

THRIVE SOBER

Hello and welcome to my eBook: THRIVE SOBER

This eBook was created to help people who are looking for a bitesize sober guide.

It's also aimed towards people who are already sober but perhaps 'stuck', to achieve the next level of sobriety.

Everything contained in this book is based purely on my own experience and will not guarantee you will get, or remain sober. You need to do that hard bit for yourself. I'm also not a trained medical professional and so if you are dependent on alcohol, whilst my book contains some good advice, you may need to seek professional help and safely detox.

If you are drinking more than you want to, or a bit too much only every now and then, I am here to support you with my wisdom from my own experience to hopefully smooth some of the process for you.

About me:

My name is Teri and I have been alcohol free since 28th April 2019. Being sober has completely changed my life for the better. I have zero regrets about quitting alcohol and I live a full, happy and present life, every single day. Yes, there are ups and downs (that's life), but I am more capable of managing my emotions and challenges, now that I am not burnt out by boozing and constant hangovers.

I used to be a classic 'Grey Area Drinker'. That means that I wasn't an alcoholic, or dependant on alcohol to function in everyday life, but I couldn't just take it or leave it. I loved drinking and it was a massive part of my identity. I drank for 27 years (since the age of 14) and stopped at 41. I had two bouts of sobriety in my 30's, but I fell straight back into drinking 4 times a week after both stints. I tried moderation for the best part of a decade but I always failed to stick to my own rules. It was exhausting. Alcohol got me into trouble in my relationships and made me lose bags, phones, money, purses, keys and my dignity. The thought of stopping drinking was absolutely terrifying and I tried everything I could to protect my relationship with wine o'clock, before finally deciding to try and stop for good. I always felt like there would be a better way to live, I was just scared to go for it. However, I have managed to completely eradicate alcohol from my life and now I cannot believe I spent so many years drinking and living with shame.

I hope that wherever you are on your journey, you get something positive from this eBook and it helps you get through the process as successfully as it did with me.

Good luck and stay in touch. It's always good to get feedback, so please feel free to DM me at [@sassysobermum](#) on Insta with your thoughts.

Lots of love

Teri

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Managing Expectations

As humans in the 21st century, we are used to getting what we want, and quickly. We are capable of ordering things from our phones, paying with a couple of quick clicks and it arriving on our doorstep the following day. We can search the internet about everything we wish to learn. We can answer our own questions instantly and we can numb our rubbish life experiences, or stress, with a big glass of wine. We are used to instant gratification.

Here is where it changes: when getting sober.

Not just putting the drink down (arguably, that's the easy bit), but actually embracing sober life. Getting 'emotionally' sober. It takes time.

You cannot short cut your way to emotional freedom in sobriety, you have to take your time and frustratingly, there is no final end date. You have to wade into the dark waters of the unknown and cross your fingers. You have to hope for the best, which is hard, because you are used to getting everything quickly. You are used to a deadline. It's not like this in sobriety.

My advice is to remove all expectations from the process. Don't look at other people on Instagram and compare your journey to theirs. Don't expect to be at a certain place in your sobriety at any particular point. Every time you place an expectation on your sober journey, be aware of it and eradicate it. Falling into the trap of having any kind of expectations is dangerous and limiting. The issue is not that you have high expectations (or any expectations), it's that if those expectations don't materialise you will probably end up disappointed and maybe close to giving up.

The best approach here, for any point of sobriety is to remain open minded. Things come and go; cravings come and go and feeling uncomfortable is something you need to start feeling ok with, all of this is normal. It is better to approach each day as a new day and not place any expectations on yourself. This is the same for the tiredness in the beginning, the sugar cravings, the low mood, the high mood that feels fake, all of it is part of the process. Just go with it and don't set yourself up for a harder time by placing expectations on yourself.

“There is no detailed timeline, only your faith in the process that you can be free”

sassysobermum

Getting into the right mindset

This is a biggie. It is probably one of the biggest areas to manage. Gaining the right mindset was fundamental to my success and what shifted me into the mindset gear, was accepting I couldn't moderate. Once I really connected with that, I knew there was never going to be any point trying to manage my drinking. I couldn't control myself once I started drinking and after ten years of trying to moderate, I was tired and fed up. I gave in. I accepted I would never drink like a 'normal' person and this acceptance shifted my mindset into the right place. It set me up for success and although I had no idea how to get sober, I knew I would do anything to achieve sobriety. I felt it. I wanted it so badly.

