



P
UT THE
WINE
DOWN!

A SPIRITUAL GUIDE TO
BREAKING THE WINE O'CLOCK HABIT

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Introduction

This is not a book about wine. It's a book about why you reach for it. I'm not here to shame you - there's enough of that in the world already; in your mind, in your inbox, maybe even in your own reflection. This book doesn't want to punish you. It wants to help you understand yourself.

It knows the truth you've tried to joke about. It knows the silence that comes after the fourth glass. It knows the little ache behind your eyes when you ask yourself, 'is this still fun... or am I just glossing over something?'

This isn't a book about labels or absolutes. It's about honesty, it's about patterns. It's about finally being willing to ask yourself the questions you've avoided.

You and I both know, it's never just about the glass. It's about the overwhelm you're trying to mute. The grief that has nowhere to go. The shame that clings like smoke. The loneliness that masquerades as "me time." The heartbreak you've told yourself you've already healed from.

You don't have to call yourself sober to want to feel alive again. You don't have to stop drinking forever to admit that drinking isn't helping. You don't have to crash to realize you've been quietly unravelling.

If you've ever thought:

- I need to cut back.
- I'm tired of waking up with regret.
- I don't even know who I am without it.

...then you're in the right place.

You didn't pick up this book by accident. Maybe it found you in a bookstore, maybe it showed up in a late-night scroll when your heart was heavy and your glass was full. Or maybe someone who loves you passed it on quietly, hoping you'd see what they see in you: a spark that's still alive beneath the dying embers.

I wrote this book for the version of you that knows, even if she can't quite say it out loud, that she's worthy of facing her pain rather than pouring another glass over it.

- You're not weak for needing help.
- You're not broken because you've used something to cope.
- You're not a mess because you want to change.
- You are powerful. Brave. Beautifully self-aware.

So, let's begin without guilt and without rules. All you need to bring is yourself and your truth, because you're ready now to put the wine down and reach for yourself.

Chapter 1

It Started with a Sip

It didn't begin with a crisis. It began with a moment, a glass in your hand at the end of a long day, a toast at a celebration, maybe just something to do while watching a movie or making dinner. It was normal, harmless. Something to look forward to. And for a while, it probably was just that.

You didn't pour that first glass expecting it to become anything more than a way to unwind. You certainly didn't imagine you'd one day be questioning your relationship with it. But that's how this kind of thing goes. It doesn't barge into your life with a warning. It creeps in quietly, disguised as comfort.

At first, it helped - or at least, it felt like it did. It helped you relax, helped you cope, helped you switch off when the weight of the day or the past felt too heavy. There's no shame in that. You were doing the best you could with what you had. You found something that made it feel a little easier, and that's okay.

Over time, it stopped feeling like a choice and started feeling like a need. A default. A habit. Something you reached for without thinking - even on days when you promised yourself

you wouldn't. Somewhere along the line, a drink became more than just a drink. It became part of how you coped with being human.

You might not drink every night, you might not even drink heavily, but maybe you've noticed how often you reach for it when you're stressed, or lonely, or numb. Maybe you've started to wonder what's really behind that craving? Maybe there's a little voice inside you saying, this isn't really helping anymore. That voice deserves to be heard, not silenced, not ignored. It's not accusing you. It's trying to protect you. It's trying to remind you that you don't need to escape your own life in order to survive it.

There's a version of you underneath the habit who is ready and waiting for something different.

This chapter isn't about blaming yourself for the way you've coped. It's about honouring the fact that you *have* coped, even if you're now questioning how. You don't have to have all the answers; you don't have to swear yourself off anything forever. You just need to be willing to look at it, to wonder, to get curious, and to be honest with yourself.

You don't owe wine anything. You're allowed to change. You're allowed to grow past what once helped you survive.

You're allowed to say, this isn't working for me anymore, even if you're not sure what comes next.

This book is here to sit with you in that uncomfortable middle space, the one between knowing something needs to shift, and figuring out how to actually shift it. If you're here, reading this, you've already taken the first step.

And that matters.

Reflection & Journal Space

You don't need to solve anything right now. This is just a space for you to get honest, without pressure, without judgment.

Ask yourself:

When did wine become more than just a drink for me?

What am I often feeling when I pour that first glass?

What am I hoping it will give me?

What am I hoping it will take away?

What would I say to the part of me that reaches for it most often?

Finish this sentence:

I'm not broken; I've just been trying to:

Onwards and upwards.

Chapter 2

Wine Isn't a Hug

There's something about the way a glass of wine wraps itself around you at the end of a hard day. The warmth, the familiar routine, the softening of the noise inside your head. It's no wonder so many of us confuse that sensation with comfort. It mimics closeness. It feels like something is finally holding you. And sometimes, when you've gone too long without real comfort, it's easy to mistake the feelings of relief for love and comfort.

Wine isn't a hug. It doesn't see you. It doesn't hear you cry in the shower, or sit with you in your loneliness, or tell you you're doing better than you think. It doesn't validate your feelings. It doesn't remind you of your worth. It just temporarily silences the loneliness.

And I say that with zero judgment, only understanding. Because when you're carrying pain that hasn't been witnessed, when you've spent years pushing through, numbing out, or holding it all together, a drink can feel like the only thing giving you permission to unravel. It becomes the stand-in for the connection you really need. The

surrogate for the safety that's been missing. The quick fix for feelings that have gone unspoken for too long.

Here's the hard part: the more we rely on something that *feels* like comfort but doesn't *offer* comfort, the harder it becomes to reach for the real thing. Emotional connection, support, softness - they start to feel foreign. Vulnerability starts to feel risky, so we turn back to what's predictable. What's within reach? What doesn't ask anything of us in return?

Eventually, the wine stops working. It doesn't soothe like it used to. It doesn't help you sleep. It doesn't quiet the shame or soften the sadness. It just adds another layer of regret and self-doubt, the sinking feeling that maybe this is becoming a destructive pattern.

If that's where you are, I want you to know you're *not failing*, you're *feeling*, and that's where change begins. Not with cutting anything out, not with making big promises to yourself, but with recognising that your need for comfort is valid. You're not weak because you want to be held. You're not broken because you've looked for softness. You're human, and you've been doing your best to manage what no one else can fully see.

The difference now is that you're ready for a different kind of comfort, one that heals instead of hides. You're ready for real hugs, real connection, real release - even if you're still figuring out how to ask for it.

You don't have to give up drinking today, but you do get to tell yourself the truth: that it isn't giving you what you really need.

And that truth is a door that opens into a wine-free future.

Reflection & Journal Space

You deserve comfort that meets your needs.

Ask yourself:

When I pour a drink, what emotion am I usually trying to soothe?

What does comfort really look like for me?

When was the last time I truly felt safe or seen by someone, not just distracted or numbed?

Finish this sentence:

What I need more than wine is:

Chapter 3

It's a Treat until It's a Trap

You didn't wake up one day and decide to lean on wine. It happened slowly, almost invisibly, in moments that didn't feel like decisions. A glass here, a toast there, a reward after a long day. It was a treat. Something small that made life feel a little more manageable, a little more yours.

There's nothing wrong with treating yourself. In fact, you've probably needed far more kindness, softness, and space than you've ever been given. So, the idea of a glass of wine as your one little indulgence feels harmless, reasonable, deserved. And in many ways, it is.

But sometimes what we call a treat becomes something else: a tool to cope, a buffer between ourselves and the feelings we don't know how to face. We still tell ourselves it's just a small thing, a way to unwind, a grown-up pause button. But deep down, we know it's becoming more than that. We know we've stopped really tasting it. We know it's less about pleasure and more about avoidance. We know when we say, "I've earned this," what we really mean is, "I can't deal with this."

No one teaches us how to notice the shift. There's no warning light that says: this habit is beginning to carry your emotions for you. There's no one moment when it goes from "I want this" to "I need this." It happens subtly, until one day, you realise the treat doesn't feel like a gift anymore, it feels like a crutch. It feels like a trap you didn't know you were walking into.

This is about gently naming the pattern, so you can step out of it. Because if the thing you're calling self-care is quietly creating more self-doubt, it's time to gently look at your coping patterns.

Gifts, self-care, and treats don't leave you with regret. They don't cloud your clarity or keep you stuck in cycles of emotional suppression. They nourish. They restore. They reflect your worth instead of making you question it.

So, if wine has become your go-to "I deserve this," you're allowed to ask: what do I *really* deserve?

It's not about cutting wine out of your life to prove anything; it's about choosing not to pretend it's helping when it's hurting. It's about remembering that what you truly need - comfort, relief, a sense of peace - can't be found in a bottle.

You don't have to keep pretending the treat is still sweet, especially when your body, your mind, and your heart are quietly craving something real.

Reflection & Journal Space

Sometimes the kindest thing we can do for ourselves is tell the truth, gently, and imperfectly.

