

How to Find Help with Controlling Your Alcohol Intake

This information sheet is intended as a guide. It is not exhaustive, just a review of the help-sources that I am aware of, with a brief commentary. I hope you will find it useful.

AA – Alcoholics Anonymous

- Founded in 1935, AA has grown to become a global fellowship.
- Without doubt the best-known method, and much of what people believe about alcoholism comes from the principles of AA.
- Very accessible, with in-person meetings in most towns, as well as on-line meetings. Free to attend (although donations are requested to cover costs)
- Has helped millions of people around the world to become, and stay, sober
- However, some people don't get on with AA, often because they are asked to identify as an alcoholic and to assume a degree of culpability for their defective or weak character. It is an underlying principle of AA that there is something wrong with the person
- Emphasis on God isn't universal – often 'Higher Power'
- Implies powerlessness for the individual – Step 2
- Based on the 12-steps, which are set out below:

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol — that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Rehabilitation Clinics

Rehab clinics can be very effective, particularly if the patient has chosen to go there, of their own free will. However, the vast majority of rehab clinics are run along 12-step principles, so if AA doesn't appeal or hasn't worked for you in the past, this may not be for you. Other factors to take into consideration are:

- The clinic gives people the chance to string together a period of alcohol-free days/weeks, by virtue of the fact that there is no alcohol available. But of course, alcohol is all around us in the 'real world' and people can find it very difficult to stay off the booze when they come home.
- Rehab Clinics offer very intense levels of therapy, with a mix of group sessions and one-on-one sessions with psychiatrists – some people find that this is too much, whilst others come to rely on this level of support and find it difficult when it is no longer available to them
- For many people it is simply not practical to be away from home for a month or more
- Rehab clinics can be very expensive – with many charging over £1,000 a day.

Hypnotherapy

Hypnotherapy uses hypnosis to try to treat conditions or change habits.

There are different types of hypnotherapy, and different ways of hypnotising someone.

First, you'll usually have a talk with your therapist to discuss what you hope to achieve and agree what methods your therapist will use.

After this, the hypnotherapist may:

- lead you into a deeply relaxed state
- use your agreed methods to help you towards your goals – for example, suggesting that you do not want to carry out a certain habit

- gradually bring you out of the trance-like state – most people feel refreshed and relaxed

You're fully in control when under hypnosis and do not have to take on the therapist's suggestions if you do not want to.

If necessary, you can bring yourself out of the hypnotic state.

Hypnosis does not work if you do not want to be hypnotised.

It can be very successful in helping people to change their habits. However, we know that there are often deep, underlying reasons for people drinking (such as difficult emotions and trauma), and with these people, their drinking is more than a habit, and hypnotherapy may not be effective in the long term.

My personal view (based on personal experience and the experience of several people I have coached), is that hypnotherapy's weakness is that it does not often help the client identify the underlying reasons why they drink – and the key to lasting success is to be able to identify these reasons and reframe them, effectively re-wiring the subconscious.

In the UK, hypnotherapy is not usually available on the NHS. The NHS website gives the following advice for anyone looking for a private hypnotherapist:

"In the UK, hypnotherapists do not have to have any specific training by law.

This means hypnotherapy can be offered by people with little training who are not health professionals.

When looking for a private hypnotherapist:

- *choose someone with a healthcare background – such as a doctor, psychologist or counsellor*
- *if you have mental ill health or a serious illness (such as cancer), make sure they're trained in working with your condition*
- *if you're looking for a therapist for your child, make sure they're trained to work with children*
- *check they're registered with an organisation that's accredited by the [Professional Standards Authority](#)*

[Find a hypnotherapist through the Professional Standards Authority](#)

Speak to your Doctor

Here in the UK, there is help available through the NHS, but it is limited, and the waiting times can vary, as can what is offered. This can only be a very top-line review.

Detox Units

A small proportion of drinkers have significant physical dependency on alcohol, and are at risk of seizures if they stop drinking suddenly (go 'cold turkey'). These people need a medically supervised detox, where drugs will be administered to them by medical staff, so that they can withdraw safely. Each NHS authority has Detox Units and it is often possible for patients to be admitted to them straight away (often straight from hospital after an alcohol-related hospital admission).

