Why Choose Abstinence?

15 reasons why choosing abstinence may work in your favor

Your behavior is your responsibility and you have the freedom to choose. Here are 15 reasons you might prefer abstinence as a goal and why experts often commend it:

1. When successful, abstinence is a safe choice.
2. Abstinence is simple – no counting, simple and precise decisions, good for all situations.
3. No guaranteed safe level of drinking/using exists.
4. Many medical conditions contraindicate any use.
5. Many psychological or psychiatric problems are made worse by any using.
6. Some medications are hazardous in combination with alcohol or other drugs.
7. Some medications are ineffective in combination with alcohol or other drugs.
8. Strong external demands to abstain exist from: courts, family, employers, etc.
9. A history of severe alcohol related problems and/or dependence may suggest it.
10. Numerous risk factors may exist – family history, early onset, long history, heavy use, etc.
11. Abstinence can allow you to find out what it's like and how you feel without mood altering substances.
12. Abstinence can help you learn how you have become dependent on mood altering substances.
13. Abstinence can help you break your old habits and lower your tolerance for potentially harmful substances.

14. A period of abstinence can help you experience a change and build some confidence.
15. By abstaining, you may experience increased support from concerned significant people such as your spouse, partner, children, employer, etc.

What you do is up to you. No one can decide for you or change your drinking or other drug use for you. Only you can do it. You decide whether to go on as you were or to make positive changes in your life.

The above is based in part on: NIAAA Motivational Enhancement Manual, Vol. 2, Project MATCH, 1995.

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