Ask yourself:

What do I usually tell myself when I pour a drink?

Is it truly about enjoyment, or is it about escape?

What else might feel like a “treat” that wouldn’t leave me feeling worse after?

Finish this sentence:

What I really deserve at the end of a hard day is:

Chapter 4

Let's Talk About Numbing

Numbing doesn't always look dramatic. Sometimes it just looks like pouring a glass of wine at the end of the day and calling it self-care. Sometimes it looks like zoning out in front of a screen, eating when you're not hungry, scrolling until your brain finally quietens down.

None of these things make you bad, broken, or weak. They make you human - and we *all* find ways to take the edge off. Life can be overwhelming and how to handle tough feelings doesn't come with instructions. When you've been carrying stress, sadness, loneliness, or pressure for a long time, it makes sense that you'd look for something that helps soften it. Numbing often begins there, with the simple desire to feel less.

And in the short term, it works. The tension eases, your thoughts slow down, the world feels slightly more manageable. But over time, the habit of reaching for something to mute the noise can start to chip away at the parts of you that actually want to be heard. The truth is that numbing doesn't just reduce pain - it also reduces clarity, presence, and the ability to connect with what you truly need.

Most of us were never taught how to feel hard things safely. We were praised for being strong, staying busy, bouncing back, keeping it all together, so when emotions start rising, it's natural to reach for something that lets you push them aside. You were never shown another way but here you are, quietly asking if that way is still working. That's not weakness. That's awareness.

You don't have to stop numbing overnight. You don't have to feel everything all at once. You don't have to fix anything. But you are allowed to notice. You're allowed to ask: *What am I trying not to feel right now? What could I do instead of avoiding it?*

Sometimes, just asking that question is enough to create a small shift, nothing dramatic. It might look like waiting five minutes before pouring a drink. It might look like writing a few lines in a journal. It might just be pausing long enough to admit that something's going on here and I'm willing to listen.

That's where change begins. Not with a grand gesture. Just a moment of truth, wrapped in kindness.

Reflection & Journal Space

This isn't about judging your patterns. It's about understanding them.

Ask yourself:

When I reach for wine, what feeling am I most trying to avoid?

Where in my life have I felt like emotions weren't safe or welcome?

What does "comfort" mean to me, beyond distraction?

Finish this sentence:

Right now, I'm learning to stay present with myself when I feel:

Chapter 5

When the Glass Is Really a Shield

Sometimes, drinking isn't about the wine at all. It's about the barrier it creates between you and the world. A glass in your hand can feel like a buffer. A little emotional distance. A way to soften the edges of life, especially when those edges have felt too sharp for too long. Maybe it's what you reach for before a social event, or at the end of a day that left you feeling small, unseen, or overwhelmed. Maybe it helps you feel braver, more relaxed, less exposed.

It's not always about escaping; sometimes it's about protecting yourself, not having to explain yourself or sit with the intensity of your own thoughts. Sometimes it's just about creating a kind of safety, even if it's temporary.

If that's how it's been for you, I want to say this clearly: I get it. There are times when life asks too much and gives too little. Times when you're expected to show up, perform, cope, care and the idea of doing it all without some kind of shield feels impossible. So, you build one. Quietly. Subtly. A drink here. A ritual there. And slowly, it becomes part of how you manage everything you've been holding. But over time, that

shield can become a wall. One that keeps the world out, but also keeps you in.

It's hard to feel fully present when you're protecting yourself from feeling too much. It's hard to connect deeply when you're holding emotion at arm's length. And it's hard to hear your own truth when there's always something standing between you and it.

You might have started drinking to cope. Or to loosen up. Or to make social situations less awkward. You might have told yourself it helps you be more "you." But what if it's actually hiding the real you underneath it all? The version of you who doesn't need to perform. Who doesn't need to be numb to be safe. Who doesn't need to be drinking to feel like she belongs.

The point isn't to 'shame the shield' but to notice it with kindness, with curiosity. To ask whether it's still serving you or whether it's time to put it down, even just for a while, and learn what it feels like to show up without it.

It might feel vulnerable at first, a little exposed, and that's okay; that's part of reconnecting with yourself, with your emotions, and with the people who care about the real you. The shield protected you, but you're allowed to outgrow it.

Reflection & Journal Space

This is your space. Quiet, gentle, and honest.

Ask yourself:

In what situations do I feel like I need a drink to “get through” something?

What am I protecting myself from in those moments?

What might feel safer or more supportive than a drink?

Finish this sentence:

When I put down the glass, I want to feel:

Chapter 6

The Evening You Needed a Miracle But Settled for Merlot

There are nights that ask a lot of you. Nights when something inside feels too big to carry, and too hard to name. The kind of nights when everything you've been holding back rises to the surface and leaves you standing there - tired, raw, unsure what to do with yourself.

Maybe it's grief. Maybe it's loneliness. Maybe it's the weight of a hundred small things you've shrugged off for too long. On those nights, a glass of wine can seem like a soft landing. It's familiar. It's easy. It asks nothing of you.

You weren't looking to get drunk; you were looking to be okay, and sometimes wine is the fastest way to feel like you are.

The truth is, there are moments when what you needed wasn't in the bottle. What you needed was a release. A breakthrough. A conversation. A good cry. A hug. A sense that you were seen and heard or held by something other than your own exhaustion. Those are the nights when you needed something close to a miracle. Not in the dramatic, fix-

everything kind of way, but in the quiet, human way. A sign you weren't alone. A moment of connection. A reminder that you're not lost or failing or too much to carry. But instead of reaching for that, you reached for what you knew.

The wine was there. Magic moments and miracles take a bit longer.

If you've had nights like that - and chances are you have - I want you to know this: you weren't wrong for reaching for comfort. You weren't weak for wanting the pain to go away. You weren't foolish for hoping that a glass of wine might fill the space where something else was missing. You were doing the best you could in that moment with what you had.

But now you're here, and that means something inside you is starting to wonder: what if I expected more from myself next time? More support. More truth. More gentleness. More presence. More of what actually helps. The glass of wine might feel like a solution in the short term, but it rarely speaks to the real need underneath - and you deserve more than momentary relief. You deserve something that stays with you after the glass is empty. You deserve the miracle and peace of mind and emotional freedom while you wait for it.

Reflection & Journal Space

Let this be a space to remember what you really need on the nights when the pain is deafening.

Ask yourself:

What are the emotions or situations that make me feel most alone?

What do I find myself hoping the wine will “fix” or silence?

What might help me feel comforted, connected, or less alone in those moments?

Finish this sentence:

When I reach for a drink, I think I need relief but what I’m really craving is:

Chapter 7

High-Functioning, Low-Feeling

It's possible to have a calendar full of meetings and social events, a fridge full of food, and still feel completely empty. It's possible to be the reliable one, the strong one, the capable one and still feel like you're carrying something invisible and unbearable.

'High functioning' isn't always a sign of health. Sometimes, it's just another way of saying, I can manage everything except how *I actually feel*.

You get up. You show up. You work hard. You say the right things. You smile when expected. You laugh at the right moments. From the outside, there's nothing wrong. You're coping. You're holding it together. You're fine.

And yet, inside, something is switched off. The sparkle's dulled. The joy feels distant. The emotions you haven't had time or permission to feel are sitting in the background, waiting for you to slow down long enough to notice.

That's often where the wine comes in.

It doesn't ask you to process anything. It doesn't require effort. It doesn't push back. It gives you a quick way to unwind from the pressure of performing, of pretending, of keeping it all running. It makes the space between "functioning" and "feeling" easier to ignore.

But here's the quiet truth: You can only live that way for so long before something inside you starts to ache for more. More than just getting through the day. More than ticking every box. More than looking like you've got it together. At some point, you want to actually *be* together. Inside, and out.

You want to *feel* something again. Even if it's uncomfortable at first. Even if it's messy. Even if it breaks the illusion of having it all handled. Because feeling means reconnecting. It means coming back to yourself, not as a role or a title or a task-doer, but as a person. A whole one.

You don't have to stop being strong. You just don't have to do it all behind a wall. Especially not when that wall is made of something you know deep down isn't working anymore.

The wine isn't what keeps you high functioning. You do that. And you always have. The question now is what would it look like to keep functioning... and start feeling?

You don't have to choose between being effective and being honest. You get to be both. Capable and connected. Put-together and present. Strong, and still soft enough to feel what's real.

That's not weakness. That's wholeness.

Reflection & Journal Space

Sometimes we're so used to managing, we forget how to check in with what we're really feeling underneath.

Ask yourself:

In what ways do I keep myself looking "okay" on the outside, even when I'm not?

What do I avoid feeling by staying busy, efficient, or constantly productive?

Where in my life would it feel safe to be more honest with myself or someone else?

