



So, you want to QUIT DRINKING



By Karen Gardinier



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So, you want to quit drinking.

Well, let's talk about that for a minute. There are some safety issues that must be considered. It is not always safe for people to just stop drinking cold turkey. This is dependent on how much and how often they are drinking.

If there is one thing this pandemic has shown us is that you can get sober at home. I do not think you have to go to a treatment center or a detox house to get sober. I have helped a lot of people get sober in the last six months, at home. People all over the world have been "staying in place" during this pandemic and their drinking has been on a steady climb. Anxiety, Depression, and loneliness have fueled the fire of what might have been heavy drinking or Functional Alcoholism. Simultaneously the world of recovery has had to take to the worldwide web and Virtual Recovery is at an all time high. What a perfect time to get sober, with hundreds of thousands of support groups available online...for free!

However, we need to remember "Safety First"!

Let me ask a few questions here to help you get started and figure out where you are at on your journey. The first thing I ask someone who contacts me about getting sober is if they have a family doctor? This is such a blessing and makes it a much safer endeavor to have a doctor or medical professional walking you through detox. The first step is to call your family doctor and ask to talk to the doctor or the physician's assistant, the nurse, and tell them that you are drinking too much and you need help quitting at home. They're going to ask you a series of questions. How much are you drinking a day? How often? Have you ever tried before & what happened? Tell them the truth.

The whole point of this exercise is not that you are telling on yourself, it's that you may need some prescriptions. You might need a prescription, an anti-seizure med and possibly a taper med. It's up to your doctor. They're going to know what to do. I've had all sorts of people, have all sorts of responses. Somebody I helped got a taper med. Somebody was just given some anti-seizure medication. Probably these decisions were made based on the doctor hearing how much they were drinking and how often.

I had a couple of girls whose doctor put them on Antabuse. I know another girl in Texas whose doctor tapered her with alcohol, with the exact alcohol she was drinking, and it was a slow taper. It was a long, gradual taper. She still had about two weeks left where she was supposed to drink a ridiculously small amount, she was going to meetings during her detox. During that last two weeks stretch She was just like, "Oh, forget it. I'm done." So, she did not even have to finish the taper, but it got her through the danger zone. I think when you are ready, you are ready, and it is all going to work.



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So, call the doctor.

Quitting any other kind of drug is not as dangerous. Heroin is not a dangerous drug to detox from. It is extremely uncomfortable, terribly painful, but you will not die from the detox.

People die from Heroin when they quit and then relapse and go back out and they overuse, they think they can use what they used before and they overdose. Meth addicts usually do not die during detox either. If it's just meth, they sleep and eat for about three or four days and then they feel great. Barbiturate users are a little bit different. They should be under doctor's care as well.

Alcoholics in general should be contacting a doctor to detox. So, let's say you don't have a family doctor. What are you going to do? Well, the next thing I would say is if you don't have a family doctor, depending on how much you're drinking, go to Urgent Care. You can tell Urgent Care, "I am drinking myself to death," exaggerate if you need to, "and I need an anti-seizure med or a detox med. Can you put me on a taper?"

Right now, because of the pandemic, they are helpful. In a lot of areas Treatment Centers and detox houses have been closed or allowing limited number of occupancies You're going to get more help than you did before because this is quite common. People are at home, stuck at home and they are drinking too much, so check in to Urgent Care. If you are drinking too excess and you are drinking around the clock, go to the Emergency Room. Tell them you need to quit and see if they will give you a prescription taper.

Now, if none of these are options for you and you are an alcoholic like I am and you drank away your savings, your job, your insurance, you have no medical care and you're homeless, you can still get sober. I got sober. I had to detox at home. It was very dangerous, but I had done it before. If you are a die-hard alcoholic like I was, you know what I am talking about. You have had to tape yourself down before and you know how to do it. Any kind of die-hard alcoholic has had to pull himself together and get sober for some reason. The problem is "staying stopped".

So, if you need to get a neighbor or tell someone, "Seriously, I need to quit drinking and I need to taper down, will you help me?" You will get out a measuring cup and you will make a schedule, and you taper down. And do not tell me you do not know how to do it because I know you do. If things start going south have them call 911 or rush you to ER.

Also, if you need help and you need to go to the emergency or you need to talk to someone about this and you're just drunk as a skunk, this is what you're going to do. You are going to go into "maintenance mode."

Maintenance mode is when you have to get to the bank and cash a check, or you're not going to have any money or you're supposed to meet someone that's giving you money or you're trying to get a job. So, you kind of slow down and you drink water in between and you kind of pull yourself together. You're still a mess, but you slow down and you drink just enough so you



don't get sick. That's what I want you to do. I want you get to maintenance mode. So at least we can discuss options.

So I don't think anybody in this day and age right now has to go to a treatment center. Unless you are living in a house where people are constantly drinking and using drugs, and you're in a terrible situation and you need to get out and get away to get sober, and you have insurance, then by all means, go.

If that is the case, then you are going to call the number on the back of your insurance card. Cut to the chase. Don't try to find a place and then see if your insurance will cover it. Call your insurance. If it's state insurance, call that number on the back of the card and say, "I need help. Where do I go?" They're going to help you. There's a lot more resources right now.

But I'll tell you what. If you've got a doctor and they'll help you taper at home, you can get on Zoom meetings. You can go through the steps and you can get sober at home. So this is a great time to get sober. A lot of people think it's a terrible time. It's an absolutely great time, great time to get sober. And people have never been more serious about getting sober. I think this pandemic really rocked people's world about the seriousness of their drinking and using and what it was going to get them, what was going to happen.

So anyway, there's just some great starts. You can find a Zoom meeting everywhere right now. Whether it's a Zoom AA meeting, NA meeting, Al-Anon meeting, Nar-Anon meeting, there are lots of meetings. First thing you can do is you can just go to AlcoholicsAnonymous.org or NarcoticsAnonymous.org, and you can look at electronic meetings or Zoom meetings, same with Al-Anon family groups or Nar-Anon family groups. Google that.

You can also go to Facebook and search Zoom AA meetings, Zoom NA meetings, Zoom Al-Anon meetings and all these groups will come up. You can join these groups and you will get support like you will not imagine. I have helped women all over the world get sober that I have met on an AA women's group. It was AA women; I think is what it was called and then there's Women of AA. There are all sorts of Facebook pages. You can do that. You can go on to Instagram and look up the hashtag, #AAZoomMeetings.

You got to get genius about this. Go after it with as much vigor as you put into finding drugs and alcohol. You are going to look for meetings that have Big Book studies, people that read out the Big Book and then do the steps. No discussion meetings, no bullshit meetings, that's a waste of your time. Get to the meat and potatoes groups.

The program of Alcoholics Anonymous is in the first 164 pages of the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous. It's not a puzzle. It's right there in black and white, and it's free. So if you're thinking about getting sober, here are some good solid advice. Let's go.