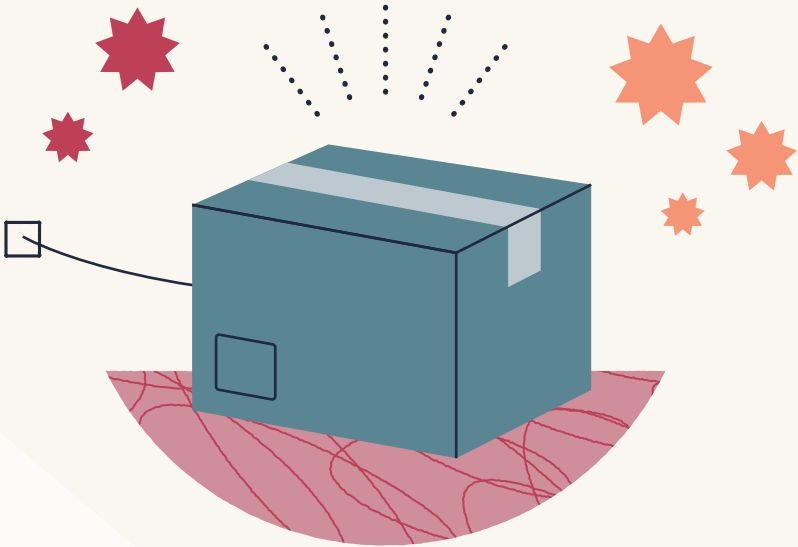
What do I like about my drinking?



What's not so good about it for me?



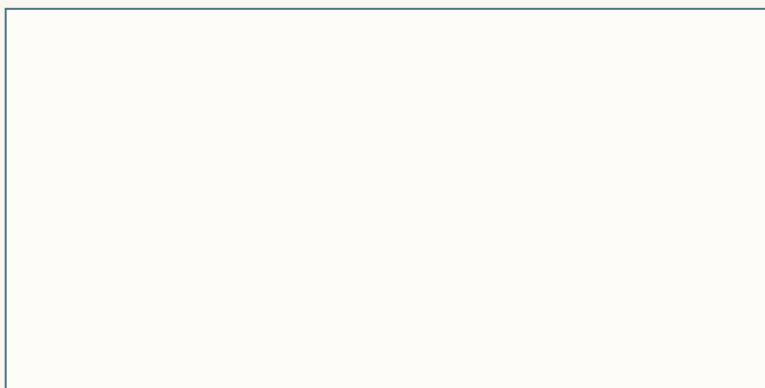
What's not so good about my drinking for other people?



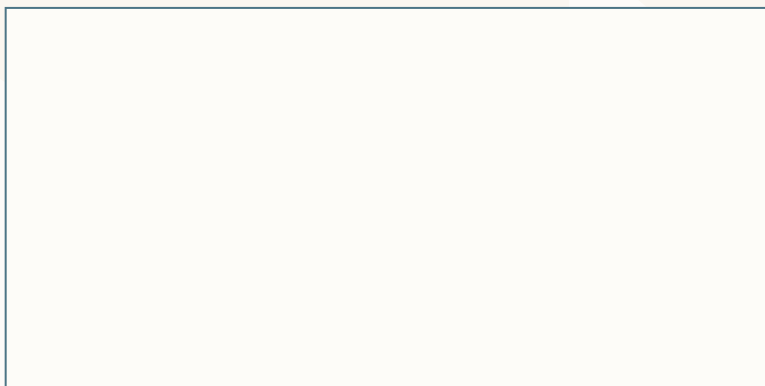
WEEKS 1-2

LEARN FROM EXPERIENCE

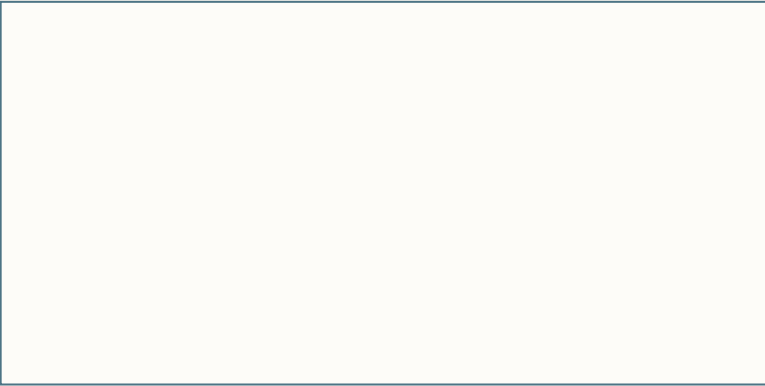
Looking back, these are the things that stand out most about my drinking experiences ...



