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Oct 20, 2021 Why is everyone so obsessed with drinking?

# Why is everyone so obsessed with drinking?

By twenty-something. • Issue #21 • View online

## Or not drinking for that matter.

by Natalie Zisa

I've had an ongoing love/hate relationship with alcohol. I didn't drink much in high school. When I got to college, I found myself experimenting with my limits. I rarely woke up from a night of drinking feeling good. Something was always off, whether it was my head or my stomach. And I never slept well. I was always jealous of my roommate who could sleep in after a night of drinking only to rest up and do it again the next night.

I can count on one hand the number of absolute worst hangovers I've ever had to the point where my mom asked if I was allergic to alcohol. It didn't just affect me physically. I had emotional hangovers too and I'd suffer from anxiety almost all day. Because the hangovers didn't happen too often and I didn't drink all the time, I didn't take it too seriously. Plus, as everyone everywhere knows, drinking is a big part of the social life in college.

Fast forward to four years since graduation, I'm still exploring my relationship with alcohol. I'm proud to say those types of hangovers haven't happened in years, but I've yet to perfect the role that alcohol plays in my life. Obviously, how I socialize and drink has also changed since college and even more so, since the pandemic. When I started going out again this past summer, I noticed similar results. Even after only a few drinks, I would still have trouble sleeping. I would still find myself shaking in the middle of the night and making trips to the bathroom (as noted in my Hot Girls issue). And most of all, I found myself anxious about what I said or what I did. (I wish I could say it was just old(er) age, but the reality is alcohol never sat well in my system.) In an attempt to eliminate this issue, I made a rule that I would have a maximum of two drinks when I went out, no matter the setting; dinner or dancing. On occasion, I would impress myself with my ability to be so disciplined.


At the same time that I was exploring my relationship to alcohol, I saw a similar discourse happening in the Twittersphere. For Slate, Angela Lashbrook wrote End Office Happy Hours, in which she makes a great case for why alcohol should be eliminated from the workplace altogether. And when I made my own rule about my two-drink limit, I was reminded of this piece in Life Hacker about why you only ever need to have two drinks at a party. Naturally, I then brought this topic to a lot of conversations with my friends. One friend summed it up best when she said, "Alcohol is so socially acceptable that we forget that it's basically poison."

The reality is that people abstain from alcohol for a lot of different reasons. But often, they're met with questions about it. Yet that same curiosity or judgment around abstinence is not the norm for other drugs...or really anything else. The Instagram algorithm must know me really well because, in the process of writing this, I saw an ad for Curious Elixirs, which is a non-alcoholic brand of craft cocktails. And I have to say, their marketing has me sold. This voiceover of comedian, Jim Gaffigan, comparing people not drinking to people not eating mayonnaise is pretty on point. And this meme about cutting back on alcohol, but still knowing how to party reminds me that it's possible with the right people.

Which brings me to my next point. If you're like me and questioning your alcohol intake, you might also want to question why you drink. Personally, I know I loosen up when I drink. I'm less awkward. I say things without hesitation (which could be good or bad). And I have no fear of what I look like when I'm dancing. So drinking really did help me meet people and feel comfortable socializing when I was in college. But now, I'm usually drinking alcohol with the people I'm already most comfortable with. (I guess that's a sign of aging too.) So, what's the big deal about cutting back?

As it turns out, there's a term for what I'm experiencing right now: sober curious. Bustle defines it as knowing that alcohol doesn't make you feel great, but not wanting to box yourself in a category. Out of 2,000 women they interviewed, 9% identified as sober curious, while 38% were completely sober, and 11% chose smoking weed as an alternative to drinking. They claim that it has something to do with the increased interest in the wellness movement. At first, I didn't get it because the wellness movement has been around, but then I remembered that we've all had to be hyper-aware of our health over these past two years.

I guess all I'm really advocating for is for mocktails to be normalized and abstinence not to be questioned. For people to take a deeper look at why we're all participating in this societal norm, even if it is legal. I still associate life's biggest milestones with drinking: birthdays, weddings, and various other celebrations. And that's okay, as long as I'm drinking because I want to and not because I'm expected to. But maybe I can get the same joys out of a non-alcoholic drink after all. Minus the lack of sleep and anxiety.



**witch pony**  
@molly7anne

can't believe alcohol is the legal one. when I get too drunk I want to make the worst mistakes of my life. when I get too high I want to mix all the dipping sauces and be a better friend

10:54 PM - 2 Oct 2021

Natalie is a freelance writer based in New York City. She loves SoulCycle, croissants with her coffee, and taking too many pictures of sunsets in Central Park. You can find more of her writing at [www.natalie-zisa.com](http://www.natalie-zisa.com) and you can find her on Instagram and Twitter @natalie\_zisa

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Twenty-something is a newsletter about being twenty-something. Or thirty-something. Or forty-something (you get the idea). Every week, we pose a question about the most important things impacting young adults today or the questions we can't stop thinking about while we mindlessly scrolling on our phones, taking our Screen Time to new limits.

We have a lot of questions. We will rarely answer them in their entirety. We will have fun trying.

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