



GETTY IMAGES

Six steps to avoiding a hangover tomorrow

Trying to cut back on the beer or reduce the rosé? Here's what you need to know

Sandra Parker

Monday May 05 2025, 12.00am BST, The Times

It's a bank holiday — and rosé season is coming. But if you're already dreading tomorrow's hangover, you may need help cutting back. Sandra Parker, the founder of Just the Tonic Coaching, specialises in advising high-achieving professionals who want to gain control over their drinking. Here, she shares her top tips.

1. Willpower alone is not enough

The most common problem I see is high-achieving professionals using alcohol as their daily crutch to unwind. They're typically drinking a bottle of wine every night while appearing to do well in other areas of their life.

They are trapped in a paradox — wanting to drink less but terrified of losing their crutch. They've tried willpower repeatedly and failed, waking at 3am with regret, telling themselves in the morning that they are definitely not drinking that day, and meaning it, yet by evening they're back to the same pattern.

[Willpower](#) doesn't work in the long term. If you are relying on willpower, you are constantly exerting effort trying not to drink, despite wanting to drink. The breakthrough comes through changing how you view alcohol and your beliefs about it, not through gritting your teeth.

That means recognising alcohol as an addictive substance and identifying what you're really seeking from alcohol (eg stress relief, emotional numbing, permission to switch off), and then developing healthier alternatives. The transformation happens when you shift from dreading not drinking to genuinely enjoying life without needing alcohol — not from willpower or discipline.



Sandra Parker, founder of Just the Tonic Coaching

2. It's not just about big social occasions

For most excessive drinkers, the real problem is daily, private drinking at home, not at social gatherings. Covid accelerated this trend dramatically.

Among professionals aged 40-64, lifestyle changes naturally lead to more time at home. They're no longer in their "party unwinding from demanding careers. Home drinking is simply easier: there's no travel involved, no risk of being seen overdoing it and alcohol delivery services make restocking as convenient as ordering a takeaway pizza.

3. If you are at a big bank holiday gathering, prepare

Know exactly what you'll drink before arriving (you could, for instance, check the venue's website for options). If you don't want to drink, try always having a non-alcoholic drink in hand to avoid offers. Bring a supportive friend who understands your goals and can help you navigate any social pressure.

If offered alcohol, try a response that shows vulnerability rather than potentially coming across as smug: "I'm taking a break from drinking and it's still early days" — such honesty invites support rather than pressure.

Remember that most people care far less about your drinking than you imagine. They're focused on themselves, not monitoring your glass. Give yourself permission to arrive late and leave early if that makes events more manageable.

4. Set yourself a hard limit and stick to it — or take a break completely

Alternating between alcoholic and [non-alcoholic drinks](#) on a night out is a common strategy, but it can be challenging in practice — it's often easier to decide on a maximum number of drinks in advance and then switch completely to alcohol-free options once you reach your limit. If even this approach is difficult, practise being completely alcohol-free on some nights out.

Moderation presents significant challenges. It requires constant decisions: "Should I drink today? How many? When to stop?" This ongoing negotiation is exhausting and often leads back to previous patterns.

Taking a 30 to 90-day break resets your relationship with alcohol. The goal isn't signing up to some miserable "sober pledge", it's reaching a point where you have complete control and alcohol becomes an irrelevant issue rather than a constant source of internal conflict.

5. Find an alternative drink that works for you

The non-alcoholic market has grown significantly in recent years. Based on my client recommendations, here are some standout options:

For beer drinkers, [Lucky Saint](#) consistently ranks as the top choice, with [Guinness Zero](#), Peroni 0%, and BrewDog AF options also proving popular. The beer category has seen the most dramatic quality improvements.

Many former wine drinkers prefer switching to [alcohol-free spirits](#) rather than wines. My clients particularly enjoy Tanqueray 0% (including its Sevilla orange variant) and Sipsmith 0 for making sophisticated non-alcoholic cocktails. While regular alcohol-free wines are still hit or miss, sparkling options such as Nozeco and Freixenet Alcohol Free Rosé are popular.

For something different, [kombucha](#) has complexity similar to alcoholic drinks, with its fermented flavours, and it also has kick.

6. If you slip up, try to learn from it

Let's ditch the "wagon" metaphor — it implies failure if you "fall off". Instead, think of it as learning to play a musical instrument. You wouldn't expect to master the piano without hitting wrong notes along the way. Those wrong notes aren't failures; they're essential to developing your skill.

If you drink after a period of not drinking, approach it with curiosity rather than judgment. Ask: what led to this? What was I seeking? Did alcohol deliver what I hoped? How do I feel now compared with before? The most successful people learn from these experiences without shame, reconnect with their motivation and continue forward.

Most importantly, reach out for support immediately. Connection defeats shame, restores perspective and keeps you moving forward.
justthetoniccoaching.com