Finish this sentence:

I want to feel more, but I worry that if I slow down I:

Chapter 8

The Hangover That Hits Your Heart, Not Your Head

Some mornings, you wake up and your head is fine, but your heart feels heavy. No nausea, no headache pounding through your temples. Just a quiet weight pressing in your chest. A flicker of shame. A sense that something is... off.

This is the kind of hangover most people don't talk about. The kind that doesn't come from how much you drank, but why you drank. It's subtle. Sometimes you can't even name it right away. You just feel distant from yourself. Disconnected. Maybe a little numb. Maybe a little regretful.

You scroll your phone, drink your coffee, go through the motions, but there's a lingering sense that you didn't show up for yourself the night before. Not in a catastrophic way. Just in a quiet, disappointing one, and that can be harder to carry than any hangover.

The hangover that hits your heart comes from knowing that you were overwhelmed but didn't feel able to deal with it. That you needed something - comfort, care, connection - and you bypassed it. That you reached for a drink instead of reaching inwards, or towards something more real.

This isn't about blaming yourself. It's about naming that feeling. Because when we don't name it, we tend to push it down, cover it up, or drink it away again the next night. And that's how the cycle continues - not because we're addicted, but because we're avoiding.

And truthfully? Avoidance makes sense when you haven't felt safe to feel.

But you're here now. And that means something is shifting. You're not just going through the motions anymore. You're noticing the aftermath. The emotional residue. The voice inside that's saying, I don't want to keep waking up like this.

That voice isn't asking you to be perfect. It's asking you to be present, to listen to what your heart is carrying, not just what your mind is managing. It's asking you to meet the discomfort, not outrun it. Because that's where something new begins, not in the morning after regret, but in the moment you realise you want something different.

You don't need to shame yourself for the quiet hangovers. You just need to start paying attention to what they're telling you. That you're tired, that you want more, that your heart deserves better than avoidance, that there's a version of you

who wants to be fully here and fully you - and that version of you is closer than you think.

Reflection & Journal Space

The emotional aftermath is a signal, not of failure, but of awareness.

Ask yourself:

How do I usually feel *emotionally* the next morning after drinking?

How do I usually feel *physically* the next morning after drinking?

What thoughts or feelings come up that I tend to brush past?

What might that heavy feeling be trying to tell me?

Finish this sentence:

I want to wake up feeling:

Chapter 9

Drinking to Feel Less Is Still Feeling More

There are days when it's just easier not to feel. Maybe you're overstimulated, overtired, or emotionally flat. Maybe you're fine all day, and then the evening comes and with it, a wave of something you'd rather not name. So, you pour a drink. Not to escape entirely, but to soften the edges.

It makes sense. You're not doing anything wrong by wanting space from the noise inside your own mind. You're trying to manage it. That's what the drink becomes: a pause, a buffer, a bit of breathing room.

But even when the intention is to feel less, it often ends up doing the opposite. What you push down doesn't stay down. It turns into restlessness. Or anxiety. Or numbness. Sometimes it waits until the next morning. Sometimes it hangs around longer. Either way, the thing you were trying not to feel doesn't disappear. It waits. The hardest part is how subtle it can be.

You're not falling apart. You're functioning. You're holding it together, showing up, ticking boxes. But something

underneath feels off, heavier, a little disconnected. Like you're living on a delay. Not dramatic, but real.

And if you've started to notice that toll - emotionally, mentally, or physically - that's not failure, that's awareness. You're not being dramatic. You're being honest.

The goal here isn't to stop feeling. It's to learn how to stay with yourself, even when it's uncomfortable. Not all at once, not without support, but gently, in moments, not because it's the right thing to do but because you're tired of checking out from your own life.

You don't need to fix everything right now, but you can start noticing what feelings are at the bottom of the glass.

Reflection & Journal Space

No pressure. No pushing. Just space.

Ask yourself:

What emotions feel hardest for me to sit with?

Have I noticed patterns of behaviour happening around me or within me that trigger my drinking?

What would it feel like to sit with just one feeling, even briefly, without numbing it?

Finish this sentence:

I no longer want to feel nothing. I want to feel:

Chapter 10

Cheers to Avoiding Our Childhood Wounds

A lot of what we reach for as adults makes more sense when we look at what we never received as children.

Maybe you learned early on that your feelings were too much. Maybe you were expected to cope quietly, behave perfectly, or keep the peace. Maybe there was chaos in your home, maybe silence, or the unpredictability of both. Either way, it taught you something: *don't wake the monster*. Don't rock the boat. Don't cause trouble. Don't speak up. Don't break down.

So now, when those same feelings rise up - the hurt, fear, rejection, sadness - it makes sense that you want to shut them down. Wine can feel like a tool for that. Not just to take the edge off the day, but to take the edge off *you*.

When emotions don't feel safe, numbing becomes familiar. It might even feel responsible. You're not yelling, you're not crying, you're not falling apart. You're just quietly disappearing. That's how it's always been, right?

But drinking to avoid old pain doesn't mean the pain isn't there. It just means it gets buried deeper. And eventually, it

shows up in other places: burnout, overthinking, shame, emotional disconnection, and loneliness. You start to feel stuck, but you can't quite name why.

This isn't about digging through your childhood to assign blame. It's about making the connection. The way you cope now didn't come out of nowhere. There's a reason you reach for something to take the edge off. And there's nothing wrong with you for that. You're trying to manage something that started long before adulthood.

What you needed back then was emotional safety. Comfort. Reassurance. The sense that your feelings were okay and that someone was there to help you carry them. If you didn't get that then, wine - or any other addiction - feels like a solution now. It steps in where nothing and nobody else did.

But now you have a choice. You can keep reaching for something to numb the pain. Or you can start noticing where the pain comes from and give it what it needs: validation, care, and presence. That might sound uncomfortable, but it's not as hard as pretending you're fine every day and literally drowning your sorrows.

You don't have to drink your way past your past. You're allowed to face it, gently, piece by piece. You don't need to

drown the wounds in alcohol to disinfect them or submerge them to sanitise the pain. They can be held, felt, and healed when you're sober, tender, and true. Painful memories aren't trying to ruin you; they're trying to be heard so they can finally stop running the show. Listen to them.

Reflection & Journal Space

There's nothing wrong with you for carrying old pain. It just doesn't need to be in charge anymore.

Ask yourself:

What did I learn about emotions when I was growing up?

Was I comforted, ignored, criticised, or left to deal with things on my own?

How might those early experiences still be shaping how I cope now?

Finish these sentences:

Back then, I needed:

Now, I can give that to myself by:

Chapter 11

Are You Addicted, Or Avoiding

There's a difference between addiction and avoidance. You might not crave alcohol during the day. You might go days or weeks without it. You might not drink heavily. But still, something about your drinking doesn't feel right. Not out of control exactly, just 'off' - like it's disguising or replacing something.

You may not be *addicted* to alcohol, but to the *permission* it gives you to hold certain feelings at a distance. Avoidance can be subtle like that. It often hides behind being "fine."

Maybe it's the end of the day, and you feel overstimulated or unsettled, and the drink helps you to not overthink. Maybe it's a way to get through loneliness without calling it loneliness. Maybe it helps you avoid the parts of your life you haven't had time or space to deal with. That's not failure. That's a survival response.

But avoidance has a cost. It keeps things suspended. The emotions you push aside don't go anywhere, they just wait. They hang around, unprocessed, showing up as fatigue,

irritability, disconnection, or shame. And that can feel worse than the thing you were trying to avoid in the first place.

This isn't about judging how you cope. It's about noticing what's underneath it. You've likely had to 'stay strong', 'keep going', 'get through' so numbing became familiar. Understandable. Sometimes necessary, even essential.

But if you're here, reading this, something in you is done with the delay. You don't need a crisis to say this isn't working anymore. You don't need to hit rock bottom to want something different.

Avoidance isn't weakness - it's a response to overwhelm. But now maybe you're ready to face things more clearly - because not facing them has become its own kind of exhaustion, a distraction, even its own form of addiction.

Reflection & Journal Space

You don't have to analyse. Just check in.

Ask yourself:

What have I been postponing emotionally?

Are there parts of my life I try not to think about?

How does avoidance show up for me - not just in drinking,
but in other ways?

Finish this sentence:

I've been avoiding because I didn't feel ready to:

Chapter 12

The Buzz Can't Compete With Your Brilliance

There's a moment after the first drink where everything feels slightly better. Not perfect. Just softer. You feel looser, maybe a little more confident. The tension eases. You laugh more easily. You stop second-guessing yourself.

That moment is real. No one's pretending it isn't. But it fades fast. And what it leaves behind doesn't always match the person you want to be or the life you're trying to build.

Because the truth is, the buzz doesn't enhance you, it dulls you. It flattens your sharpness, your insight, your intuition. It makes you quieter on the inside, not clearer. And over time, that matters. Especially if you're someone who feels deeply, thinks quickly, dreams big, or pushes yourself to grow.

