

# SELF-EVALUATION OF DRINKING

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A. People differ widely in how much they drink. Some people avoid alcohol altogether, some drink only a little, others drink more. It is difficult to say how much is "too much" for a certain individual or for people in general. But what is **your own** honest opinion about your drinking pattern? Do not ask whether your drinking seems "normal" or "social" or "moderate" in relation to other people's drinking. Rather the question is: What do **YOU** think about your present drinking?

1. I am certain that I drink too much.
2. I probably drink too much.
3. I am not sure.
4. I probably do not drink too much.
5. I am certain that I do not drink too much.

B. Regardless of what a person thinks about his or her own drinking, the people around him or her form their own opinions. Sometimes family members or friends are concerned that the person is drinking too much. Sometimes a doctor or other professional advises the person to "do something" about alcohol. Sometimes others notice and worry about the person's drinking but do not say anything for fear of embarrassment or creating hard feelings. What do you think about how other people view your drinking at the present time?

1. I am certain that there are people who think I drink too much.
2. Probably there are people who think I drink too much.
3. I am not sure whether other people think I drink too much.
4. Probably other people do not think I drink too much.
5. I am certain that other people do not think I drink too much.

C. Alcohol can affect one's social life. Some people find that drinking damages their social relationships or reputations. They say things they should not have said, make other people angry or upset, cause distance from loved ones, or perhaps lose friends because of drinking and its effects. Other people report that alcohol helps them socially. They feel more relaxed or less shy around other people when they drink, are more able to talk and socialize. Some believe that alcohol helps them to be more witty and clever, or to carry on a better conversation. Some people are proud of how much alcohol they can drink, and regard this as a positive part of their social reputation. Overall, what effect do

you think your drinking is having on your social life and relationships at the present time?

1. I think it is having a very negative or damaging effect.
2. I think it is having some negative or damaging effect.
3. I think it is having no effect, one way or the other.
4. I think it is having some positive or helpful effect.
5. I think it is having a very positive or helpful effect.

D. Another area that can be affected by alcohol is health. It has been shown that heavy drinkers have higher risks of many diseases including cancers, ulcers, and heart disease. One organ that is very clearly damaged by alcohol is the liver. In later stages of liver disease the symptoms are obvious: swollen belly, yellowing of the skin, darkening of the urine; but in early stages it is difficult to see the damage without special testing. Among other negative effects of alcohol on health are: more frequent colds and illnesses because of lowered resistance, slow healing of cuts or other injuries, odd aches and pains or numbness and tingling in the hands or feet, stomach pains, fatigue, and weakness. On the other hand it has been reported that very moderate drinkers may experience beneficial health effects, especially a decrease in the risk of heart disease, and some people feel that they are healthier because of their drinking. Overall, what effect do you think your drinking is having on your physical health at the present time?

1. I think it is seriously damaging my health.
2. I think it is damaging my health somewhat.
3. I think it is having no effect on my health, one way or the other.
4. I think it is having a somewhat beneficial effect on my health.
5. I think it is having a very beneficial effect on my health.

E. Alcohol has powerful effects on human emotions. Contrary to popular belief, it is a depressant drug and can directly produce negative moods or make them worse. Some people feel more anxious, guilty, upset, or depressed during drinking. One reason for confusion about alcohol's true effects on mood is that drinking may cause slightly better mood at moderate levels, but in larger doses alcohol can have just the opposite effect. (Also it seems easier to remember the positive effects of low doses.) On the other hand, some people do experience mostly positive feelings during and after drinking. They feel more calm, relaxed, happy, carefree, confident. They feel better about themselves, more like the person they want to be. Overall, what effect do you think your present drinking is having on your emotional state?

1. I think it is having a very negative effect on my mood overall.

2. I think it is having a somewhat negative effect on my mood overall.
3. I think it is having no effect on my mood.
4. I think it is having a somewhat positive effect on my mood overall.
5. I think it is having a very positive effect on my mood overall.

F. It is possible to become addicted to alcohol in the same way that people can become addicted to other drugs such as narcotics. Not everyone does become addicted or dependent, however; many people drink without dependence on alcohol. In the most serious forms of alcohol addiction, a person becomes severely ill when he or she stops drinking: the person may have severe shaking, sweating, convulsions, physical sickness, or hallucinations (seeing, hearing, or feeling things that are not there).

What many people do not realize is that dependence on alcohol occurs gradually over a period of months or years, and that there are signs of developing addiction long before these more serious stages are reached. Early signs of dependence can include any of the following:

- Shakiness, nervousness, or vague anxiety
- Headache
- Insomnia (sleeping problems)
- Irritability
- Sensitivity to noise, jumpiness
- Feeling of "needing" a drink

These occur when the person stops drinking or cuts down for a period of time (if the person does not take other drugs). Another important clue is that the person feels better (the signs go away) if he or she drinks or takes a tranquillizer or sedative medication. Sometimes the symptoms are very mild, and the person does not recognize them as signs of dependence, nor experience a "craving" for alcohol.

An increase in one's physical dependence on alcohol may show up in other ways:

- A gradual increase in drinking
- Being less affected by alcohol
- Having more severe hangovers
- Drinking in the morning
- Feeling urges to drink

It is difficult to judge your own degree of dependence objectively. Do not be misled just because you do not feel dependent on alcohol, or because it seems

you "can go without it." The question is this: Given the signs of dependence described above, do you think your present drinking is producing a physical dependence on alcohol?

1. I clearly am very dependent on alcohol.
2. Probably I am becoming dependent on alcohol.
3. I am not sure.
4. Probably I am not becoming dependent on alcohol.
5. I am certain that I am not becoming dependent on alcohol.