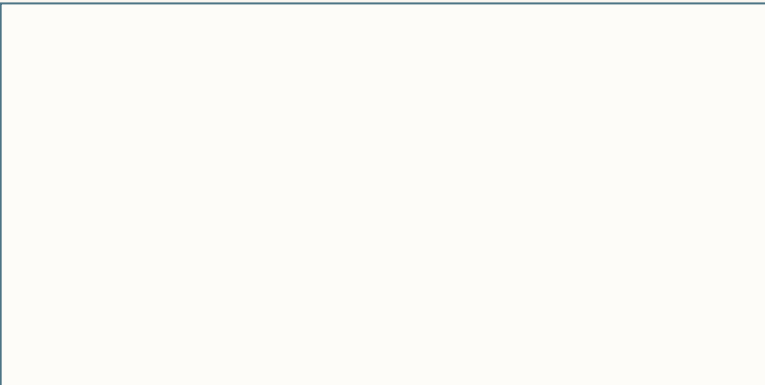
Looking ahead, what strengths can I draw on as I go forward? What supports do I have that I can draw on? Look back to page 8.



How can I handle the challenges that might get in the way of going forward?



How would I like to see my drinking change as I go forward?



WEEKS 1-2

LEARN FROM EXPERIENCE

How important is it for me to change my drinking?

Not important

Fairly Important

Very Important



I feel it's **important** because ...

How confident am I that I can start changing my drinking?

Not Confident

Fairly Confident

Very Confident



I'm feeling this **confident** because ...

How ready am I to change my drinking?

Not Ready

Fairly Ready

Very Ready



I'm feeling this **ready** because ...



WEEKS 1-2

SELECT YOUR GOALS

When it comes to my drinking over the next two weeks, these are some options that I could choose from:

- ▶ *I could keep on drinking as usual*
- ▶ *I could try drinking less often*
- ▶ *I could try drinking less each time*
- ▶ *I could try pausing my drinking for one week*
- ▶ *I could try pausing my drinking for two weeks*

- ▶ *Or I could ...*

From these, the specific goals that I'm choosing to work on for the next two weeks are to ...

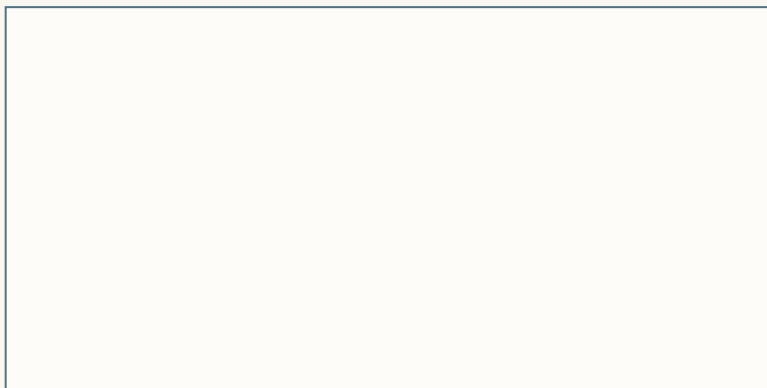




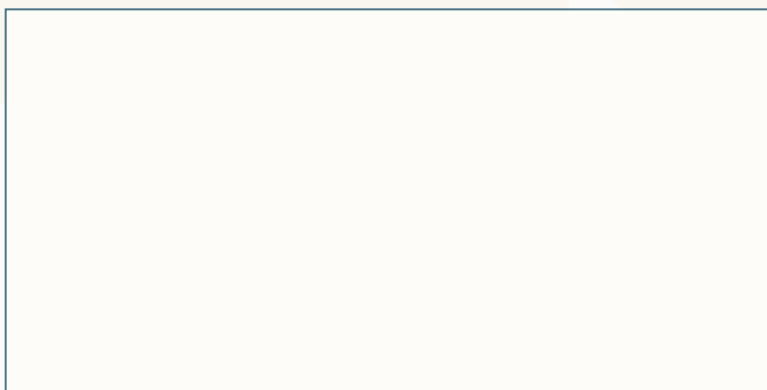
WEEKS 1-2

EMPOWER YOURSELF

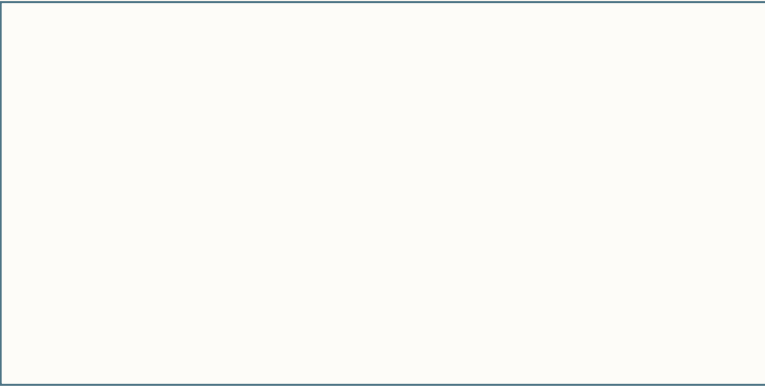
The things (feelings, thoughts, actions) I can do that will encourage me to work on my goal are ...



