



The Mindset Mistakes Most People Will Make This January

This New Year, many people will vow to cut out alcohol in January... but that's all they do.

They don't change anything else. They don't do any of the mindset work. They don't examine their beliefs about booze or think about *why* they feel drawn to drink. Instead, their focus is on trying to get by on grit and determination. It's miserable.

In order to feel good about living life alcohol-free, we have to tackle our deep seated beliefs about booze. We live in a world that loves to glamorise and romanticise alcohol, and we often project qualities on to booze that simply aren't there.

"I used to give alcohol so many different jobs. It had to make me happy, make me less anxious, help me calm down, help me have fun, help me party and just make everything better. And somehow it never really worked."

Mary - Sober School Graduate

What do *you* believe alcohol does for you? What benefit or service does it provide? Get clear on this and write it down below.

Alcohol can't read your mind.

When you look at your list above, you might find that you use alcohol for a variety of functions. Sometimes you want to calm down and maybe even go to sleep. Other times, you want to pep up and get in party mode, or get an energy boost ahead of cooking dinner. Are you asking the same liquid drug to do different things on different days or at different times?

Alcohol wasn't created in a high tech, state-of-the-art science lab. It's just a crude, toxic poison that's been around for centuries. So how can it even know what you want it to do for you each time? It doesn't! It can't possibly do all the different things we ask it to - it's just that our minds are incredibly powerful. We often project qualities onto alcohol that just aren't there.

I know you're probably still feeling very attached to alcohol at this point. However, if you agree that it's unlikely alcohol can do ALL the different things we assume it does... well, things are about to get interesting. Because that means everything is up for scrutiny. What if alcohol hardly does *anything* for you at all? Then it would be much easier to let go of it...

Myth-busting

Here are two common beliefs about booze that aren't actually true:

MYTH 1 - "Alcohol relieves my stress."

Think about your experiences with alcohol. What are your stress levels like the morning after you've been drinking? What about your anxiety? (If you struggle with morning-after anxiety, google 'hangxiety' - it's a thing).

How much time are you spending worrying about your drinking? Does drinking disrupt your sleep? How do these factors contribute to your overall ability to deal with life the next day? If alcohol really was a magic stress-buster, shouldn't you be super relaxed and happy right now?

When we assess the impact of drinking on our lives, we have to look at an entire 24 hour period. You can't judge alcohol on how it makes you feel right after you drink it. That's like judging a movie based on the first scene alone! When you're deciding whether alcohol *really* helps with your stress, you've got to let the movie play out to the end.

Watch Episode 9 to hear from Melissa, a nurse who quit drinking at the start of the pandemic. How did being sober help her manage her stress? How could it help you?

You can make notes here

MYTH 2 - "Without alcohol, life will lose its sparkle."

Analyse a recent drinking episode where you drank a lot, but didn't have a good time. If alcohol is the magic joy juice it's marketed as, why didn't you have fun?

Consider this: what if alcohol was *stealing* sparkle from you? What opportunities for fun and joy have you missed out on because you were too drunk, or too hungover or too consumed with thoughts of where your next drink was coming from?

Find out more about people who don't drink. Google sober celebrities. What are their lives really like? Are they having a miserable time? I doubt it! Watch the video in this lesson to hear some of my students talking about their lives now. Are they having fun? Yes!

You can make notes here

And finally...

I wanted to include a transcript of my student Susan, who we heard from in Episode 11. Susan used to spend her days working for an alcohol company, where it was her job to increase sales. Each evening, she'd come home and drink wine in her kitchen. She's many years sober now and I value her insights on the billion dollar alcohol industry, which has conditioned many of us to view alcohol as essential to a fulfilling, satisfying life.

Here's a reminder of what Susan said:

"You try and tell people that if you have this particular gin or this particular vodka, you as a human being will be more chic. You as a human being will be more sophisticated. We had spirits in the company, but also multiple wines as well. And in wine, you're selling people sun, sea and sand, the grape. You're selling them all of these messages that you are churning at them from multiple angles, from the supermarket shelf to the magazine, to television, to billboard advertising."

"I sat at tables - decision making tables - as to how to reach women within the spirits side of the business. How can we reach women? What can I say to women that will actually make them feel more like a man, more sophisticated? And it's ironic because in your classroom, you started a seed within me of wanting to know more about the industry, wanting to know more about what I had been peddling. Once I started to look and learn, it was actually a bit horrifying."

"At no time when I'm sticking up a billboard in a city across Europe about a particular brand, did I sit back and think that actually, I was peddling road crash. I was peddling sadness, I was peddling powerlessness to women. At no time did I think about a message that said 'wine equals reward'. At no time did I know that that was actually categorically dangerous for women to buy into that message. But it's a collective message across an entire powerful industry."

"We as women, we get sucked into that. We talk about glass ceilings, Kate, and we say, 'Let's smash the glass ceiling.' Well, here's the bloody truth of it. You'll never smash a glass ceiling with a wine glass in your hand."