G. Some people simply run into problems because of drinking. When drinking they are less able to cope with day-to-day difficulties. They may use alcohol to forget troubles, but in the long run this does not solve anything and may make things worse. For others, alcohol seems to help them solve problems (and not just avoid them). Life seems less troublesome with alcohol and problems are fewer. Overall, what effect do you think your drinking is having on your life problems at the present time?

1. I think it is making my life problems much worse.
2. I think it is making my life problems somewhat worse.
3. I think it is having no effect on my life problems.
4. I think it is making my life problems somewhat better.
5. I think it is making my life problems much better.

H. Recent research shows that heavy drinking can damage the brain. More than 50% of chronic dependent drinkers show actual physical shrinkage of the brain itself. The brain becomes significantly smaller, and this can be seen in an x-ray. In advanced stages, alcohol-produced brain damage includes permanent disabilities in memory and learning. With careful testing, it is possible to detect these damaging effects much sooner, before they become serious and permanent. These earlier effects are difficult to notice without such testing, but they may appear as increased difficulties in concentrating or remembering things. The alcohol blackout, a period of time during drinking that the person cannot remember later, is a possible sign of beginning brain damage. It has been shown that much of this early brain impairment can be reversed. On the other hand, some people believe that alcohol makes them smarter, more mentally keen and alert, more able to concentrate or to think creatively. Overall, what effect do you think alcohol is having on your brain and mental abilities at the present time?

1. I think it is having a very damaging effect.
2. I think it is having a somewhat damaging effect.
3. I think it is having no effect at all.
4. I think it is having a somewhat beneficial effect.
5. I think it is having a very beneficial effect.

I. If you have a family, the effects of alcohol may be positive or negative. For some, alcohol has a dividing and destructive effect on the family. Drinking results in hard feelings, arguments, bitterness, and distance, making the family less happy. For others, alcohol is part of enjoyable family times. It makes for warmer times together and serves to draw the family closer. Overall, what effect do you think that your drinking is having on your family life at the present time? (If you have no family, go on to Question J.)

1. I think it is having a very damaging effect on my family life.
2. I think it is having a somewhat damaging effect on my family life.
3. I think it is having no effect on my family life.
4. I think it is having a somewhat positive effect on my family life.
5. I think it is having a very positive effect on my family life.

J. One's work may be influenced by alcohol. Some people find that drinking has negative effects on their work or school performance. They become less efficient or motivated, get into trouble with supervisors or peers, miss days or come in late. Perhaps the person's job or career is even threatened or lost. Drinking can make it harder to find or keep a job. Other people find that their work is helped by alcohol. It allows them to relate better to the people they work with, or it is a necessary part of their work setting. Overall, what effect do you think your drinking is having on your work (or education) at the present time?

1. I think it is having a very negative effect.
2. I think it is having a somewhat negative effect.
3. I think it is having no effect on my work or education.
4. I think it is having a somewhat positive effect.
5. I think it is having a very positive effect.

K. Another general area might be called "social adjustment." Some people run into various social problems related to alcohol: they get into trouble with the law, neglect responsibilities, have financial problems, have to move, or perhaps embarrass themselves in public. Other people feel that drinking helps their social adjustment: they get along with people better, and fit in with others. Overall, what effect do you think your drinking is having on your social adjustment at the present time?

1. I think it is having a very negative effect.
2. I think it is having a somewhat negative effect.
3. I think it is having no effect.
4. I think it is having a somewhat positive effect.
5. I think it is having a very positive effect.

L. For some people, drinking decreases their interest in sex, or at least takes away some of their ability to enjoy and engage in sex. Some people are less attractive as sexual partners because of their drinking. Other people find that alcohol increases their sexual desire or helps them be more comfortable and more able to respond sexually. For some, drinking is an important part of meeting potential sexual partners. Overall, what effect do you think your drinking is having on your own sexual fulfilment at the present time?

1. I think it is having a very negative effect.
2. I think it is having a somewhat negative effect.
3. I think it is having no effect.
4. I think it is having a somewhat positive effect.
5. I think it is having a very positive effect.

M. In terms of your life as a whole, what would you estimate to be the overall effect of your drinking at the present time?

1. I think it is having a very negative effect overall.
2. I think it is having a somewhat negative effect overall.
3. I think it is having no effect overall.
4. I think it is having a somewhat positive effect overall.
5. I think it is having a very positive effect overall.

N. How important do you think it is for you to do something to change your present drinking pattern so that it has less of a negative effect on your life?

1. Extremely important to do something.
2. Very important to do something.
3. Important to do something.
4. Somewhat important to do something.
5. Not at all important - no change needed.

## SELF-EVALUATION OF DRINKING

### Personal Answer Sheet

A.	1( )	2( )	3( )	4( )	5( )
B.	1( )	2( )	3( )	4( )	5( )
C.	1( )	2( )	3( )	4( )	5( )
D.	1( )	2( )	3( )	4( )	5( )
E.	1( )	2( )	3( )	4( )	5( )
F.	1( )	2( )	3( )	4( )	5( )
G.	1( )	2( )	3( )	4( )	5( )
H.	1( )	2( )	3( )	4( )	5( )
I.	1( )	2( )	3( )	4( )	5( )
J.	1( )	2( )	3( )	4( )	5( )
K.	1( )	2( )	3( )	4( )	5( )
L.	1( )	2( )	3( )	4( )	5( )
M.	1( )	2( )	3( )	4( )	5( )
N.	1( )	2( )	3( )	4( )	5( )