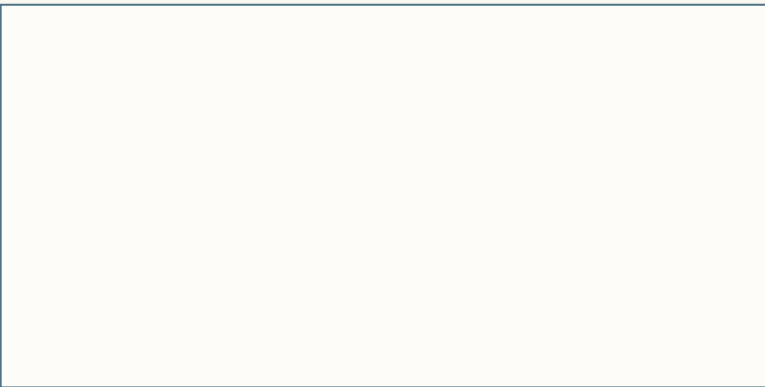
What things (feelings, thoughts, actions) would be better to discourage in myself?



What people and activities would help me reach my goals in the weeks ahead?

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to write their answer to the question above.

What people and situations would be better for me to avoid?

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to write their answer to the question above.

Now I'm going to work on my change goals for the next two weeks ...

WORKING ON CHANGE

Weeks 1-2

Record the number of drinks consumed per day*

	Week 1	Week 2
1 st Day		
2 nd Day		
3 rd Day		
4 th Day		
5 th Day		
6 th Day		
7 th Day		
Total Drinks		
Days Without Drinking		

*Think of one drink being a 5 ounce glass of wine, a 12 ounce glass of beer, or a single shot of whiskey.

WEEKS 3-4

FOLLOWING PULSE

Welcome back to **Going Forward**, your personal guidebook for changing your relationship with alcohol.

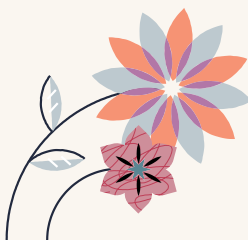
This is the second Part of the three-part guidebook. Here again, we invite you on a journey through a process we call **PULSE**.

Recall that PULSE stands for

- ▶ **Preparing** yourself for a compassionate conversation with yourself about drinking,
- ▶ **Unpacking** your own experiences with alcohol and drinking patterns so you can examine them,
- ▶ **Learning** from your experiences with alcohol and from earlier efforts to change,
- ▶ **Selecting** goals toward change from possible choices so you can have a plan for going forward, and
- ▶ **Empowering** yourself to make those changes as you go forward in the weeks ahead.

As before, you will have an opportunity to work toward the changes you choose.

AND NOW, BACK TO YOU ...



WEEKS 3-4

PREPARE YOURSELF

Again, the goal here is to guide yourself through a process that looks at your drinking and helps you line up any changes you want to make going forward.

As before, take a moment to prepare.

Which of the following statements comes closest to where you are at **this week**?

Put a check mark next to the statement that's closest to where you see yourself right now.

I see some good and not-so-good things about my drinking, and I'm unsure if I want to change.

I feel that I need to change my drinking and I want to start working on that.

I am already working on changing my drinking and want to keep working on it.

I have made some real changes in my drinking but things are slipping and I want to get back on track.

If these don't capture how you see your situation right now, please describe where you are at in your own words:

As you continue through this part of the guidebook, remember these suggestions that can help you get the most out of it.

TIME

Find a time where you can give your full attention. It need only be 10 or 15 minutes. But make it time just for you to focus only on this activity.

PLACE

Find a place where you are not subject to distractions.

For most people that is a place where there are no competing demands or interfering stimulation.

Finding the right time and place that works for you is an important part of getting prepared.

FOCUS

Take a few moments to settle into the activity.

It can help to take a few calming breaths, get into a comfortable position, and make this a moment that belongs to you.

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It's about taking time to hear yourself as you think about your drinking and what you want and need for yourself going forward.

WEEKS 3-4

UNPACK YOUR EXPERIENCE

Earlier (page 15) I had chosen the following as my change goal for the last two weeks:

How did my efforts work out? On a scale of one to five, I'd say I was:

Not Successful



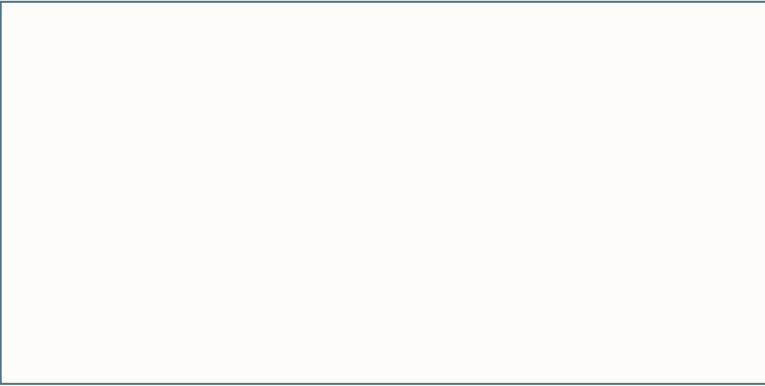
Fairly Successful



Very Successful



What examples stand out for me of when my efforts to change worked well? What can I learn from these?