If you are struggling with this acceptance, ask yourself these questions (write them down and keep them if you can):

- What do you believe you are/were gaining from drinking alcohol?
- What would you gain from sobriety?
- How would your life look in 12 months if you were sober?
- List out your 'whys' (why you want to be sober)

The other interesting point around mindset is our self-talk. Our inner narrative. How do you talk about yourself either in your mind or when you are talking to others?

For example, are you someone who says things like...

'I really want to give up but I just can't get past 4 days'

'I'm struggling to even start'

'I'm scared of failing'

'I don't think I can do this, I've tried everything'

'I only seem to make it to 3 weeks and give up'

These statements are called 'limiting beliefs'. They are beliefs you have about yourself that are literally talking yourself out of success. Your brain is super clever and also a bit lazy at the same time. It will believe what you tell it. If you believe you can't succeed you are already walking yourself down the path of difficulty.

Can you start to pay attention to this talk and reframe it? So, focus on empowering statements such as:

'It might be scary but I am going to do everything in power to get past 3 weeks this time'

'I deserve a happy and sober life'

'I can and I will achieve what I want, I just haven't got there yet'

Preparation

I did some prep work in the very beginning which I believe helped me in the long run.

Here are the things I did:

- I got rid of all the alcohol in the house.
- I downloaded a sober days counting app (I chose 'I am Sober', its free, but it has in app purchases, which I didn't need).
- I bought AF beers in the very beginning, to give me a special drink to have at the weekends. It doesn't need to be AF beer though, it could be nice soft drinks, or even tea. Just try and plan having something ready for crucial occasions like weekends.
- I bought my first 'quit lit' book. I bought the Allen Carrs, 'Easyway to Stop Drinking for Women' and it was a real game changer for me. However, I have also heard similar stories from people reading This Naked Mind from Annie Grace and Quit like a Woman by Holly Whitaker. There is a long list of books on my Resources page if you need some inspo.
- I started researching podcasts using the podcast app on my phone. I searched 'sober' and 'sobriety' and started listening. I have a list of podcasts on my Resources page as well.
- I told my partner and some close friends that I was getting sober. I found it useful to be accountable.
- I followed sober accounts on Instagram and started reading posts from likeminded people.
- I joined some free sobriety groups on Facebook for the same reasons as above.
- I planned nice food and walks during my first few weeks, especially at weekends.

<https://www.sassysobermum.com/resources>

What to expect

Not going to lie, it's tough in the beginning. Some of the early days in sobriety are rocky. One minute you can be riding a massive wave of gratitude and the next minute you are crying into your hands. It's different for everyone, but the common denominator seems to be we all find it up and down, and hard and uncomfortable at some point(s).

That's normal.

If you imagine, you have been drinking quite a bit for probably a very long time and then you stop, everything you were easing with alcohol, or numbing out will surely resurface. Trust me though, that is a good thing. Learning to deal with your real emotions and feelings is crucial to long lasting sobriety and a happier way of living.

You will also feel tired in the beginning. I slept long and hard, and also felt very foggy for at least 3-4 weeks when I stopped drinking. It's what I now call 'catch up' sleep.

You may not know, but every time you have a drink of alcohol you ruin your sleep for that night because of the chemical interactions going on in your brain due to alcohol (which your brain sees as a threat).

Your brain fails to achieve the REM bit of sleep that is fundamental for proper recovery each night and this is why you don't sleep well when you drink. It also explains the 3am insomnia you get after drinking. Every time your brain experiences alcohol, it releases cortisol, a stress hormone, to combat it. It feels attacked and under threat. Each time you take a drink, it releases more cortisol. So, if you drink to relieve stress, you may not realise you are actually triggering more stress internally, which usually explains why you need to continue drinking and suppressing that feeling. Once all the alcohol has worn off and the brain released cortisol dies down, you end up suddenly feeling alert again, often at three in the morning. So, stopping drinking for a few weeks means your body learns to sleep properly again.