The part of you that's brilliant - creative, driven, funny, powerful - doesn't need to be loosened. It needs to be trusted and that's hard to do when you're regularly checking out of your own head, your own body, your own energy.

This isn't about demonising the drink. It's about recognising when it starts getting in the way of who you really are. Not in a dramatic, rock-bottom way. Just subtly. Quietly. In the way

it slows your mornings, interrupts your focus, or makes you second-guess a choice you made the night before.

If you've started to feel disconnected from your creativity, your clarity, or your spark...your need for the 'buzz' might be why.

The drink doesn't make you more relaxed; you've simply learned to associate it with relief. The drink doesn't make you more fun; you've simply used it to lower the volume on your self-consciousness.

You don't need alcohol to be someone people want to be around. You don't need it to feel a sense of ease. You don't need it to bring out what's already in you.

That's the shift.

When you start trusting yourself to show up as you are, even when it's uncomfortable, even when you're unsure, even when it feels easier to pour your next glass. You don't need the buzz. You need to believe in your own presence, your own power, your own pace. And the more often you choose that - in other words the more you choose yourself - the easier it becomes to leave the glass alone.

Reflection & Journal Space

Let this be your space to reconnect with what's already in you.

Ask yourself:

What do I think the buzz gives me that I don't have on my own?

Without alcohol, when do I feel most confident, present, or powerful?

What parts of me have felt muted or distant lately?

Finish this sentence:

I don't need to be fixed; I need to be:

Chapter 13

This Isn't About Sobriety - It's About Self-Honesty

You don't have to label yourself. You don't have to explain your choices to anyone. You don't even have to decide what you're doing for the rest of your life. This isn't about declaring sobriety. It's about getting honest with yourself.

Maybe you've told yourself you don't have a "problem." Maybe you don't drink every day. Maybe no one around you has said anything. But something inside *you* has started to question it. Something's shifted. The glass of wine you used to enjoy now comes with a pause, a second thought, a feeling that something isn't lining up.

Self-honesty starts when you stop asking, "Is this bad enough to be a problem?" and start asking, "Is this good enough to keep going?"

You don't need a crisis to start making changes. You don't need to justify your discomfort. You're allowed to simply want more from your life than this pattern. And you're allowed to explore that without putting a label on it.

It's easy to get caught in all-or-nothing thinking. If I'm not an alcoholic, then it must be fine. If I'm not quitting forever, then

what's the point of cutting back? But those extremes miss the real question, which is: Is this working for me anymore? If the answer is no, even quietly, even occasionally, that's enough. That's your signal. You don't need permission to shift. You don't need a plan. You just need to be honest about how you feel before, during, and after you drink.

That honesty will tell you everything you need to know, not about who you are but about what you need. This isn't a movement or a message. It's a moment, a private one between you and you.

Reflection & Journal Space

You don't have to explain yourself to anyone. But you owe *yourself* the truth.

Ask yourself:

What have I been afraid to admit about my drinking?

Have I been waiting for it to get worse before I let myself question it?

What would it feel like to let go of labels and just listen to how this feels?

Finish this sentence:

This doesn't have to be about sobriety. It can just be about...

Chapter 14

Red Flags Come in Rosé Too

You don't have to hit a wall to realise you want to change something. You don't have to ruin your life, lose your job, or burn down your relationships. For many people, the signs are much quieter than that.

Even though it's not excessive, maybe you've started to feel uneasy about how often you're drinking,. Maybe it's the way you look forward to the first glass, or how irritated you feel if something gets in the way of it. Maybe it's how drinking isn't as enjoyable anymore, but you do it anyway. These aren't dramatic red flags, but they are signals.

We tend to think red flags come wrapped in chaos but sometimes, they show up in the little things: the dull regret in the morning, the tension in your body, the promises to cut back that keep getting postponed. Maybe you've noticed how short your fuse gets after a few drinks. Or how you're less present around people you care about. Or how your sleep feels disrupted. None of it feels like a crisis in the moment, but it adds up and because your life still "works," it's easy to tell yourself you're overthinking it. That everyone does this. That you're functioning, so it must be fine. But functioning

isn't the same as living. It's possible to keep everything running smoothly while something within you is quietly slipping.

This is about giving yourself permission to pay attention. If drinking no longer feels like a light part of your life - if it's starting to carry weight, cause tension, or chip away at your sense of peace - it's okay to take that seriously.

You don't need to compare yourself to anyone else. This is about you, and whether the way you're drinking still fits with the way you want to live. Noticing a red flag isn't weakness - it's self-respect. And the truth is, it's not even about the wine. It's about what you're tolerating, what you're ignoring, and what you've outgrown.

Reflection & Journal Space

What feels small now might not stay small if it keeps repeating.

Ask yourself:

What patterns around drinking have I started to feel uncomfortable with, even if I haven't said them out loud?

Are there ways I'm justifying something that I know isn't aligned with me anymore?

What would I tell a close friend if they described themselves as having this exact relationship with alcohol?

Finish this sentence

Just because it's not dramatic doesn't mean it's not:

Chapter 15

Sips Don't Solve Sh*t

Let's be honest: drinking can feel like the answer to everything. Stressed? Pour a glass. Celebrating? Pour a glass. Lonely, bored, overwhelmed, overstimulated, or just done with the day? Pour a glass. It becomes automatic. It becomes background noise.

But the problem you're facing, whatever's bubbling underneath the surface, doesn't disappear. You just stop noticing it for a little while. That's the trick of it; the relief is real, but it's short-lived and the return is always the same: the same stress, the same sadness, the same restlessness.

Eventually, you start to see the pattern, the same thoughts coming back. The same emotions repeating themselves. The same inner conversations, long after the drink is gone. And you start wondering, 'if this isn't solving anything, why do I keep doing it?'

The answer isn't weakness, it's habit - a pattern - born from repetition. It's familiar because it's what you've become used to. It's what's available when comfort is needed and sometimes it's just simple what everyone else is doing too.

Numbing yourself isn't healing. Distracting yourself isn't resolving anything. And sipping your way through discomfort doesn't remove it; it delays it.

You don't need to make yourself wrong for drinking, but if it's not working the way it used to, you're allowed to notice that and admit it isn't helping like it used to.

The drink might give you ten minutes of relief but so does turning off your phone. Or taking a walk. Or putting on music and crying. Or writing something down. Or asking someone to just sit with you. It doesn't have to be dramatic. It just has to be different.

You deserve solutions that actually support you, not quick fixes that leave you tired, foggy, and disconnected. You don't need to shame yourself; you just need to be honest about whether it's solving anything. And if it's not? Then you have permission to put it down.

Reflection & Journal Space

Let this be a check-in, not a judgment.

Ask yourself:

What emotions or stressors do I hope drinking will take away?

Have those things gone away when I drink, or do they keep coming back?

What might a real solution look like, even if I'm not sure how to start?

Finish this sentence:

I don't need a temporary fix. I need:

Chapter 16

Emotional Escape Is Optional

You don't *always* drink because you want to. Sometimes, you drink because you don't want to feel your feelings. And that distinction matters.

Most people wouldn't describe themselves as trying to escape, just trying to cope, to unwind, to manage what's sitting under the surface. And for a while it works, until you start noticing how often you're using alcohol to avoid yourself.

Avoiding isn't always dramatic. It can look like reaching for a glass the moment the house goes quiet or pouring one after a tough conversation to take the edge off. It can look like drinking to silence a feeling that won't stop nagging at you.

Having a drink can become so normal that you stop seeing it as avoidance at all. You feel uncomfortable, so you distract yourself. You feel emotional, so you smooth it over. You feel anxious, so you take the edge off. The habit builds slowly, but the effect is real: you stop learning how to sit with yourself and with your feelings.

Here's what's also true: **emotional escape is optional**. You don't have to run from what you feel, even if you don't love it. You don't have to numb it just because it's heavy. You don't have to make yourself smaller or quieter just to survive the moment.

You might not normally hold space for yourself during tough times and even tougher emotions, especially if, in the past, no one else modelled that for you. But learning to **pause instead of pour** is a skill you can build moment by moment, to ask yourself what you need instead of silencing the feeling, learning to trust that you can hold space for discomfort without needing to drown it out.

You don't need to force yourself into emotional overwhelm but you can begin to slow down the automatic reaction. Create a small space between feeling and action. Breathe there. Ask yourself a question there 'what do I need right now'. Even just noticing 'I want to drink because I don't want to feel this' is enough to interrupt the cycle.

You're not trying to control yourself; you're trying to reconnect with yourself. And that's where things start to shift.

Reflection & Journal Space

You're not escaping because you're weak. You're escaping because something hurts. That matters.

Ask yourself:

What are the emotions I most often try to avoid?

When I feel them, what's my first reaction?

What would staying with the feeling, for just a few minutes, look like instead?

