Do you feel that you drink too much alcohol? If you are fed up with your drinking, self-regulating your alcohol consumption gives you specific tools and methods that will help you change your habits. Self-regulation of drinking means trying to reduce your alcohol consumption into moderation, and it is a suitable choice for people who do not consider themselves alcoholics, but are worried about or unhappy with their current use of alcohol.

First, you can start by finding out exactly what your current drinking style is. You can do that by evaluating your situation and your level of consumption. You can for example write down, over a period of a few weeks, how much and what you drink, in which situations and how. To help you in assessing your current situation, you can use the resources at AddictionLink, such as the drinking habit test, the Jeppe Drinking Diary, or the self-help sheet. The self-help sheet and the Jeppe Drinking Diary are useful resources for the continuous monitoring of your alcohol consumption and the possible changes in it. A careful and honest evaluation of your current situation creates the foundation for change.

The first step towards change is setting a realistic goal. First, decide whether you intend to stop drinking completely or whether you will get positive outcomes just by cutting down on your drinking. However, it is useful to keep in mind that many of those who want to cut down on their drinking start with a few weeks’ abstinence and begin to work on their new drinking style only after that.

When you set a new goal, it is important to evaluate what, for you, is moderate alcohol use and what is too much. In other words, how often and how much at a time can you drink in the future? To help you in evaluation and planning you can consult the Current Care Guidelines on the risk levels of alcohol consumption, published by the Finnish Medical Association. However, keep in mind that the risk levels are not guidelines for what is safe drinking for you; they are only average estimates. In addition, the risk levels decrease as you age, so it is recommended that over 65-year-olds should consume no more that 2 standard drinks at a time, and no more than 7 standard drinks in a week.

You can also think back to situations when you felt in control of your drinking. What helped you succeed then? How were you able to abstain from drinking too much? Could you do the same again? Make a list of ways of controlling your alcohol use that you are familiar with and that work for you. Keep track of your drinking. Writing down the amount of alcohol you consume helps you follow your progress.

The Self-help section at AddictionLink includes a comprehensive guide for controlling your drinking (in Finnish). The guide is meant for people who are concerned over their drinking and want to start working towards a change. The guide offers a clear, step-by-step program that helps you achieve your goal. The first step is to assess your situation and your level of alcohol consumption. The second step is to find out which option is best for your situation: to stop drinking altogether or to cut down on alcohol. The third step is to implement the change: the guidelines are detailed and support a normal rhythm of life. The final step is to concentrate on maintaining what you have achieved and on preventing you from going back to your old drinking habits.

You can find anonymous peer-support at the discussion forums at AddictionLink (in Finnish). There are also several books published on the self-regulation of drinking in Finnish, such as Timo Kauppi’s “Jos ottaminen ottaa pääähn” or Anja Koski-Jännes’ “Kuinka paljon on liian paljon”. The book “Irti alkoholista”, published by Duodecim and Mental Hub, provides a self-help program based on cognitive psychology and can be recommended to everyone interested in cutting down on their alcohol use.

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See the Self-Help section of AddictionLink for more information.