You may also crave sugar. I couldn't stop eating chocolate for months and months. Alcohol contains a lot of sugar and so your body is used to a high level of sugar via drinking. My advice here is to go with it. Focus mainly on eliminating the alcohol and once you are more stable in sobriety, then you can approach reducing sugar intake. I am no trained medic though so if you feel something is off or not right, please seek professional help. I'm also talking about a few months of letting the sugar go, not ten years. I don't want you to induce diabetes because of reading this advice!

The positives you feel though will hopefully outweigh the negatives. You should start to feel clearer headed, perhaps less bloated or puffy faced, your skin will look brighter, you will feel more present and you will enjoy your food more. This is just the start of it as well, it gets better and better as time goes on.

Socialising

In the beginning I didn't socialise a lot. I instinctively knew that putting myself in my usual social settings would be difficult and might derail me. I cancelled things I had in the diary and explained I was doing a health challenge and didn't want to drink alcohol. People were wary. Most people didn't like it and tended to ask a lot of questions.

The first thing I would say here is don't feel like you owe anyone an explanation. You don't. Most of my friends like to drink and whilst some of them were supportive, I could tell when people thought I was silly to be trying to stop a substance that glued us together. I over explained myself in the beginning because I was anxious and afraid my friends would ditch me. I wish I had been more confident and stronger when handling myself at first, but I also know that we grow at our own rate and some of those experiences were learning opportunities I needed at the time.

Don't put yourself under too much pressure to socialise if you are not ready. Think of it as a form of self-protection. If you want to see friends, suggest doing activities that don't involve being in a place where they readily serve alcohol. Plan a walk or a shopping trip. Play sport or meet up for coffee. There are lots of alcohol-free activities to engage in.

If you have to attend a social engagement where there is alcohol, have firm boundaries in place and take drinks with you if there are no soft drinks. Make sure you have an exit strategy in your mind and leave when it gets uncomfortable. You have the power to decide. You are in control of your life. You call the shots. Go when you are ready – you will thank yourself for it in the morning.

Self help

The biggest area (after mindset) in your continued commitment to education. Read/listen to books about sobriety and quitting alcohol, and listen to podcasts. I cannot preach enough about how important this part of the journey is. It truly got me to where I am today. I have learned so much information about alcohol and why I drank the way I did, not to mention the great comfort I found in hearing similar stories to mine.

There is so much shame wrapped up in our drinking and doing this work helps to set you free. I listened to a podcast every day for the first year and I still listen to podcasts 3-4 times a week now. It's easy to de-prioritise this work because we get busy but you must keep it up. If you aren't 'doing the work' you won't get emotionally sober, which is the key to lasting success. If you aren't learning, you will get complacent. Don't let this catch you out.

This is so important, not just for early sobriety but for all wobbles in sobriety.

Even around the one-year alcohol free mark, you can have big dips in confidence. You can question your decision to be alcohol free and this allows room for your brain try and convince you that you can probably moderate. I always advise, whenever you are feeling wobbly, ramp up the learning. Get a new book ordered or downloaded and find new podcasts to listen to.

<https://www.sassysobermum.com/resources>

Do different things

Someone I know got sober and got bored of life several months in. It turns out, they hadn't made any changes in the way they lived their life. They were still doing all the same things as they were when they were drinking. Life hadn't shifted and whilst they felt keen to remain sober, they felt flat and stuck.

They explained that when they changed some of their routine habits, things started to shift positively. For example, instead of sitting in on Friday nights, they started walking early evening. Instead of lying-in bed in the morning, they got up and did some activity first thing. Instead of drinking the same drinks, they tried new ones and ramped up their water intake. At weekends they would try to see the sunrise or watch the sun set. They started exploring new types of books to help with areas they wanted to fix, such as people pleasing and managing fear. They researched new groups online and found new ways to connect with people. They planned a night out once a month doing something they never did before like going to the cinema, trying kayaking and walking around a completely new area.

I say this again, you cannot just put down the drink and expect life to dramatically change (see, those expectations again).

You need to change. Sounds scary but it is completely possible. Some things you might like and some things won't be your bag, but try things anyway. Do life different. Don't expect change if you don't try to change what you do with your time, and being sober, you will have an awful lot of time.

Cravings

Cravings are a normal part of sobriety. I have a couple of important points to make here:

The first one is that the way you approach getting sober will really help you with this. What I mean is, you cannot rely on willpower alone to get you through. Willpower by its very definition is abstaining from something you desire. That's the problem with it, it keeps alcohol in the desirable camp and this means you always have to white knuckle cravings. That's hard.

