

UNCORRECTED PROOF. NOT TO BE QUOTED FOR PUBLICATION.

**YOU'RE
DOING
GREAT!**

**AND
OTHER
LIES**

**ALCOHOL
TOLD ME**

DUSTIN DUNBAR

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DETOX TIMELINE: ONE WEEK ALCOHOL-FREE

You can do this. Trust me.

I became alcohol-free in Hawaii, on September 19, 2019. The Bloody Mary I had on my flight back from that disaster of a trip to Canada is the last drop of alcohol I've had since. When I ordered it, I knew it was my last drink.

Most of you won't need to take a final drink. You might already be done with—and disgusted by—alcohol. But for those of you who need to take your last drink, do it. Don't beat yourself up. You're saying a final goodbye to something that was in your life for a long time. That part of your life is now in the past.

Just know that it is an absolute fact that you're putting a toxic poison into your body. Mentally, it is important to get your consciousness in order, with no illusion about alcohol's benefits. You have to know with every fiber of your being that alcohol is bad for you, in every possible way.

The most important thing in this first seven days is community. Having people in your corner is essential. During my first week being alcohol-free, I relied on a community I found on the I Am Sober app. It was the best twelve dollars (a month) I ever spent. People posted regularly about their initial struggles and small but important successes. I spent that first week typing and texting, checking in with my online community, sharing positive reinforcement with people who were going through the same thing I was going through at the same time. We were all walking the same walk, and we were determined to keep each other accountable and make everyone feel supported. I felt like I was part of a team. (Now you, too, can be a teammate at the AFR website: www.WeAretheAFR.org)

When I wasn't on the app, I was hyperfocused on researching

DETOX TIMELINE

alcohol, which I realize now was the first step in unbrainwashing my mind. Almost immediately, I realized how bad alcohol is, how destructive and pernicious it is. Did you know alcohol is just ethanol, a highly flammable organic compound that is also used in personal care products, paints and varnishes, and gasoline? A liquid toxin, ethanol is the active ingredient in every alcoholic drink you've ever swallowed.

At the same time, I realized the power of repetition as reinforcement. I read and reread the books that resonated with me most. I repeated statistics and facts about alcohol, again and again, as if they were my personal mantra. You can do the same, especially if and when intrusive thoughts and temptations arise: keep reminding yourself of the facts about alcohol and the harm it can cause.

I was on a mission. Not only to break my addiction, but to break out of the Alcohol Matrix and its network of insidious lies once and for all.

My other allies in this mission were exercise and meditation, which helped me get my body and mind right after years of beating them up. Take a brisk walk, practice yoga, take fitness classes, ride a bike, or play with your kids. Meditation helps quiet your mind, training it on your own thoughts rather than the lies you've accepted about drinking and about yourself all these years. The guided meditation app Headspace is my personal favorite. It costs about six dollars a month, which is how much I used to spend for one drink! Now I spend that same amount to listen to a fully ordained Buddhist monk from London named Andy guide me through my meditation and explain in understandable ways what is happening in my brain to influence my thoughts. Get the app, do the daily guided meditation for ten to twenty minutes, and before you know it you will be a "meditator" just like me. Exercise and meditation will help you as your body starts to rid

itself of all those horrible toxins.

WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS

My addiction looked like two glasses of wine per night and more on the weekends. I didn't experience a lot of discomfort or withdrawal when I went alcohol-free, but it is very normal for your body and your mind to feel not so great when you are overcoming physical and psychological addiction while also purging your system of a lot of toxins. Depending on your level of addiction and the quantity of alcohol you regularly consume, detoxing might initially cause you some discomfort—mild, moderate, or severe. It's possible, if not probable, that you may experience a racing heartbeat, "the sweats," "the shakes," panic, or sudden mood swings. Though scary, withdrawal symptoms, no matter how debilitating, are only temporary.

If you are more severely addicted or have serious cravings, consult with your doctor. Three types of oral medications (naltrexone, acamprosate, and disulfiram) are currently approved for treating alcohol addiction. All three can mitigate symptoms of withdrawal, and all three can make alcohol undesirable to drink. Naltrexone, for instance, helps reduce cravings by binding and blocking the opioid receptors in the brain, which blocks alcohol's sedative effects. Acamprosate interacts with the brain's neurotransmitter systems, which reduces the addictive effects of alcohol, and disulfiram causes an adverse reaction to alcohol, like vomiting, nausea, a throbbing headache, and dizziness.

Symptoms of withdrawal can also be intensified by poor overall health. Those of you who don't eat a nutritious diet or get regular exercise will experience more unpleasant withdrawal symptoms. This is because your bodies are less resilient. Likewise, if you smoke, use other drugs, or have health conditions like depression, chronic pain, or underperforming organs, you might have some negative symptoms when going alcohol-free.

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If you suffer from these or other diagnosed conditions, I suggest you talk with a doctor to help you start to detox from alcohol.

Remember—you sacrifice nothing by giving up alcohol. Without it, you gain everything.

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