Clean Slate Clinic offers at-home detox and ongoing support, but is currently only available in Australia. Due to launch soon in the UK – see <https://www.cleanslateclinic.com>

CBT – Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

CBT can be effective in helping people overcome problems with alcohol, particularly if the therapist is trauma-informed and/or has undergone specialist training in addiction.

However, the waiting lists in the NHS can be very long, and I would suggest that if you are going to pay for help, you might be better off working in a group or one-to-one with a coach who specialises in alcohol addiction.

Medications

There are two key drugs prescribed to people seeking to regain control over alcohol:

Naltrexone is a prescription-only drug – also available under the brand names ReVia, Vivitrol and Depade. This drug is an opiate-blocker and is described as 'extinguishing' the addictive software in the brain. It effectively stops patients from feeling the 'buzz'. Prescription of Naltrexone is the basis of the Sinclair Method,

and allows patients to withdraw safely – they can continue to drink whilst taking the medication, but because they experience none of the pleasures from drinking, they stop having cravings and gradually lose the desire to drink.

Antabuse – also known as Disulfiram or Disulfide – is another prescription-only drug. It works by causing very unpleasant effects if you drink any alcohol, effectively producing many of the effects of a hangover straight away. It is taken as a tablet or an implant under the skin, and can be a very effective deterrent. When you drink alcohol, the liver breaks it down and produces acetaldehyde. Antabuse blocks the enzyme which breaks down acetaldehyde. This leads to an increased level of acetaldehyde in the blood, which causes the unpleasant physical reactions. It is potentially very dangerous to drink any alcohol at all whilst taking this medication, which is why it needs to be carefully monitored.

Online Communities

There are numerous online communities where people support each other. These tend to be free, and can be very helpful. However, there is always the potential for people to offer poor advice, sometimes even dangerous advice, and not all communities have good oversight. If you are going to join an online community, you should be sure that it is being moderated well by someone who is trained and certified.

Coaching

As a certified coach, I am obviously in favour of coaching as a method, but I will be as objective as I can.

Firstly, I am in favour because it worked for me when AA hadn't worked at all, and hypnotherapy had worked for a period but not when I was facing some very difficult emotions. I did a 3-month group course with This Naked Mind. There are, of course, alternatives.

Secondly, there is clear evidence of the effectiveness of good coaching. With my own Clients, over 90% achieve and maintain their goals for at least one year, and for the vast majority, that goal is to become alcohol free. This Naked Mind (through whom I am certified, and for whom I coach alongside my private work) report similar figures. This compares to 3-5% success rates for rehab clinics. However I should point out that the methodologies, and indeed the client bases, are potentially very different, so direct comparisons are not that meaningful.

There are two broad options for coaching – group or 1:1.

When it comes to choosing who to work with, most coaching is done online, so geography is not much of an issue, provided that you can make the timezones work. Here are a list of questions you might want to ask. I have assumed you might be looking for 1:1 coaching, but the same questions are just as relevant if you are joining a group programme.

- Is the coach trained and certified? And by which organisation?
- What method of coaching do they use – most will be trained in a compassion-based approach which I believe to be the most effective method.
- Does the coach have lived experience of overcoming alcohol problems?
- Is the coach living alcohol free, and how long have they been alcohol-free? (I'm not suggesting that people need to have been alcohol free for a long time before they can be an effective coach, but if they have only been alcohol-free for a few months, you might want to look for someone who has 'been around the block' a bit more).
- How much 'content' will be shared with you (videos, worksheets etc)
- Have they got good testimonials from past clients?
- Do you get a good feeling about them from their website?
- Check out their social media feed, and their podcast / blogs /books – this will give you a really good feel for whether they would be a good fit for you.
- Do they offer a free Discovery Call?

Some supplementary questions for Group Programmes:

- How many people are in the group?
- How many people typically attend each coaching call?
- Is there the opportunity to interact with other group members through a community? And is the coach/coaches active in the community?

To find out more or to book a free, no-obligation Discovery Call with me, click [here](#)