The way to approach sobriety is to remove the desire from alcohol completely. This is what I found out when I read the Easyway book by Allen Carr, he stripped alcohol bare and helped me to see alcohol for what it really is, and not what I *think* it is.

For example, we have grown to associate alcohol with having fun and enjoying life. The two things are completely married together in society and that's what we truly believe. But it is a belief and not fact. You do not need alcohol to have fun, it's just what you have always done and it is a formed belief. To unpick this belief, you need to challenge your own thinking:

- Is it the alcohol that is really making you have fun, or is it the people, the place or the occasion?
- If you had to go to an event and you, and all your friends and family were *not* drinking, do you believe you would still have fun or not? Explore this and ask yourself why (to whatever your answer was).
- Usually, the most fun you have when drinking is in the first 20 minutes after a hit of alcohol, or the first 1-2 drinks. After that, it all tends to go downhill. So, is it the alcohol that's bringing you fun, or is it the anticipation of the drink (or the night out), or the first drink only?
- When you look back at the fun night you had drinking, identify what was really fun about it? How long did that fun really and honestly last?
- At what point did the night of fun turn into a bit of a disaster? Based on how the night ended, was the initial bit of fun worth the following cost (shame, regret, hangover and tiredness?)

We are being sold this false life of alcohol and have been for a very long time. We don't question it because we never think anything of it, its 'just what we do'. We've grown up around alcohol and most of our friends and colleague's drink. It feels like there is no other way. Not to mention, when we give up drinking people literally ask 'how will we have fun now that we don't drink? It's ingrained in society and it's the social glue that keeps us all bonded and trapped.

I often think now, if I was told the real facts about alcohol when I was younger, and had more role models of people not drinking, I would have probably avoided it. If someone

said it is a poisonous, carcinogenic liquid that will strip me of confidence, self-love and dignity, I'm not sure I would have tried it. Maybe I would, but you get my point. It's hard to stop doing something that 90% of our friends and family are doing around us most of the time.

The other point that is prudent to know is that when we drink, our brain is so used to getting alcohol that it actually learns to release chemicals to process the alcohol, before it's even been consumed. Our brain is efficient and it knows its daily or weekly dose of wine is coming and so it releases cortisol and other chemicals in advance. How clever hey?

But, when you stop the alcohol, your brain has not had the memo and doesn't know the alcohol isn't coming, and so it feels uncomfortable to not reach for that drink, as your brain is desperately waiting for it.

Cravings, in the beginning have big power. They feel horrible and strong. They feel like a 10/10 on the discomfort scale, but each time you get through one, the power fades a bit. Next time, it might be 8/10 and then it might be 6/10 and then 3/10. The power decreases and your confidence increase as you power through them successfully.

Finally, be aware of HALT. This stands for Hungry, Angry, Loneliness and Tiredness. All these things are a potential trigger. When you feel a craving coming on ask yourself if you are feeling any of these things. If you are hungry, can you have a snack? If you are angry, can you take a walk or talk it through with someone? If you are lonely, can you reach out to a friend or chat on a sober group to another person in sobriety? If you are tired, can you take a nap or take some rest for a bit?

My three best tips for managing cravings are these:

- Play it forward – what does the night look like if you cave and have that drink? Where does it end? How do you feel in the middle of the night and in the morning afterwards? Play it out in your mind like a movie scene.
- Create distraction – Do something else instead of focusing on the craving. Take a walk, run a bath, pick up a book, make dessert, listen to a podcast, do some yoga or go to bed! I used to go to bed really early on Friday nights in the beginning to help me manage my cravings and fomo.
- Assess HALT and take appropriate action.

Move your body

Exercise is such a good way to gain natural dopamine, the chemical we had large hits of when we drank alcohol. This doesn't mean you need to start running or doing one-hour intense workouts if you don't like doing those things.

Walking is a great way to start, even if it is 15 minutes a day. I always find getting out in nature is a great way of boosting my own feel-good factor and I love to stick on a podcast and listen as I walk.

Another fantastic activity is yoga. The breath work combined with stretching is magnificent at releasing tension and making you feel lifted afterwards.

