

Work Hard, *Play Smart*

5 Tips for Surviving Happy Hour



Wandering Beagle
Counseling

Work Hard, *Play Smart*

5 Tips for Managing Drinking at Happy Hour

Imagine this: The clock strikes 5 PM on Friday. You log off Teams and start packing up your office to head home for the weekend. A colleague stops by your desk and mentions that the office is going to the local bar down the street to unwind and celebrate this week's business successes. "Definitely! I'll see you there!" you reply. But it feels like an automatic response. You've already attended one happy hour this week along with another work function with a client. You're uncertain about going again, but you worry about being seen as "not a team player" if you skip the happy hour. Plus, FOMO is real. Your boss will be there; what if they overlook you for that big client account your team just secured? You're starting to question whether you're drinking too much, but you don't want to miss out on opportunities. Sound familiar? Here are five practical tips to help you maintain a balance between success and drinking during happy hour.

1 Set an *intention* Before Heading Out to Happy Hour

Being intentional about your actions is important when trying something new. If you don't understand the "why" behind your actions, it will be difficult to figure out the "how." Before you head out the door, take a moment to write down your intention for happy hour. Are you using this time to get to know your colleagues better? Are you looking to unwind after a hectic work week with others who understand the stress of your business? Or do you find that a couple of drinks helps ease your anxiety? Perhaps you're hoping to learn more about a new business opportunity your boss mentioned.

Identifying your intention is not about judging or shaming yourself; it's about bringing awareness to the reasons behind your actions. Make sure to write down your intention—whether in a notebook (which is my preference, as writing by hand helps your brain process information!) or in an app. Keep this intention at the forefront of your mind throughout the night.



2 Set a clear *limit* for the night.

Before you enter the bar, decide on a personal drink limit and stick to it. Whether you choose to have one drink or five, having a plan helps you maintain control and minimizes the temptation of "I'll just stay for one more..." This isn't about being overly restrictive (we all know how those goals can end up). It's about understanding your intentions and staying aligned with your purpose.



3. EAT!

Drinking alcohol on an empty stomach can lead to a quicker onset and greater intensity of intoxication. While that might be enjoyable for a night out with friends, it's not ideal for a professional happy hour. Eating a meal before you start drinking slows down the absorption of alcohol and reduces the feeling of a dizziness buzz.

Be sure to keep a go-to snack at your desk or grab a small meal before the event. If food is available at the event, make it a point to snack while you socialize. Many bars offer happy hour food specials as well; my personal favorite is the pretzel bites with queso!



4.

Alternate with Non-Alcoholic Drinks or mocktails

Do you feel pressured to drink just to avoid the "Why aren't you drinking?" question? You're not alone. While setting your intentions and limits, consider establishing a rule: for every alcoholic drink you have, alternate it with a non-alcoholic beverage. Many bars offer a variety of alcohol-free beers and impressive mocktails. Holding a drink in your hand can mimic the appearance of a standard cocktail, allowing you to blend in without having to explain your choices.

5

Focus on *conversations*

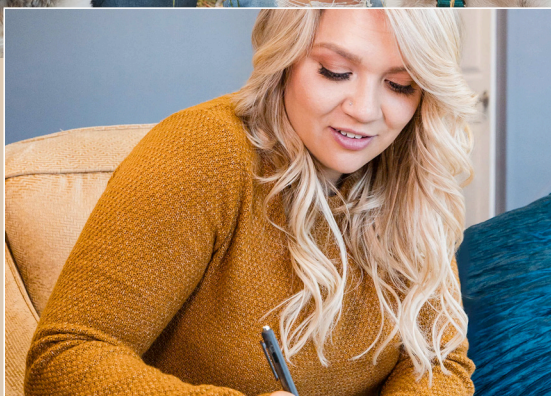
Chances are, you're already skilled at building relationships. Whether you're networking with other professionals or keeping your business clients engaged, it's all about nurturing those connections. Shift your focus from what's in your hand to connecting with your colleagues. Try asking open-ended questions about their hobbies. Listen actively by giving them your full attention. Show that you are listening by maintaining good eye contact and asking clarifying questions. You never know what relationships might develop through the power of rapport!



BONUS TIP! Learn how to say “*no*” in a respectful and assertive manner.

It requires skill to balance fitting in with your colleagues and the work culture while also protecting your personal boundaries. Prepare polite yet firm responses for declining invitations to drinks. Make sure these responses align with your personality and style so they feel more natural. It's a good idea to practice them ahead of time! Here are some examples: “I'm pacing myself tonight,” “I've got to see Grandma bright and early tomorrow, and she'll know if I'm hungover,” or simply, “I'm good for now, thanks.”

Did you find these tips helpful? If so, email me at chelsea@wanderingbeaglecounseling.com! If you're ready to explore your relationship with alcohol, stress, and anxiety more deeply, visit wanderingbeaglecounseling.com and click the “Schedule NOW” button to book your free consultation.



Chelsea Follett is a licensed professional counselor (LPC) and addiction counselor (LAC) with 14 years of experience in the mental health and substance use fields. She specializes in working with young adults and professionals in high-stress, demanding careers/fields, particularly those looking to redefine their relationship with alcohol and other substances. Her focus is on helping clients maintain career/school success while exploring sober-curious lifestyles and understanding the underlying reasons for their challenges. Chelsea owns a private practice where she sees clients in Evergreen, Colorado, and Westminster, Colorado.

About Me Hi I'm Chelsea!

I don't preach sobriety and I'm not here to tell you not to do drugs. I'm here to create a place where we can have the difficult conversations in order to shine light on the parts of us that we would rather hide or pretend didn't exist.

If you're starting to wonder if your relationship with alcohol has become problematic—even if it's not yet causing major disruptions in your life, you've come to the right place.

And if the idea of never enjoying a drink again isn't appealing, here's the good news. Redefining one's relationship with alcohol doesn't have to mean 100% sobriety. There is a middle ground where you can figure what works for you!



Wandering Beagle
Counseling

32135 Castle Court, Suite 208
Evergreen, CO

2008 West 120th Avenue
Westminster, CO, USA

720.837.1015
chelsea@wanderingbeaglecounseling.com