

# Why I gave up drinking in my early twenties

The obvious and unexpected difficulties of going sober



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On New Years Day of 2022, I stumbled out of bed and immediately lost my vision, fell to the floor, and had to get my then-partner to help me back into bed. This wasn't the first time this had happened, and I knew what it was straight away - I was having a migraine. In the previous decade I'd had countless migraines, and they always followed the same pattern. I'd wake up after a night out, attempt to get to the bathroom, lose my vision, and most likely end up on the floor vomiting from the pain that I can only describe as feeling like someone trying to hammer a nail into my skull.

The worst part about them? They were avoidable. The only times they'd ever occurred were after nights of heavy drinking. The first one I had was at the age of seventeen, when I passed out in my bed after a night out, only to wake up at 3 am with a head-splitting migraine. I quickly stumbled into my bathroom, only for my vision to start to fade. Within a few seconds I had fallen over and was lying on my side on the cold tiled

floor, vomiting in nothing but my boxers. Only for my dad to hear me, come into the bathroom and assume I was belligerently drunk whilst I desperately tried to explain I was having a migraine before he could attempt to (rightfully) chastise me. Not my best look. You'd think I'd have learnt my lesson there. But, I didn't. This New Years Day migraine was as embarrassing and tragic as the first one (and all the others). After a late, late New Years Eve dinner, I had possibly the worst migraine to date the following morning. So I lay in my partner's bed writhing in pain until I eventually passed out,

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had my partner leave me due to out of control drinking, so there was no flaming mess I could point to as a reason to stop. Instead it was the culmination of the little things and a heavy blanket of sluggishness and malaise that was hard to identify during its presence, but extremely evident in its absence. Some people may be reading this and thinking 'why not just drink less?', to which I totally agree. And when I'm sober I don't want to have a dozen drinks, but when I've had two drinks, another ten seems like a real hoot. So as I lay in bed for a few days recovering from my New Years Eve bender, I read [This Naked Mind](#) by Annie Grace, and decided I would abstain from alcohol for at least a month, and see how I felt.

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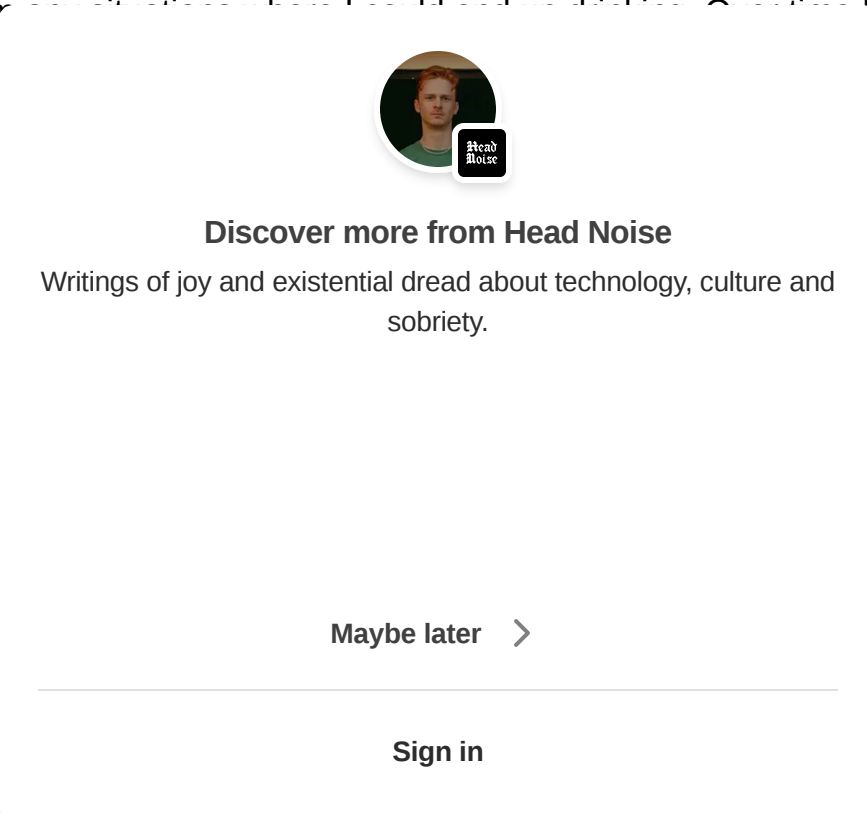
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The biggest and most daunting question I asked myself while beginning this experiment was 'How am I going to socialise and not drink?'. Growing up in Australia, drinking has been synonymous with socialising for me since the age of fifteen. I work in Sales

Engineering so even my work obligations can sometimes be booze adjacent (one of the biggest DevOps meetups in Sydney is called BeerOps and it's exactly what you're imagining). And outside of work I run a community radio station, which is deeply involved with the Sydney dance music scene. It seemed that all facets of my life revolved around booze.

At first I somewhat just avoided going to parties or pubs, completely removing myself from social situations where I had to drink. Over time I started to go out a little bit

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The screenshot shows a social media post from a user named 'Head Noise'. At the top is a circular profile picture of a man with red hair and a beard, with a small 'Head Noise' logo to its right. Below the profile picture is the text 'Discover more from Head Noise' in bold. Underneath that is a short bio: 'Writings of joy and existential dread about technology, culture and sobriety.' At the bottom of the post are two buttons: 'Maybe later >' and 'Sign in'.


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where I'd say yes to any occasion because 'why not?', if it was a dud I could just have a few drinks. I had to assess whether or not these nights were important to me, what I gain from attending, and what were my motivations behind going. Did I go because I wanted to? Or did I go just because I didn't want to say no, or because I didn't have anything else on that night? Now, a year later, I know what nights are enjoyable for me, and I pick and choose what I go to, to avoid those socially tiresome nights.

Now the big question I get from friends, family and colleagues as I come up to a year of sobriety is always a variation of "How much better do you feel!?". The answer is a rather anti-climactic "A fair bit". Now, it hasn't completely changed my life and launched me to soaring new heights in my career and mental well being. And I haven't lost 10kg of fat and replaced it with lean muscle. However, I'm definitely in the best shape I've ever

been, and I don't have to try and remember what I did last night anymore. The biggest win has been reclaiming my mornings, and not having to deal with hangovers that were getting increasingly more excruciating as I got older. But ultimately it hasn't eliminated all the problems in my life that were present when I drank, it's removed a few and made some others much easier to deal with though. And all of that is more than enough for me to be happy with my decision.

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