Finish this sentence:

When I stop running, I notice:

Chapter 17

Wine Was Never the Villain

This was never really about the wine. It served a purpose; it quietly stepped in offering a sense of ease. It smoothed over the noise, slotted itself into the rhythm of evenings and emotions without making a fuss and at first, it gave something back.

But the real problem wasn't in the glass; it was in everything the glass and its contents represented. The tiredness that built up over time. The loneliness that came and went in waves. The memories that sat too close to the surface. The pressure to hold it all together without letting anything spill.

Wine didn't solve any of that. It temporarily numbed it and often made it worse. At some stage, it stopped offering comfort and started creating disconnection, not just from difficult feelings but from everything else, too. From clarity, from presence, from the ability to sit with life honestly.

The wine can't be held solely responsible for creating the disconnect though - the real responsibility has always lived somewhere else: in the questions that never got answered, and the feelings that had nowhere to go.

No villain here. Just a pattern that made sense, until it didn't. A tool that once felt helpful, now getting in the way. It's okay to admit that. Just recognising that it wasn't the wine that caused the disconnection but the disconnection that made the wine feel necessary.

That's where the shift begins to embed itself; by understanding what it's been protecting, rather than fighting the habit. And by choosing bit by bit not to run from it anymore.

Reflection & Journal Space

Ask yourself:

What was going on in your life when drinking started to feel more like a coping tool than a treat?

What feelings has alcohol made easier to avoid?

What's been missing that wine temporarily filled?

Finish this sentence:

It wasn't the wine, it was my/the:

Chapter 18

The Ritual of Reaching for Something Else

It starts the moment your body registers the change in energy, the drop in your shoulders. Maybe it's 5:47 p.m. Maybe it's when the kitchen goes quiet. Maybe it's when your brain just stops caring what's for dinner. Something clicks, and you're already halfway to the bottle.

It's not even a decision anymore. It's a ritual. A small, familiar moment that tells your nervous system, it's time to disconnect. Time to dim everything down.

That's what the wine became: a cue, a signal - not for joy, not for pleasure, but for release. A shortcut to the feeling of letting go without having to name what you're holding. And the ritual became so normal, so practiced, that it stopped feeling like a choice. You don't even ask if it's what you needed; you just reached for it because that's what you've always done.

But the ritual isn't sacred anymore. It's automatic. It's not meeting your needs, it's bypassing them. You're not weak for falling into the habit, you're human. Repetition is comforting, predictable, but just because something feels familiar doesn't

mean it's safe or right. Just because it helped for a while doesn't mean it still does.

So now the ritual needs interrupting, not with shame or rules, but with honesty.

What are you really reaching for? Is it rest? Reassurance? An exhale? A break from your own brain?

The ritual can stay, but the contents can change.

Maybe instead of the wine, you reach for something that actually supports you. A hot shower, a slow walk, a moment alone where no one needs anything from you. Maybe it's five minutes of stretching your back. Maybe it's music, or silence, reading a chapter of a book, or just doing nothing at all without numbing it away.

You can still mark the end of the day. You can still signal to your body that it's safe to stop. But it doesn't have to cost you presence. Or clarity. Or yourself.

The ritual wasn't wrong. Now, like you, it gets to become something else.

Reflection & Journal Space

Ask yourself:

What have I been reaching for that's been hidden behind the wine?

What moments in my day feel like cues or triggers to pour a drink?

What could I start doing instead, even just once this week?

Finish this sentence:

The wine was the habit. What I needed was:

Chapter 19

But It Helps Me Relax - So Does Breathing

That's the line, the one that's hard to argue with. "It helps me relax." And it's true, it does. There's a chemical shift. A moment of ease. Your shoulders drop. The noise quiets. You feel the edge dissolve and think, 'this is what I need'.

But here's the bit that doesn't get said, out loud: *the drink is relaxing you from the stress that it's started to create*. The poor sleep, the low energy, the flat mornings, the mental fog, the feeling that you're out of sync with yourself.

That moment of relief you get...wine didn't create the relief; it just blocked the overwhelm for a bit.

The relief doesn't last. You still feel it all, it's just delayed. Sometimes duller, sometimes louder. You still wake up with the same tension, except now there's a heaviness to go with it. A small self-betrayal you can't quite name. If it really helped you relax, you wouldn't feel like you needed it again the next day.

Relaxation is a real need, but numbing isn't rest. Switching off isn't peace. And drinking away the emotional weight you're carrying doesn't mean you're no longer carrying it.

Here's what's true: your nervous system is tired. You don't want to feel so wired all the time; you want to feel calm and safe. That's not too much to ask - it's just not coming from a bottle, not sustainably, not ever.

So, what helps instead?

- Deep breathing - also known as diaphragmatic breathing.
- Movement.
- Sitting on the floor in silence for three minutes without performing anything for anyone.
- Giving yourself permission to rest, without having to be numbed first.

Relaxation isn't found in what removes you from your life. It's found in what gently returns you to it, at a slower, kinder pace. And the more you practice that, the less the wine feels necessary, and the less you need to switch off.

Because slowly, you're feeling safe staying switched on.

Reflection & Journal Space

Ask yourself:

When I say I need to relax, what do I mean?

What does real, full-body rest feel like to me?

When was the last time I felt it?

What would relaxation look like if I trusted myself to stay present for it?

Finish this sentence:

I want to relax but more than that, I want to:

Chapter 20

If It Was Really Fun, You Wouldn't Be Reading This

If it was still working, you wouldn't be here. If it was just fun, you wouldn't be questioning it. If it felt good all the way through, you wouldn't be looking for a way out.

That's the giveaway.

Because when something's truly fun - when it brings joy, energy, connection - it doesn't leave you feeling flat the next day. It doesn't leave a trail of mental chatter, quiet shame, or wondering if 'this' is becoming 'a thing'.

It doesn't steal your mornings. It doesn't turn one glass into three when you swore it'd be just one. It doesn't become the thing you secretly negotiate around every evening. That's not fun. That's management.

There was probably a time when it was fun. Light. Social. Carefree. But something shifted. Maybe it's the way your body reacts now. Maybe it's how your emotions feel more fragile. Maybe it's how you feel halfway through the first glass - already unsure, already wishing you hadn't poured it.

Fun isn't supposed to come with conditions. It isn't supposed to ask you to recover from it. When people ask, but don't you miss it? it's okay if the answer is, "I don't miss how disconnected it made me feel."

You're not overreacting. You're waking up. You're noticing the difference between pleasure and self-abandonment, between actual joy and the hollow kind of fake enjoyment you drink your way into. If it was still serving you, you wouldn't be sitting with the discomfort of this process. You wouldn't be wondering what life might look like if you stopped reaching for something that keeps letting you down. Real fun - the kind that excites you instead of draining you - is still available. It's not gone. It's just been buried under the version of fun you were sold. The one that needed a drink in your hand to count.

You're allowed to choose better.

Reflection & Journal Space

Ask yourself:

When was the last time drinking actually felt good the whole way through - before, during, and after?

What 'version of fun' am I ready to retire?

What would freedom and joy feel like if I didn't need alcohol to access them?

Finish this sentence:

I don't miss the drink. I miss the feeling of:

Chapter 21

Put the Wine Down. Pick Up Your Power.

This is the part where we get real. We know that wine was never the problem. It wasn't the villain. It wasn't even the root cause. It was just a symptom of something deeper. A need to manage, escape, cope - whatever you call it. It didn't make you weak; it made you human.

But now, you're at a crossroads. You've seen what it wasn't doing *for* you, and what it was doing *to* you. Now you're choosing differently - and that's not about getting rid of the wine but about reclaiming yourself.

The power was never in the drink; it was always in you. It was in your ability to choose. It was in your ability to feel. It was in your ability to let go of what isn't serving you and reach for something better. You didn't have the permission, or the right support to see it. But now you do.

Letting go of the wine doesn't make you weak. It makes you stronger than you've ever been. Because now, you're going to show up for yourself in a way you haven't been able to before. You're going to trust your own clarity. Your own

wisdom. Your own ability to stand firm when everything else tells you to turn away.

You can handle what's coming without the crutch, without the mask. This isn't about restriction, it's about expansion. You're not quitting something. You're choosing something more. More presence. More truth. More honesty. More energy. More life. Once you make that choice, you start to see it everywhere. The way you move through the world changes. The way you engage with yourself shifts. The way you interact with others, with your work, with your body, with your mind - it all becomes clearer, more connected, and more powerful.

This is where you start trusting your intuition again, your gut, your natural instincts. The part of you that's been buried under self-doubt, under shame, under exhaustion. You can trust that part of yourself. And that's where the real power lives.

No more performing. No more pretending. No more negotiating with yourself about what you can and can't have. You get to be real with yourself now. To take yourself - and your life - seriously.

Reflection & Journal Space

Ask yourself:

How do I feel when I think about releasing the drink?

What part of myself has been waiting for this moment?