Here are some activity ideas to get your blood pumping and dopamine hitting:

- Walking
- Cycling, running, tennis and any contact sports with friends
- Swimming in the sea or lake if you have one nearby – it's very exhilarating
- Yoga – there are lots of free YouTube courses, try Yoga with Adrienne
- Pilates – again, try YouTube or seek out a local class
- Paddle boarding and kayaking
- Couch to 5k running app – even for non-runners, this will get you running 5k in about 8 weeks
- Home workout – you can pick up some inexpensive home equipment like a skipping rope, dumbbells, rubber bands, kettle bell etc. Again, YouTube workouts
- Strength training course
- Plank challenge at home – 1 minute, building up to 3 and 5 minutes
- Join a local gym or training centre
- Boxing & martial arts

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCFKE7WVJfvaHW5q283SxchA>

Journaling

It's not for everyone, but writing down how you are feeling is a brilliant way of dealing with the emotional challenges in sobriety. This could be in a notebook and done daily, or only when you feel like it. There are no rules. It's just an outlet, but it helps you to identify thoughts and feelings that might unlock past issues and trauma.

Most people got into problematic drinking through some type of insecurity or trauma. Whether it was to help manage social anxiety, soothing difficult experiences, not feeling good enough or dealing with stress and mental health issues. We all have some deep reason why we drink the way we did. It's not always easy to identify these reasons, but journaling can help you find these reasons and start to unpick them.

It's also a good way to start to learn how to verbalise how you are actually feeling. I used to drink to soothe every difficult situation and when I got sober, I had to learn how to manage my emotions for the first time in my life.

I was stuck in a 14-year-olds brain and had never developed a mature way of coping with things. In my drinking days, I got angry and cried quickly when I felt frustrated, like one of my young children would do now. Writing things out helped me to process emotions and also feel grateful for any progress.

Every day for a few months, I would write out these things in the morning or at the end of the day:

- One thing I am grateful for today
- One thing I am proud of myself for today
- The best bit of my day today
- What I am looking forward to
- Who I am grateful for

It's simple, but very effective.

Boundaries

Establishing boundaries was a new strength I developed in sobriety. Being a people pleaser all my life, I have very little knowledge or practice of good boundaries. I basically said YES to everything, and then felt annoyed by it later on.

I realise now that this stems from my lack of self-worth. I suppose I felt like if I didn't say yes, people wouldn't like me. Lack of boundaries is also amplified with alcohol. I just didn't make very good decisions under the influence and my moral compass was skewed. I wasn't operating with a clear head and authenticity and this meant I accepted things, or events, that in hindsight were not the best for me.

In early sobriety I encourage people to decline social events. This is the start of putting yourself first and enforcing a protective boundary. It is a vital and often uncomfortable skill to master, but it is so rewarding when you start to choose the things that enhance your life and not hinder it.

I learned how to decline social events and meet ups with old big-drinking friends. The more I got used to saying no, the more I got better at it. If I was in a situation that was making me feel uncomfortable, I removed myself from it. I walked off or took 10 minutes to breathe. I had never done this before in my life. I used to feel like I should put up with things, even if they were making me feel bad. I learned this is not the case at all. That I can always choose to remove myself from bad or toxic situations.

It's the same with some people's reactions to my not drinking. Now I just close the conversation down with 'I don't drink'... *Why* they say? I just don't. Move on. Boundary firmly in place. It's my business and I don't owe anyone any more than that if I don't feel comfortable explaining it further.

You might find some family members or friends grill your decision to stop drinking. I encourage you to have a polite and private side chat with them, and ask for their support. Explain that its hard and it would mean a lot to you to have their backing and not their jibes. If they cannot show you this respect, pull yourself back from them for a while.

When I started to get good at establishing boundaries there was no stopping me. Now I am very in tune with what will work for me and what won't so I am quick to accept or decline invitations. It makes me feel good that I am choosing what is right for me and not based on what others expect from me. Its liberating. If you're not already doing it, try it.

Making peace with the past

If you are here, there is a very good chance you have done some embarrassing or regrettable things when drinking. I know I did more than I can probably recall. I feel like there is so much shame wrapped up in those uncomfortable memories that it's sometimes hard to accept and forgive yourself. I felt like I would never forgive myself for doing some of the things I did, or, for putting myself and others at risk with my drinking choices. I found this to be one of the harder parts of sobriety; facing the past and reviewing all the poor decisions I made.

