



Cutting down on unhelpful drugs

Relevant to: Anxiety: Irritability/Anger: General emotional control: Depression:

There are lots of unhelpful drugs: heroin, cocaine, coffee (if it interferes with your sleep can be very unhelpful). The one we are going to use in the example is alcohol, simply because it causes easily the most devastation, but you can adapt it to whatever you want. So here are some suggestions borne out by scientific research ...

Know exactly what you are trying to do.

If you currently drink 7 pints of beer every night, what is your new goal? 2 pints? 1 pint? 1.5 pints?

If you currently drink two bottles of wine every night, what is your new goal? Half a bottle? One large glass? Two thirds of a bottle?

It is the old adage: *unless you know what you're trying to do, you are unlikely to do it.*



Get friends and family to help you.

It turns out that this is a very effective action to take. The responsibility is still yours, but there is no reason why you shouldn't ask others to help.

Some people make it very formal and will say to their partner each morning, something like: *Thank you for helping me to keep to my drinking goal yesterday, will you please do the same today?*

To which the partner responds: *Thank you for making an effort to reduce your drinking and yes I will do my best to help you today.*



Change the situation.

If you currently spend 2 to 3 hours in the pub every evening drinking about 7 pints of beer, then it's unlikely you can continue to spend 2 to 3 hours in the pub and just drink 1 pint. You need to go somewhere else.

If you currently sit for 2-3 hours over dinner with your partner every evening, during which time you drink two bottles of wine, it's unlikely that you can continue to spend 2-3 hours at the dinner table and only drink one glass. You need to do something else.

Discussion point: What else might the people in these examples do?



Measure the results.

If cutting back on your drinking is something you care about then it's important you record the results of your efforts. You need to make a note of how much you are currently drinking (tip: look at actual days rather than a "rough estimate of the last week"). Then you need to make a note of how much you drink each day.

Refine your plan.

Rarely does anybody get their plan spot on first time! When things go wrong, plan what you can do to avoid it going wrong again. When things go right, examine what caused that and do it again! You'll soon have a good plan that stands a great chance of working!