What examples stand out for me of when my efforts to change did not work so well? What can I learn from these?



WEEKS 3-4

UNPACK YOUR EXPERIENCE

Drinking Patterns (AUDIT-C)

How often did I have a drink containing alcohol in the past year?*

Never	0
Monthly or less	1
Two to four times a month	2
Two to three times a week	3
Four or more times a week	4

How many drinks did I have on a typical day when I was drinking in the past year?*

None	0
1 or 2	0
3 or 4	1
5 or 6	2
7 to 9	3
10 or more	4



Think of one drink being a 5 ounce glass of wine, a 12 ounce glass of beer, or a single shot of spirits.

How often did you have six or more drinks on one occasion in the past year?

Never	0
Less than monthly	1
Monthly	2
Weekly	3
Daily or almost daily	4

Total Score

WHAT DOES MY SCORE MEAN?

The AUDIT-C questions, taken together, suggest whether you have a **hazardous drinking pattern**. In other words, it indicates if there is a high risk of your drinking threatening your health and safety. ¹

For men, a total AUDIT-C score of 4 or more indicates high risk; for women, a total score of 3 or more indicates high risk. If your drinking pattern is high risk, then we strongly urge you to decrease your drinking by a lot or stop drinking altogether.

Also, remember that there's no such thing as risk free drinking. The more you drink and the more frequently you drink, the more you are at risk for injuries or premature death from preventable diseases, such as stroke, heart disease and cancers.

DOES BEING FEMALE MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Yes. While the risks for men increase substantially with every additional drink on average, the increases in risk for women are even greater. For example, the risk of death among women before age 70 from breast cancer rises dramatically with each additional drink.

HOW DO I COMPARE WITH OTHERS?

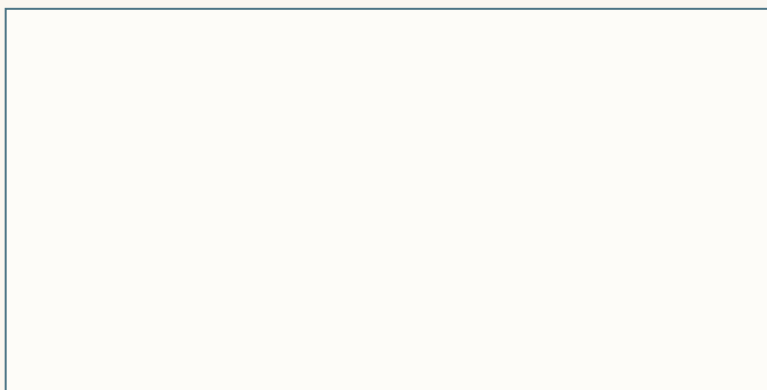
In Canada (2023), the risk levels among men from *average weekly drinks** are about: 50% no risk (0 drinks), 15% low (1-2 drinks), 16% moderate (3-6 drinks), and 19% high (7+ drinks). Among women, the risk levels are: 59% no risk (0 drinks), 15% low (1-2 drinks), 15% moderate (3-6 drinks), and 11% high (7+ drinks). ²



