

Well-Being Tip

April 2025

It's Patio Season: Are you considering changing your relationship with alcohol?

It's April in Iowa, which means the days are getting longer and warmer! In Midwestern nomenclature, this month marks the start of "patio season." For many, patio season translates directly to consuming alcohol al fresco, often starting in the early afternoon with "day drinking" and continuing past sundown. With spring at our doorstep, it is helpful to remember that any amount of alcohol consumption carries risk, and these risks increase when it is consumed in excess ([Kaiser Permanente, 2024](#)).

April is also Alcohol Awareness Month, which is a great time to reflect on your relationship with alcohol. Growing in popularity, the sober-curious movement encourages people to get curious about how much, when, and why they drink. Examining your relationship to alcohol might help you determine whether your current drinking habits are supporting your overall well-being and to make informed decisions about the role you'd like alcohol to play in your life ([National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 2024](#)). MSCC invites you to use the questions below as a starting point to explore your relationship with alcohol:

1. What are your current alcohol use habits? How many drinks do you usually have on one occasion? How many drinks do you usually have per week?
 - a. Not sure? Use this drink tracker card to count for a week or two: <https://rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov/tools/worksheets-more/drinking-tracker-cards>. There are also many smart phone apps that can help to track alcohol consumption.
2. What do you see as the benefits of your current alcohol use? Consider whether these are long-term or short-term benefits.
3. What do you see as the downsides of your current alcohol use? Consider whether these are long-term or short-term consequences.
4. What does your current alcohol use cost you? You might consider financial costs, time costs, or health costs.
 - a. You can calculate how much you're spending on alcohol here: <https://rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov/tools/calculators/alcohol-spending-calculator>
5. Once you have started drinking, how hard is it for you to stop?
6. Have your drinking habits changed over time? If so, how? Do you notice any trends?
7. If you have tried to cut back on your drinking before, how did that go?

8. What factors typically precipitate your decision to consume alcohol? Is it something you do socially? Or do you find yourself reaching for a drink in response to stress or anxiety?
9. If you were to change your relationship to alcohol, what would your alcohol use habits be?

Sometimes it can feel like everyone is drinking alcohol, but the truth is that mindful drinking and abstinence from alcohol is on the rise, especially for Gen Z ([McCabe et al., 2021](#)). We hope you take some time to non-judgmentally check in with yourself about your drinking habits this patio season. If you'd like to further explore your relationship with alcohol or feel like you would benefit from professional support related to changing your drinking habits, please contact MSCC at (319)335-8056, or by email at osac-mscc@uiowa.edu to schedule an appointment.

If you'd like to learn skills to support people wanting to make changes to their substance use, join us for the CCOM Student Recovery Ally Training!

When? Monday, May 12th, 2025 from 4:00 pm -5:30 pm

Where? Kelch (CBRB 1289), Carver Biomedical Research Building

Food will be provided!

Register here: https://uiowa.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_cvFaxmELODcRynA

The Medical Student Counseling Center (MSCC) offers free, confidential personal counseling, disability and accessibility services, academic and career development support, and wellness consultations to MD and PA students.

Contact MSCC

osac-mscc@uiowa.edu

(Email should not be used to share confidential information or in the event of an emergency.)

319-335-8056

If you are in crisis or you or someone you know is having thoughts of suicide,
call or text 9-8-8.

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