If I didn't need the wine, what would I do differently?

Finish this sentence:

I am not quitting. I am choosing:

Chapter 22

Who Are You Without the Buffer?

Without the wine, who are you? It's not an easy question to answer at first because the wine has blocked your self-identity. It's been the thing you've turned to for comfort, for stress relief, for company, for escape, for joy, for everything in between. So, without it, there's a gap. A space you might not be sure how to fill.

And that's where the real work begins. Because what you're really asking is: who am I when I'm fully present? Who am I without the mask, the shield, the numbing?

The truth is, you've been doing so much just to get by. The wine has been a way to survive, not a way to live. Now that you're stepping into a new space - one without the usual numbing - you get to ask yourself what it looks like to truly show up for yourself without the crutch.

At first, it's scary. It feels like being raw, exposed, vulnerable. Like you're stepping into an unfamiliar room without any walls around you or floor to support you - but the walls aren't keeping you safe, they're keeping you small, the floor isn't

supporting you, it's built on sand. They're both keeping you from seeing what you're capable of.

When you stop buffering, you start feeling. And when you start feeling, you begin to see who you really are without distractions, without excuses, without masks.

You are more than the moments you're trying to escape. More than the things you've been running from. More than the comfort you've been chasing. And when you step into that space - the space where you don't need the buffer - you'll find yourself in a new kind of power. The kind that comes from owning your full presence. The kind that comes from trusting your own ability to cope, to manage, to feel, to live - without hiding.

This isn't about perfection. It's about presence. It's about trusting that you are enough, exactly as you are, without needing anything to numb it or dumb it down.

In that space, you'll find your true power. Not the power of control. Not the power of avoidance. The power of being real with yourself and allowing yourself to simply be.

Reflection & Journal Space

Ask yourself:

What do I feel when I think about showing up fully, without the buffer?

Who am I underneath the layers of distraction?

What does it look like for me to feel, truly feel, without needing anything to numb the experience?

Finish this sentence:

Without the wine, I am:

Chapter 23

The Shame Spiral is Cancelled

Shame has its own gravitational pull. Once it gets a hold of you, it drags you in deeper, faster. It whispers all the things you've ever feared: You're not enough. You're failing. You're never going to be the person you want to be.

And when it's tied to something like alcohol, something you've been using to cope, shame can wrap itself around every choice, every moment you wonder if you've crossed a line or let yourself down.

But here's the truth: the shame spiral is optional.

It might feel automatic, like a reflex. You drink, you regret it, and shame kicks in. It loops, and before you know it, you're punishing yourself for something you're already tired of. It's a trap. It's the thing that keeps you stuck, even when you know better.

But it doesn't have to be like this.

The shame spiral is not the price you pay for wanting more. It's not a requirement for growth. It's not a necessary part of change. And it doesn't define you.

Shame is the belief that there's something wrong with you, that's why you need to drink. Not true. There is nothing wrong with you. Drinking is a habit, a cycle that you've learned, but one that doesn't need to keep repeating.

You can cancel the habit, stop following it. You can stop believing that guilt and shame are what drive you to be better. You don't need to shame yourself to change. You don't need to beat yourself up to heal. Instead, you can start showing yourself compassion for every misstep. You can allow room for mistakes. You can recognize when you've slipped and choose to move forward - not by punishing yourself, but by understanding yourself.

Shame feeds on silence and isolation. But when you acknowledge it, when you see it for what it is, when you refuse to let it control your actions, it loses its power. It loses its hold over you. And in its place, you get to choose something else: grace, forgiveness, and patience - for yourself.

This isn't about being perfect. It's about being kind to yourself, even when you're not where you want to be. It's about understanding that change is about progress not perfection, and progress is never a straight line. The shame spiral is cancelled. The new path is one of self-acceptance.

Reflection & Journal Space

Ask yourself:

When I feel shame, what do I usually tell myself?

How has shame been a barrier to moving forward?

What would it look like to show myself compassion instead of shame?

Finish this sentence:

I choose compassion over shame because...

Chapter 24

What Were You Really Thirsty For?

We reach for a drink; it feels like we're trying to quench a thirst, one that's immediate and sharp, that makes us feel like we need something refreshing *right now*. But when you pause and think about it, what are you *really* thirsty for?

It's easy to say relaxation, or escape, or pleasure. But at the heart of it, it's more than that. When you're pouring that first glass, there's something deeper you're trying to fill. A space that's been left empty for far too long.

Maybe it's the need to feel at ease in your own skin. Maybe it's the desire to feel like you belong, to relax, to truly be able to unwind without being "on" or "performing." Maybe it's the longing for emotional comfort that feels out of reach, or the overwhelming need to be free of the mental chatter that's constantly running in the background. Maybe it's simply wanting to feel something - anything - other than the heaviness of your thoughts.

Alcohol became the answer to all of that, but it wasn't the right answer. It was a temporary fix to something much deeper, something that was never going to be solved long-

term with a short-term solution. It only numbed the problem; it didn't heal it.

What if, instead of reaching for a glass, you started asking yourself what you're truly thirsty for? What if you could find comfort without needing to numb the feeling, to really sit with the emptiness and know it doesn't have to be filled by anything external?

Recognise that the relief you're looking for is yours to claim, but it's not in the bottle. It's in allowing yourself to ask the hard questions, to sit with the discomfort of being human, and to trust that you are capable of holding space for all your feelings, good or bad, without needing to erase them.

Maybe you're thirsty for peace, connection, or a deeper sense of fulfilment. Whatever it is, it's available to you without the drink. It's available in the way you learn to show up for yourself, in how you reclaim your time, your energy, and your heart, and in the ways you give yourself permission to feel and heal.

What are you really thirsty for?

Reflection & Journal Space

Ask yourself:

What do I reach for when I feel empty or disconnected?

What deeper need am I trying to meet by drinking?

How can I start filling that need in a healthier way, without numbing it?

Finish these sentences:

I'm thirsty for:

Because:

Chapter 25

Tiny Choices, Big Comebacks

It's easy to think that change needs to be big and dramatic, something that shakes everything up. You imagine the ideal version of yourself - someone who doesn't hesitate, who always says and does the "right" thing, who is never caught off guard - and it's hard to imagine the change you'd need to undertake to become this flawless person.

But power doesn't lie in huge change and perceived perfection; real power lies in the small choices, the ones that don't feel like a big deal in the moment but end up adding up to something much bigger. It's the quiet, everyday decisions that can turn the course of your day, your week, your life, into something that may currently be impossible to imagine.

It's that moment when you're standing in the kitchen, and you pause before reaching for the glass. The choice might seem small, but it's huge. Choosing to stay present with what you're feeling instead of numbing it, choosing to sit with discomfort, to breathe, to feel without distraction, gathered together these small steps make an impressive journey of self-discovery and transformation.

The comeback isn't in one grand gesture. It's in how you respond to yourself in the moments no one else sees. It's in choosing not to react the same way you always have. When you make those small, steady choices, they start to stack up.

Every time you show up for yourself in this way, you reinforce a new pattern. Every time you decide to pause and choose something that supports your wellbeing, you're slowly but surely coming back to yourself. You're re-establishing trust in your own ability to make choices that feel right, even if they're hard in the moment.

The beautiful part of it is, that these small, incremental shifts lead to massive change. The things that once felt out of reach, impossible to achieve, now become achievable. Not because you suddenly became someone else, but because you made the decision, time and time again, to honour yourself.

Tiny choices. Big comebacks.

Reflection & Journal Space

Ask yourself:

What small choice can I make today to shift the course of the rest of my day?

How have small choices I've made in the past helped me reclaim my power?

What's one thing I can do today to show up for myself without judgment?

Finish these sentences:

Today, I choose:

Because:

Chapter 26

Drinking to Cope Is So Last Season

There was a time when drinking was the go-to. The quick fix. The social norm. The “easy” solution to whatever was going on, from stress to boredom to overwhelm. It felt like the perfect band-aid. A temporary relief from a world that was too much.

But here’s the thing: the world hasn’t changed - you have. Drinking to cope is the outdated response. It’s the one that worked for a while, but now it’s starting to feel off. The temporary relief isn’t cutting it anymore. It’s leaving you feeling worse, not better. It’s not solving the deeper issues. It’s keeping you stuck in patterns you’ve outgrown.

Drinking to cope isn’t a sign of weakness. It’s a sign of wanting something better - a desire for peace, for ease, for emotional space. But drinking no longer gets you there. It leaves you with the same problems, only now they come with a foggy morning and a sense of regret.

You can’t *fix* emotional pain with something that contributes to it. Coping is not about numbing, it’s about engaging. It’s about finding new, healthier ways to manage what life throws

at you without running from it. Those new ways are already within you. You don't need a crutch. You have everything you need to face the hard stuff head-on. It's not easy, clean, or tidy - but it's real. Messy, painful, imperfect - but real. These new ways of doing things mean you're doing *everything* the critical voice in your head would hate and reject. That's the power of choosing something different. Choosing to feel, to confront, to engage without masking, without listening to the critical voices from the past...