But we all have things we wished we never did. We all look back and feel regret. I think it's part of the human experience, to feel pain and shame for the things we could have done better. Buddhism teaches that life is suffering. It believes we live in cycles of birth, life, suffering and rebirth. It says the trick is not to avoid the pain, but to learn to accept it and try to live graciously alongside it. I interpret this as adjusting 'ourselves' by changing our own perspective on things and not expecting the world to change around us, or for us. Essentially, we take responsibility for how we process events that happen.

I wanted to be able to accept and forgive myself for who I used to be when I drank alcohol. I wanted to disassociate with the behaviour I was embarrassed about and learn to accept it, and move on with my life. One of the ways I started to achieve this freedom from my past was to accept what it was and not try to change it. I accepted that I made poor choices under the influence of alcohol, but I cut myself some slack, as alcohol is an addictive drug and it literally alters our behaviour. It's designed to change our state, that's its job.

The other way I let go is I spoke openly to people about my drinking. I shared my vulnerability about how drinking was for me and how it made me feel. I talked about why I think I drank the way I did and what I was trying to escape from. Sometimes I would be brief, depending on the company, but with people I really trusted, I was an open book.

I apologised to myself for drinking and I apologised to people that I hurt with my drinking. This act of facing my past, accepting it but not letting it define who I am (putting it into perspective essentially) helped me to grow some self-compassion. I forgave myself for the things I regret. I allowed space in my mind and in my heart to separate the alcohol induced behaviour and the person I really am deep down. My authentic self.

If you could apologise to someone for past mistakes when drinking, who would it be? What would you say? How would it make you feel afterwards?

You don't need to actually approach this person physically if you don't want to, you could write them an apology on paper, fold it and put it away. Just the act of saying sorry with your heart can be enough to help free you from the chains of the past.

"I am a good person that got trapped in a bad cycle, I am not a bad person."

Sassysobermum

Managing setbacks

This section is about managing the 'blips in the road' of sobriety. Of course, everyone would love to think about getting sober, get sober and stay sober-ever-after, but sometimes this isn't our story. Sometimes we fall off the wagon, or think we can magically moderate, and start drinking again.

Most of the time, (at some point), we regret the decision to re-start drinking. We realise moderation is as elusive as it ever was (i.e., non-existent to most people) and we hanker for our sober success again. This could happen in a space of a few weeks, or as it was in my case, it could take years to get back on the wagon.

Some people might only fall off the wagon once, others might do it every couple of months, or have multiple day ones.

It can be a source of frustration and shame. Why can't you just be like everyone who is succeeding on sober Instagram, you might think, but that is because you are YOU and not them. You have your own learning to do and sometimes stopping and starting drinking is just part of your bigger picture.

Part of handling slip ups or 'blips' is about how you view them. I often hear people talking about failure when they break a period of sobriety for a drink. This is not helpful for anyone, most importantly you. You are not a failure for trying to achieve something big and life changing. You are no less worthy of sobriety because you took a drink at the pub when offered. If you think about when babies and toddlers learn things, we don't call them a failure for not doing something first time. We don't berate them for not standing up and walking first, second or third try. It takes ages. It's a process.

One thing that's always worth remembering is that you are at least trying. A lot of people go through life drinking heavily, feeling rough, but never questioning it. A lot of people right now will be drinking like you did/do, and they might like to feel better, but they just wouldn't entertain the thought of giving up. That's them, but you are trying to change and that takes courage. Be proud of that.

It's also fair to say that if you have been reading and learning about alcohol and your drinking, you have still learned those things. Just because you picked up a beer doesn't mean all the learning goes away. It's in you and it's there to be built on.

I had two stints of sobriety before I got to where I am today. During both of those stints I felt I would 'reset' myself and be able to moderate. It took me those two experiences to realise, third time round, that moderation was never going to happen for me. These stints are part of my story and they helped to shape my journey with getting and staying sober.

Be kind to yourself, you're thinking, or trying to change. That's ace.

You'll get there.

Sober holidays

Going on your first sober trip can be daunting. I took a holiday four months into sobriety and I created a mini plan for myself, to help me navigate it! Here are my top tips:

1. Be aware of your thoughts leading up to it
 - a. Are you dreading it, feeling anxious, nervous you'll cave, worrying you can't make it through?
 - b. Or, are you scared but raring to go, excited by the challenge, planning all the books and podcasts you can listen to, embracing the new and convinced you can get through it ok?