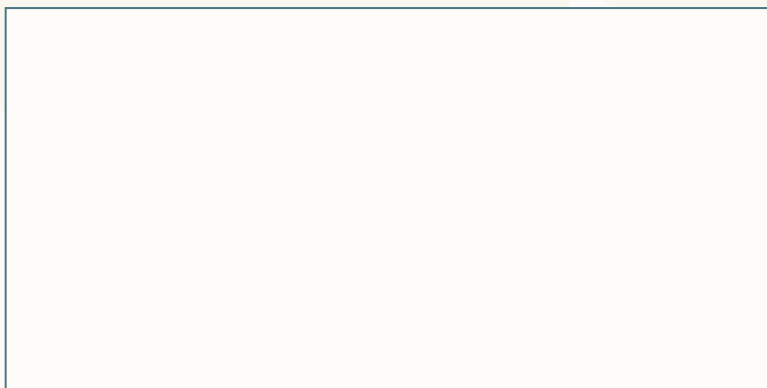
WEEKS 3-4

LEARN FROM EXPERIENCE

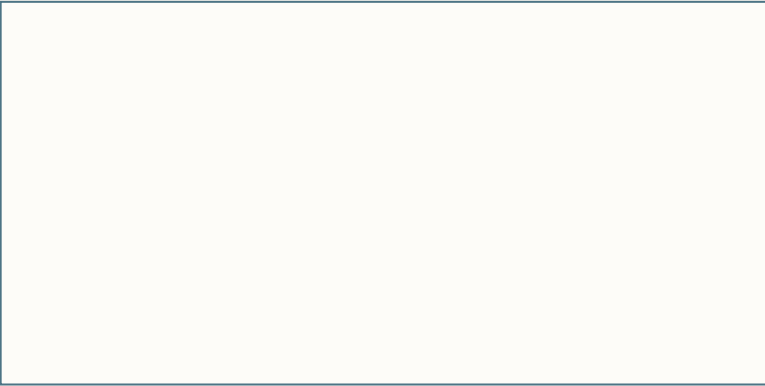
Earlier I identify some strengths and supports in my life. I now see those as including ...



*Looking ahead, what strengths can I draw on as I go forward?
What supports do I have that I can draw on?*



How can I handle the challenges that might get in the way of going forward?

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How would I like to see my drinking change as I go forward from today?

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WEEKS 3-4

LEARN FROM EXPERIENCE

How important is it for me to keep working on the changes to my drinking?

Not important

Fairly Important

Very Important



I feel it's **important** because ...

How confident am I that I can keep working on the changes to my drinking?

Not Confident

Fairly Confident

Very Confident



I'm feeling this **confident** because ...

How ready am I to keep working on changes my drinking?

Not Ready

Fairly Ready

Very Ready



I'm feeling this **ready** because ...



WEEKS 3-4

SELECT YOUR GOALS

When it comes to my drinking over the next two weeks, these are some options that I could choose from:

- ▶ *I could keep on drinking as usual*
- ▶ *I could try drinking less often*
- ▶ *I could try drinking less each time*
- ▶ *I could try pausing my drinking for one week*
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- ▶ *Or I could ...*

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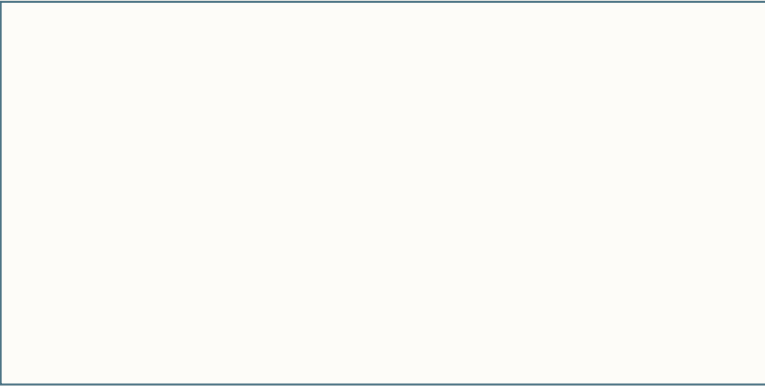
WEEKS 3-4

EMPOWER YOURSELF

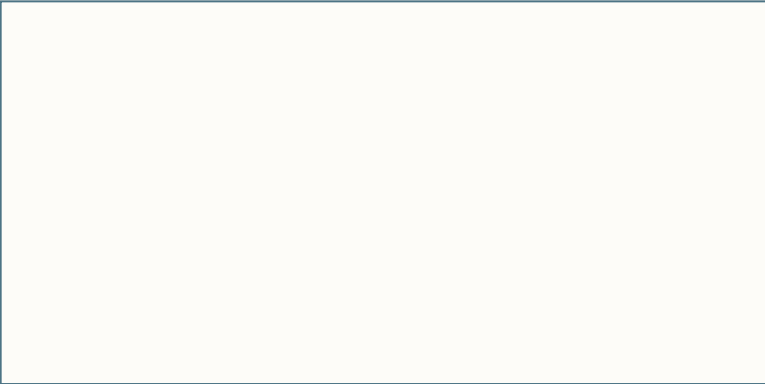
The things (feelings, thoughts, actions) I can do that will encourage me to work on my goal are ...

What things (feelings, thoughts, actions) would it be better to discourage in myself?

What people and activities would help me reach my goals in the weeks ahead?



What people and situations would it be better to avoid?



Now I'm going to work on my change goals for another two weeks ...

WORKING ON CHANGE

Weeks 3-4

Record the number of drinks consumed per day*

	Week 3	Week 4
1 st Day		
2 nd Day		
3 rd Day		
4 th Day		
5 th Day		
6 th Day		
7 th Day		
Total Drinks		
Days Without Drinking		

*Think of one drink being a 5 ounce glass of wine, a 12 ounce glass of beer, or a single shot of whiskey.

WEEKS 5-6

FOLLOWING PULSE

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Recall that PULSE stands for

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- ▶ **Learning** from your experiences with alcohol and from earlier efforts to change,
- ▶ **Selecting** goals toward change from possible choices so you can have a plan for going forward, and
- ▶ **Empowering** yourself to make those changes as you go forward in the weeks ahead.

