



Bristol Specialist
Drug and Alcohol
Service

EARLY DAYS
WITHOUT DRINKING

Tips and Ideas

Alcohol Team
1 Colston Fort

COPING STRATEGIES

1 Clean up your environment

Get rid of all alcohol. Tip it down the sink, give it away, get rid of all of it including the special bottle you thought you would save for guests.

If people in your home still drink, get them at least to keep it out of sight. Don't buy alcohol for anyone else, let them buy their own! Train everyone around you to stop automatically offering your drinks.

2 Stay away from environments associated with alcohol

This includes your "local", the off-licence, your drinking friend's flat. By being in the physical presence of alcohol, you are at risk of reaching out and picking it up, especially in an unguarded moment. Even if this does not happen the first, second, or third time, experiences clearly show that sooner or later, a relapse may happen. It's a well known saying that if you sit in the barber's chair often enough, you will end up with a haircut! You may feel confident and proud of your willpower to not drink when all about you are drinking, but how long can you honestly go through this, before feelings of discomfort, craving or resentment become too much?

14 **Protect your Recovery!**

Be selfish! Don't get involved with anyone else's problems to the degree that you lose sight of your own. Stay away from people who undermine your recovery (possibly your old drinking friends). The longer you can go without drinking the stronger your chances are of avoiding relapse.

FINALLY

Remember **you** are in charge of your life and have **sole responsibility** as to whether or not you pick up the next drink!

3 **Structure your day and establish a routine**

Get up and go to bed at a set time. Consider other ways of spending your time. There are plenty of activities that don't involve alcohol! Allow time for your recovery – attend BSDAS, Colston Fort, AA, SMART, SOS, make contact with other people in recovery too.

4 **Eat well**

Eat regular meals, If you feel full, you are less likely to want to drink. Make sure you have breakfast. This will make craving less likely by maintaining your blood sugar level. This also will reduce the chance of feeling irritable due to low blood sugar levels. Try to eat a healthy diet with plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables.

5 **If you crave sugar**

..... eat fruit or treat yourself to some chocolate. Don't worry about putting on weight. You are most probably consuming far fewer calories than when you were on a "liquid diet".

6 **Drink plenty of fluids**

Non-alcoholic of course. **Do not** drink low alcohol or de-alcoholised drinks as they will remind you of the real thing, and it may trigger craving.

7 Get some physical exercise

Walk, swim, or get down to the gym! Start looking after your body. This will give you energy, relieve aches and pains, improve sleep and help you relax (and you thought alcohol was the answer!).

8 Learn to relax

Have a relaxing soak in the bath, listen to some soothing music, read a book, use a relaxation tape, try a yoga class at your local community centre.

9 Don't expect too much from others

"I've changed" – People may have heard it all before. Like recovery, trust will take time to develop. You cannot expect others to change their thinking or lifestyle just because you have.

10 Don't get tired

You are more likely to feel vulnerable, or irritable and at risk of relapse. Allow yourself rest time and get plenty of sleep.

11 Don't expect too much from yourself

Take one day at a time. Don't rush to make too many plans and try not to be too impatient to get everything sorted out at once.

12 Take time to accept your feelings

You may have been using alcohol as an anaesthetic, or to numb feelings. When you were drinking, feelings were not "normal" as they were affected by the amount of alcohol you had on board and also by the tension and anxiety that you felt between drinks. Now that you have stopped drinking, you have removed the chemical straitjacket. You may feel up one minute and down the next. As time goes by these mood swings will eventually level out. Try to talk about your feelings in groups and you will realise that you are not alone. Don't use anger, depression or guilt as an excuse to drink. It will only amplify the feelings even more.

13 Get Support

Make contact with others who will support you in **not** drinking. Don't get lonely – you may soon start to tell yourself that a drink will make it better.

- ❖ Attend support groups – e.g. AA, SMART, SOS
- ❖ Phone DRINKLINE or AA if you need support when you are alone and need to talk.
- ❖ Get support from others attending Colston Fort.
- ❖ Invite friends around for a coffee, some pizza, or to watch a video.
- ❖ Consider joining a Church/ Mosque/ Synagogue/ Temple