Can you see the difference in these two approaches?

A is what I would call negative mindset which is linked to limiting beliefs. It means deep down you don't think you can do it. You don't believe in yourself. You are setting yourself up for failure with this inner/external talk.

B is feeling the fear but doing it anyway. Applying yourself to what you need to do to be successful. Accepting it might be tricky but feeling strong and capable. Its 'can do' attitude.

Try and be more B. It all starts with being aware of how you are framing the impending trip. Watch out for thoughts of self-sabotage and don't let yourself talk yourself out of success before you've even boarded the plane.

2. Prepare. Have a couple of books lined up to read. See my list of resources if you need some inspo. Download a couple of podcasts onto your phone so that you have some content to listen to on the journey. Try to plan something educational every day, even if it is 30 minutes. Make the time. Find the space, get a break from the kids, or the other people you're with. This is really important.
3. Focus on the food and find nice alternative drinks. What food do you like? Is there going to be any food you haven't tried yet that you want to? Are you going to drink alcohol free cocktails or AF beer? Can you eat differently to how you do at home? Be open minded. Look forward to the food and savour it when you are there. Food tastes so much better without being washed down with booze. Enjoy it.
4. Have at least one daily treat. I had amazing gelato every night on my first sober holiday and I really looked forward to it. It was a reward for getting through the day and it really worked to give me something to look forward to.
5. Build in one physical activity every day. Take a walk early morning. Swim in the pool, try a yoga class, breathe deeply, go running or try a new sport. When you are not hungover, getting active is much easier and really rewarding.
6. Implement good boundaries. If you are in a boozy group, make sure you take regular breaks or duck out when you feel uncomfortable. Don't feel like you need

to sit glued in that group, or that surrounding. Take yourself away. Go to bed early or go for a walk. Put yourself first.

7. If a craving comes along, sit with it. Play it forward. Yes, that beer might look super cold and inviting but think about where it leads. Think about the destruction that could follow that one drink. It never ends at one drink. If you are feeling anxious, stick on a podcast. Order a cold lemonade with extra ice and sip it slowly. Breathe. It passes. You'll be so happy you didn't give in.
8. Do different things. Try not to do holidays the way you always do them, do them differently. What things could you do this time, that you couldn't do before, because you were drinking or hungover? Have you seen the sunrise on holiday? Have you fully embraced a boat trip? Have you pushed yourself to do a class or a group activity? What can you do that is different?

Nine times out of ten people contact me for tips about their upcoming holiday only to message me afterwards saying they had THE BEST time they've ever had. That it was actually relaxing and they didn't realise holidays were *meant* to feel like this.

It is mostly the fear of the unknown that keeps us trapped in pre-sober-holiday anxiety. Once you actually do your trip sober, you begin to realise how much of the fear is in your head. It will never be as bad as it seems. Our brains are wired to think the worst and we see things in a harsher light than reality.

Once you get through your first sober trip happily, you won't have the same fear next time, you'll just look forward to it!

Be patient and be kind to yourself

Rome wasn't built in a day. It probably wasn't built in years to be honest, but you get my point. Be patient. Do the work, feel the feelings, manage the cravings and feel the uncomfortable and remember to be patient.

Treat yourself like a child version of yourself. Comfort yourself when you need to. Its ok to feel up and down. Its ok to grieve your old life and the drinking you. Its ok to cry and have days that are filled with fomo and sadness. Take your time and keep moving forward.

Remember as well, to be kind to yourself. You have probably been on a wild journey to get to here and you deserve some big love for that. You are trying to make changes and that is truly amazing. Be proud of yourself and give yourself a bit of a break.

Kindness and patience go a long way to releasing the shame your drinking may have brought you.

You can do it.

Best of luck

Resources list

Join the THRIVE Community: www.sobersassymum.com/thrive

Website: www.sobersassymum.com

Podcast: <https://www.sassysobermum.com/podcast>

Or type 'sassy sober mum' into any podcast app

Book list: <https://www.sassysobermum.com/resources>

Buy me a coffee to say thank you: <https://www.buymeacoffee.com/sassysobermum>