As before, you will have an opportunity to work toward the changes you choose.

AND NOW, BACK TO YOU ...



WEEKS 5-6

PREPARE YOURSELF

Again, the goal here is to guide yourself through a process that looks at your drinking and helps you line up any changes you want to make going forward. As before, take a moment to prepare.

Which of the following statements comes closest to where you are at **this week**?

Put a check mark next to the statement that's closest to where you see yourself right now.

I see some good and not-so-good things about my drinking, and I'm unsure if I want to change.

I feel that I need to change my drinking and I want to start working on that.

I am already working on changing my drinking and want to keep working on it.

I have made some real changes in my drinking but things are slipping and I want to get back on track.

If these don't capture how you see your situation right now, please describe where you are at in your own words:

As you continue through this last part guidebook, recall these suggestions that can help you get the most out of it.

TIME

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PLACE

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FOCUS

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It can help to take a few calming breaths, get into a comfortable position, and make this a moment that belongs to you.

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WEEKS 5-6

UNPACK YOUR EXPERIENCE

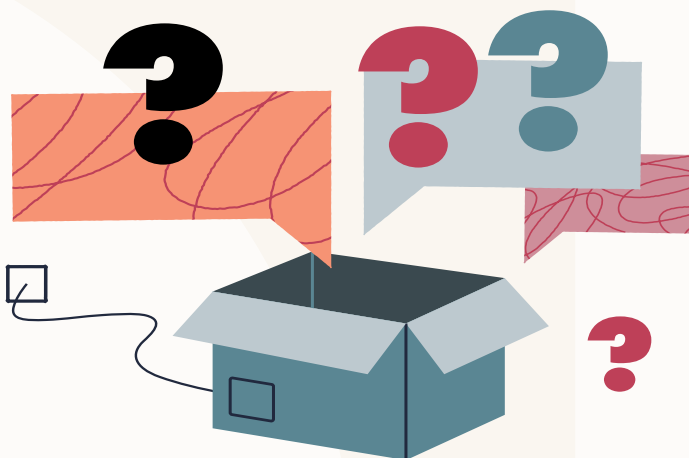
Earlier (page 31) I had chosen the following as my change goal for the last two weeks:

How did my efforts work out? On a scale of one to five, I'd say I was:

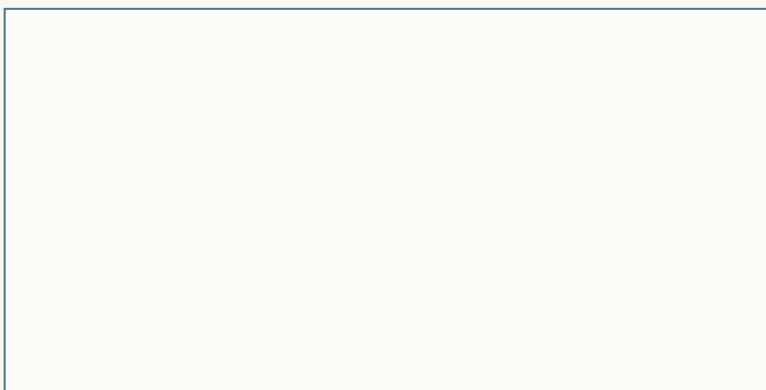
Not Successful

Fairly Successful

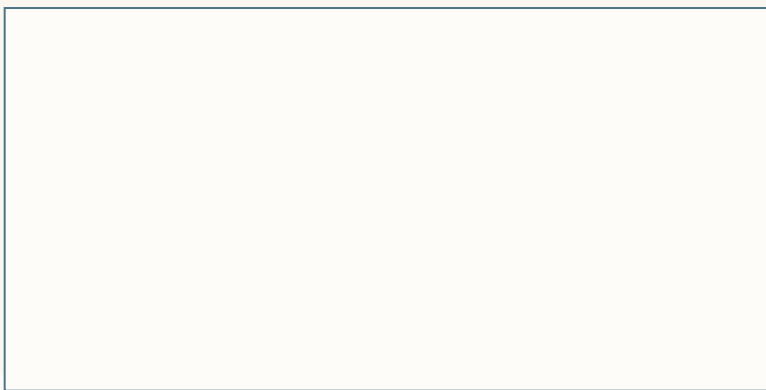
Very Successful



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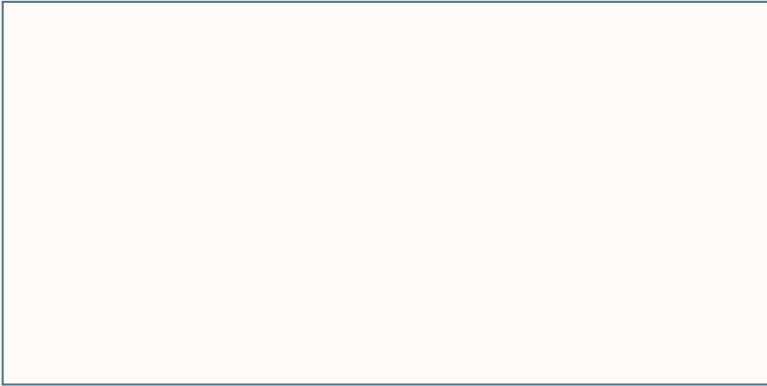