Drinking to cope is so last season. Now, it's time for something fresh, something that gives you more than temporary relief - something that gives you limitless strength and real, lasting change.

Facing life with clear eyes, a steady heart, and the courage to be present with everything, even when it's hard, gives you what you've never had. It gives you emotional freedom and spiritual peace.

Reflection & Journal Space

Ask yourself:

What are the emotions I've been masking with alcohol?

What other ways can I learn to deal with those emotions without numbing them?

What does it look like to show up for my life instead of running from it?

Finish this sentence:

I used to cope with my emotions by drowning them. Now I cope with them by:

Chapter 27

The Joy of Waking Up With a Clear Conscience

You won't be aware of the emotional weight you've been carrying until you've made it through the first few mornings without the *previous night's wine* dulling your senses. When you wake up remembering the thoughtless decisions you made the night before, the guilt and embarrassment hang over you all day influencing and impacting every choice you make and every feeling and thought you have. That guilt, that inner conflict, it stays with you. It follows you. It's that voice that says, 'you did it again'.

Waking up without the hangover, without foggy memories and sudden realisations of the choices you made and now need to atone for, brings a freedom you can't quite explain. It's the feeling of being unburdened, of knowing you can move through the day with a clean slate.

It's not about being perfect, we know that by now. It's about being real. It's about waking up and knowing you made choices you can stand by. It's about being able to look at yourself in the mirror and say, I'm proud of the person I'm becoming.

You're not chasing some unattainable ideal, you're just choosing honesty over hiding from alcohol-infused choices. And that brings incredible peace.

Your clear conscience isn't a reward, it's a birthright. It doesn't come from having all the answers. It comes from showing up for yourself, even when it's hard. It comes from making the tough decision not to rely on alcohol to carry you through the day. It comes from the courage to let go of the old patterns that have been weighing you down.

Waking up with a clear conscience is the ultimate good feeling that guarantees you begin your day with peace and clarity. It's a freedom that once you've experienced it, you never want to let it go.

Reflection & Journal Space

Ask yourself:

How do I feel when I wake up after a night of drinking?

What does a clear conscience feel like for me?

How would it feel to wake up proud of my decisions, knowing I've made choices that align with who I want to be?

Finish this sentence:

I woke up this morning with a clear conscience because:

Chapter 28

Emotional Sobriety

Being physically sober is just the first step. The real work begins when you start understanding your emotions without needing to numb them.

You might be sober in the traditional sense - no alcohol, no substances - but that doesn't necessarily mean you're emotionally clear. It doesn't mean you're free of the things that once led you to drink.

Emotional sobriety is what happens when you start facing those emotions directly, without reaching for something to make them go away.

Emotional sobriety isn't about pretending to be fine when you're not. It's not about stuffing feelings down or dismissing them. It's about sitting with them, letting them be there without letting them control you. It's about learning to cope with life's ups and downs without looking for a quick escape.

Here's the key: when you're emotionally sober, you don't need alcohol to feel okay. You don't need to run from your feelings or use a substance to feel "in control." You're already in control, and that control comes from feeling everything

fully, without fear. You learn to accept the good and the bad, the comfortable and the uncomfortable, all while standing in your own strength.

This isn't about being perfect. It's not about erasing difficult emotions. It's about developing the emotional resilience to let those emotions flow without needing to numb them. It's about trusting that you can feel your feelings without them overwhelming you.

Emotional sobriety is where you start to reconnect with yourself, and where you find true freedom. Because it's not just about not drinking, it's about being truly present, fully alive, fully you, without needing a prop to get you through the day.

Reflection & Journal Space

Ask yourself:

What does emotional sobriety mean to me?

How will I react when tough emotions come up now, compared to before?

What emotional tools or practices can I start using to stay present, instead of turning to alcohol?

Finish this sentence:

Emotional sobriety is about feeling my feelings, without letting them:

Chapter 29

You're Allowed to Feel It All

There's a quiet pressure that comes with wanting to keep things together. You don't want to appear weak. You don't want to burden others with your emotions. And you don't want to deal with the mess of feeling everything all at once.

But here's the truth: you're allowed to feel it all.

Every emotion. Every wave of discomfort. Every moment of sadness, frustration, and joy. They all matter. And they're all part of your process.

For too long, emotions have been treated like something to be avoided. A sign of weakness. Something that needs to be numbed. So, we distract ourselves, and we reach for anything that will make us feel better, even if it's temporary. We bottle things up...and then **we uncork the *physical* bottle to cope with what we've put in the *emotional* bottle.**

But feeling your feelings - all of them - is what helps you heal. It's what helps you move through them instead of getting stuck. The difficult emotions aren't the ones you need to run from; they're the ones you need to sit with. To honour. To feel fully, without fear or shame.

Feeling isn't about letting the emotions take over; it's about allowing yourself to experience them, without judgement and making yourself wrong or shamed or guilty. It's about trusting that your emotions don't define you, but they do inform you. They show you what you need, what you're afraid of, and what you're learning.

You're not meant to be numb. You're meant to be alive, to be fully present with the highs and the lows, the joy and the pain. Emotions are messengers, not enemies. They guide you. They teach you.

The more you allow yourself to feel, the less you need to numb. The more you trust yourself to handle the tough stuff, the stronger you become.

This isn't about perfect emotional control. It's about freedom, the freedom to let things be as they are, without trying to make them fit into a story you've been told about what's acceptable.

It's the freedom to say, I'm human. I'm allowed to feel everything I need to feel.

Reflection & Journal Space

Ask yourself:

What emotions have I been avoiding or numbing?

How does it feel to acknowledge my emotions instead of pushing them away?

What would it be like to let myself feel everything, without guilt or shame?

Finish this sentence:

I'm allowed to feel it all, and I choose to feel:

Chapter 30

Reclaiming the You That Doesn't Need Permission

There's something deeply freeing about realising you don't need permission to live your life the way *you* want. For so long, you might have been waiting for someone to tell you it's okay, waiting for a sign, waiting for the right time. Maybe you needed someone's approval and permission to validate your worthiness as someone who deserves to be happy, successful, and live in peace. For them to say, 'I approve of your choices and decisions'. In other words, 'I approve of you.'

The problem is when you depend on *their* approval for *your* wellbeing and worthiness and they choose to make their *disapproval* apparent - which they will - they take you're your feelings of wellbeing and worthiness - and destroy them.

The truth is you've always had the permission. You've just been waiting to give it to yourself.

When we're children we all look for external validation - approval from others, confirmation that we're doing things right, reassurance that we're making the right choices. If we don't receive that in childhood we'll keep looking for it.

Doesn't matter how old we get; **a lack of childhood love and approval** will forever uphold **empty spaces in our hearts and minds**. Unless **we fill the spaces** with our own empowering feelings of **love, resilience, self-kindness, and self-compassion**, we will fill them instead with **shame, guilt, quick fixes, and a tsunami of behaviours** that show our desperate need **for the love and approval we never received**.

As adults, while outside support and encouragement can be helpful, it's not the permission you need. **What you've been waiting for isn't someone else's approval, it's your own.**

The moment you realise that you don't need permission to be you - to take up space, to make decisions, to walk your path - that's when everything changes. You reclaim your power. You stop asking for permission to live your life and start giving permission to yourself.

This isn't about rejecting help, guidance, or community - it's about understanding that your worth isn't tied to other people's approval. It's about recognising that you get to decide what's right for you. You get to choose your direction, your values, and your path, without needing to justify yourself to anyone.

And when you do that, you unlock a freedom that can't be taken away. **You stand in your own truth, knowing that you are allowed to make the choices that are best for you, regardless of what anyone else thinks.**

This is your life. You don't need permission to live it fully. You just need to give yourself the space to choose permission for yourself.

Reflection & Journal Space

Ask yourself:

In what areas of my life have I been waiting for permission from others?

What would it feel like to give myself permission to choose my own path?

What decisions am I ready to make without needing external validation?

Finish this sentence:

I no longer wait for permission because I know that:

Chapter 31

Affirmations for When You'd Rather Pour a Glass

When the urge hits, when the temptation feels almost too much to resist, it's easy to forget what you've worked so hard for. The habit becomes a comfort, a way to shut everything out. But in those moments, instead of reaching for a drink, you have the power to choose something different. Something that doesn't take from you, but gives back.

Here are some affirmations to remind you of your strength, your progress, and your ability to stay present, no matter what:

- I don't need to numb to feel safe.
- I am allowed to feel everything and still be okay.
- This feeling is temporary, and I am stronger than any urge to drink.
- I choose to be present with myself, without needing anything to distract me.
- I trust that I can handle this moment without relying on alcohol.
- I am worthy of peace and clarity, and I choose to nurture those by staying sober.