WEEKS 5-6

UNPACK YOUR EXPERIENCE

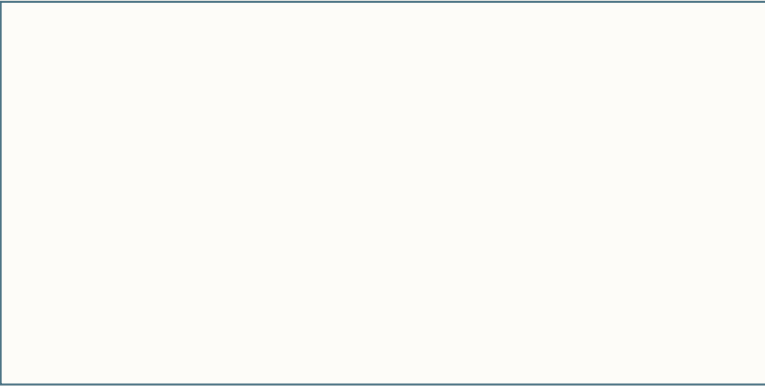
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I now see those as including ...*



*Looking ahead, what strengths can I draw on as I go forward?
What supports do I have that I can draw on?*



How can I handle the challenges that might get in the way of going forward?



How would I like to see my drinking change as I go forward from today?



WEEKS 5-6

LEARN FROM EXPERIENCE

How important is it for me to keep working on the changes I'm making to my drinking?

Not important

Fairly Important

Very Important



I feel it's **important** because ...

How confident am I that I can keep working on the changes I'm making to my drinking?

Not Confident

Fairly Confident

Very Confident



I'm feeling this **confident** because ...

How ready am I to keep working on changes to my drinking?

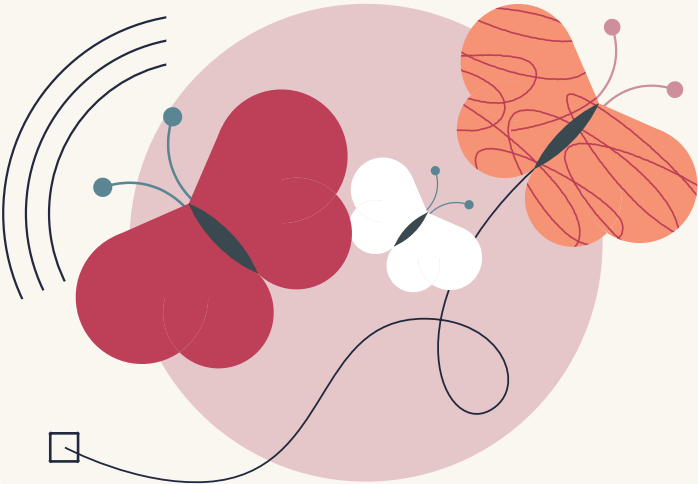
Not Ready

Fairly Ready

Very Ready



I'm feeling this **ready** because ...



WEEKS 5-6

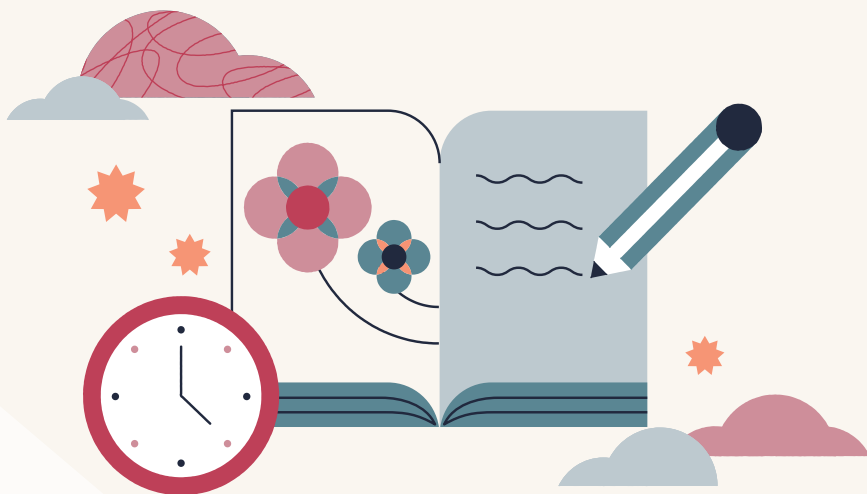
SELECT YOUR GOALS

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- ▶ *I could try pausing my drinking for two weeks*