- I give myself permission to take a break, breathe, and reset without a drink.
- My emotions are valid, and I can handle them without numbing.
- Every moment I choose to stay present is a victory. I am doing the work to heal.
- I honour my body by choosing what nourishes me, rather than what drains me.
- I am in control of my choices, and I am proud of how far I've come.

These affirmations don't magically make the cravings disappear. But they remind you that you are more than the urge to drink. You are more than the pattern. You have the power to make a different choice, and each time you do, you build your strength.

It's not about perfection. It's about progress. It's about showing up, even when it's hard, and knowing that you are worthy of doing the work to become the person you want to be.

Reflection & Journal Space

Ask yourself:

When I feel the urge to drink, what am I really needing in that moment?

How do I feel after making the choice to stay sober?

What affirmations will support me on days when the cravings feel too strong?

Finish this sentence:

The power I need to resist the urge is already within me because:

Chapter 32

Journal Prompts

Sometimes, the best way to understand what's really going on is to write it out. No filters. No right or wrong answers. Just you and the page, without judgement.

These journal prompts are designed to get you out of your head and into your heart. They'll help you get to the core of what you're really feeling, and why the urge to drink might be showing up. The goal isn't to force change but to gain clarity, to allow yourself the space to reflect without expectations.

Prompt 1: What am I feeling right now? Not just what's on the surface, dig deeper. What's beneath the frustration, the boredom, the anxiety, or the stress?

Prompt 2: What do I feel when I'm not drinking? Explore the feelings that show up when you are fully present with yourself without the need to numb or escape.

Prompt 3: What's the hardest part of facing my emotions? Is it the discomfort? The fear of what you'll find? The vulnerability? Write it all down. There's no need to rush through it.

Prompt 4: What's the 'reward' I think I'm getting from drinking? What do you believe alcohol is giving you? And do you feel that reward truly lasts, or does it disappear once the glass is empty?

Prompt 5: What would I do if I didn't feel the urge to drink? What could you do with all that energy, all that space, if you didn't feel the need to drink? What would you try, explore, or enjoy instead?

Prompt 6: How would my life change if I didn't drink at all for a month? Take this seriously, no minimising. What would shift in your daily routine, your emotions, your relationships? What would you gain? How much money would you save?

Prompt 7: What does my 'ideal self' look like, and how does drinking fit into that vision? Imagine the version of you that you aspire to be. What does that person feel, think, and do? Does alcohol fit into that vision? Why, or why not?

Prompt 8: What do I feel when I face a difficult moment, and how do I usually cope? What triggers the desire to drink? Is it boredom, loneliness, stress, anxiety, or something else? Write down what you've been using as a coping

mechanism and how you can replace it with something that truly serves you.

Prompt 9: What would it feel like to make a decision, no matter how small, that brings me closer to my ideal self today? Even small decisions add up. What can you choose today - just one thing - that aligns with the person you want to become?

Prompt 10: If I could say one thing to myself right now, what would it be? What does your inner self need to hear today? What would you say to yourself to offer comfort, reassurance, and strength?

These prompts are about helping you reflect, but more importantly, they're about uncovering the deeper truth of what's driving you. You don't need to have all the answers right away. Just let the words come out without filtering them. The more honest you are with yourself, the more you'll begin to understand where the urge to drink really comes from.

Reflection & Journal Space

Ask yourself:

How did these prompts feel to write?

Did anything surprise me?

What's the hardest part of journaling for me?

What's one new thing I've discovered about myself through journaling?

Finish this sentence:

The more I write, the more I realise:

Chapter 33

Little Wins That Deserve a Confetti Cannon

Sometimes, the biggest victories go unnoticed. In a world that celebrates the grand gestures, the dramatic turnarounds, the quick fixes, the big leaps, it's easy to overlook the small wins and the unflashy moments that don't generate a round of applause. Those moments make all the difference - the quiet victories that add up over time, without anyone noticing except you, they're worth celebrating. They're the foundation of everything you're building, even if they don't seem important in the moment.

Maybe it's the night you decided to leave the glass untouched. Or the morning you woke up feeling clear instead of foggy. Maybe it's the first time you recognised an emotional trigger without reaching for a drink, or the simple act of pausing, breathing, and choosing something else.

These moments are not small. They're the turning points. They're the choices that make you stronger, that reconnect you with your power.

Every time you choose yourself over the habit, it's a victory. Every time you acknowledge that you're doing the work, even

when it's hard, it's a victory. Every step you take that brings you closer to who you want to be, no matter how tiny, is worth celebrating.

Celebrate those moments, give them the attention they deserve. They're the markers of progress that will eventually lead you to where you want to be. They add up, one small win at a time, even if no one else is noticing, take a moment to say, 'well done'. You deserve it. You really do.

Reflection & Journal Space

Ask yourself:

What small wins have I overlooked in my journey?

What's one moment today that I can celebrate, even if it feels small?

How can I start celebrating my progress more often?

Finish this sentence:

Today, I celebrate:

Chapter 34

You Are Never Too Broken To Heal

There's a story you might have been telling yourself for a while, a story about how broken you are. How the things you've been through have left you unfixable, beyond repair, too far gone to heal. Maybe it's a story about your past, about the choices you've made, about the things you've had to carry.

Healing isn't about fixing what's broken. It's about embracing what's been hurt and giving it the space to heal. It's about recognising that your past doesn't define your future. It's about allowing yourself to feel everything, not as a weakness, but as a step towards reclaiming your power.

You've had moments where you felt lost, days where it seemed easier to turn away than to face the hard stuff. But none of that makes you unworthy of healing. It just makes you human. You were never too broken to heal. You were never too far gone. You were never unworthy of love, growth, or change.

Healing doesn't happen in an instant. It doesn't follow a straight path. It's not a process with a clear start and finish.

Healing is messy, uneven, and unpredictable but that doesn't make it unachievable. Every day you show up for yourself, every time you make a choice that honours who you are, every time you pause to feel what needs to be felt, you are healing.

You don't need to wait for the right moment to heal. You don't need to be perfect to begin. You just need to start, no matter how small the steps. Healing only requires presence. It requires you.

You're allowed to be messy. You're allowed to be imperfect. And you are never too broken to heal.

Reflection & Journal Space

Ask yourself:

What parts of myself have I believed were too broken to heal?

What does healing look like for me right now, in this moment?

How can I honour the process of healing instead of rushing through it?

Finish this sentence:

I am healing because:

Chapter 35

Put the Wine Down, But Keep the Sparkle

You've done it. You've made it to the point where putting the wine down is no longer a choice but part of who you are. And while it's not always easy, you're learning how to stay grounded, how to be real with yourself, and how to move through life without relying on alcohol as your safety net.

But just because you've put the wine down doesn't mean you have to let go of everything that made you feel alive. You don't have to lose the sparkle. The joy. The lightness. The essence of who you are is still there.

The sparkle is about the moments of joy you find in the little things. It's about embracing life with curiosity, with gratitude, and with the willingness to feel things fully. It's about the freedom to enjoy the beauty of a sunrise, a warm hug, a good laugh, or the satisfaction of simply being present with yourself.

And the best part? You don't need alcohol to find it.

In fact, once the wine is out of the picture, you might realise just how much more accessible that sparkle is. You don't need to numb yourself to enjoy the world around you. You

can feel the joy without the haze. You can experience the richness of life, even in its messier moments, and still find beauty in it all.

You don't need to give up who you are. You don't need to give up the fun, the spontaneity, the connection, or the joy. What you're choosing is a more authentic version of yourself, a version that's unfiltered, untangled, and fully engaged with the present moment.

Keep your sparkle, hold onto the essence of who you are. You don't need to hide behind a glass to feel alive. You don't need to numb out or dumb down to find your joy.

The sparkle was never in the drink. It was always within you. And now, you get to embrace it, fully.

Reflection & Journal Space

Ask yourself:

What makes me feel alive and full of joy without needing alcohol?

How has letting go of the wine allowed me to reconnect with the things that truly light me up?

What's one way I can choose to celebrate life today, without needing a drink?

Finish this sentence:

I will keep my sparkle by:

Put the Wine Down was never about shaming you or telling you what you should do or how to live. It was about giving you permission to choose yourself without the prop, about stepping into your power and realizing that you can face life head-on, without needing to numb, hide, or escape.

This is about *you*. Your strength. Your ability to heal. Your ability to be fully present with your emotions and your life, without needing something outside of yourself to cope.

So, as you close this book, remember this: the journey you're on is unique to you. It doesn't matter how long it takes or how small the steps are. What matters is that you're showing up for yourself, one decision at a time.

You are more than the habits that have held you back. You are stronger than the things you've been running from. You are worthy of peace, clarity, and the freedom to be your true self. The real work begins when you choose to believe that.

You've got this.