- ▶ *Or I could ...*

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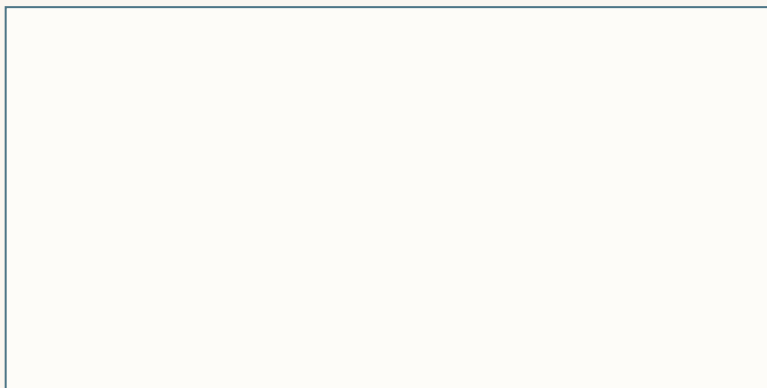
WEEKS 5-6

EMPOWER YOURSELF

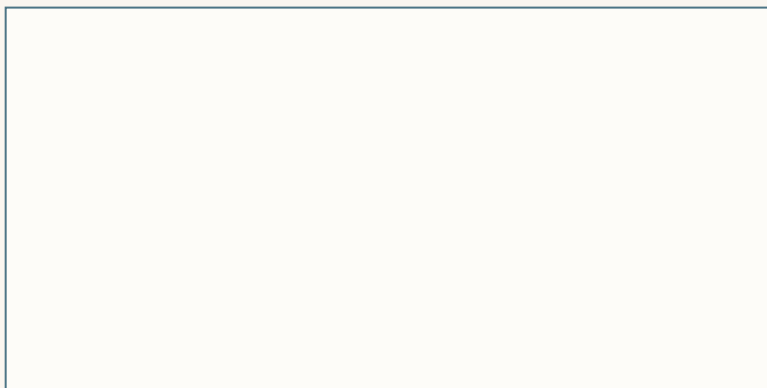
The things (feelings, thoughts, actions) I can do that will encourage me to work on my goal are ...

What things (feelings, thoughts, actions) would it be better to discourage in myself?

What people and activities would help me reach my goals in the weeks ahead?



What people and situations would it be better to avoid as I go forward?



I'm going to keep working on my change goals for another two weeks and beyond ...

WORKING ON CHANGE

Weeks 5-6

Record the number of drinks consumed per day*

	Week 5	Week 6
1 st Day		
2 nd Day		
3 rd Day		
4 th Day		
5 th Day		
6 th Day		
7 th Day		
Total Drinks		
Days Without Drinking		

*Think of one drink being a 5 ounce glass of wine, a 12 ounce glass of beer, or a single shot of whiskey.

GOING FORWARD

**Congratulations on reaching the end of the guidebook!
Take a moment to reflect on the journey here.**

What were the ups and downs?

What has this process reinforced for me?

What new things have I learned?

Was it easier or harder than I expected?

What should I do now?

You might want to keep working on your goals by returning to the start of the guidebook. You can keep using the guidebook over and over if you find it helpful.

Your challenge now is to really build the changes you've made into your life going forward. Accomplishing something hard makes us want to keep building on it.

If you concentrate on building on the changes you've made for another three or more months, you are most likely to maintain your changes in the longer term.

This is not the ending of your journey. It's the beginning of a pathway—paved with your choices—down which you have now taken the first brave steps.

Thanks for letting us walk along with you as you work toward a healthier, more satisfying life.

WORKING ON CHANGE

Future Weeks

Record the number of drinks consumed per day*

	Week A	Week B
1 st Day		
2 nd Day		
3 rd Day		
4 th Day		
5 th Day		
6 th Day		
7 th Day		
Total Drinks		
Days Without Drinking		

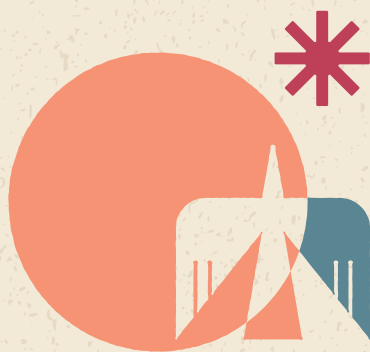
*Think of one drink being a 5 ounce glass of wine, a 12 ounce glass of beer, or a single shot of whiskey.

SUMMARY

NOTES

1. Bush K, Kivlahan DR, McDonell MB, Fihn SD, Bradley KA. (1998). *The AUDIT alcohol consumption questions (AUDIT-C): an effective brief screening test for problem drinking. Ambulatory Care Quality Improvement Project (ACQUIP). Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test. Arch Intern Med. Sep 14;158(16):1789-95.*

2. Statistics Canada. (2023). *Canadian Community Health Survey.*



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