

Ep 9 Alcohol _mixdown_new.mp3

Voiceover [00:00:02] This podcast is brought to you by the University of Aberdeen.

Bekah Walker [00:00:07] Hello and welcome back to our BeWell podcasts. Today, we're going to discuss alcohol and the effect it has on our lives and the impact it can have on our health. Joining me today I have Bill, who is a history lecturer at the University, Natalie a English and Creative Writing student, and Tilda, a member of our university alumni community. Can we do some quick introductions, so our listeners know who you are and why you volunteered to be part of our podcast today?

Bill Naphy [00:00:32] Well, allow me to introduce myself, my name is Bill Naphy, and as you said, I'm a lecturer in the history department. I've been at Aberdeen now for, well, a quarter of a century. And my main reason for being involved is you kindly asked me to come along.

Natalie [00:00:49] I'm Natalie and I am a fourth year English with Creative Writing student, and I'm doing this because I think that alcoholism is something that hasn't really been discussed too much. I think it's important to get lots of different views and opinions on it, especially in the student body.

Tilda [00:01:06] And my name is, as mentioned, Tilda. So I am an alumnus of the University of Aberdeen. I graduated in 2020 after four years of doing Business Management and International Relations. I bring with me today the perspective of someone who went my entire university career and actually my entire life without having a single drink. So, I am bringing the sober perspective with me today.

Bekah Walker [00:01:29] Brilliant. Thanks guys, and thanks so much for joining me. So, we all have different motives for drinking. For some, it can be the taste or to be sociable. For others it might be to escape problems or to get drunk. There are also people who don't drink. This could be down to a number of different factors, a common one might be religion. What are your thoughts on this? Why do we drink? And is there a sense of pressure to drink at university?

Natalie [00:01:55] I think that a lot of the reasons that students start drinking, especially at university, is because it's one of the first times that you're sort of independent and you're away from your family, you're away from home, it's the time that you sort of start exploring what it is that you want to do and who you're sort of going to be. I think that drinking sort of plays a big part in this, especially sort of around fresher's fayres and the start of university, because it's a way that is socially acceptable to sort of loosen up and to have a good time, and you know a lot of people are going to be involved in it. I do think there is a pressure on students to drink, especially from their peers, and especially round the start of the new semester and things, which I think can be quite a destructive pressure, I think, especially if people aren't necessarily used to drinking as well.

Tilda [00:02:59] Yeah, I agree. I think there's definitely a huge normality in our society to engage in drinking as you grow up, and I think especially hearing as children being targeted with these messages of alcohol being a grown-up drink and being something that adults do when they socialise or when they celebrate. I think then that when you transition into adulthood and when you go through those experiences of growing up, it's natural for you to want to engage in these experiences that we've been told are instrumental to adulthood. And so, the normalisation of alcohol as part of the human experience is really

become the normality in our society. So, it's definitely been normalised a lot. And so I think as someone who doesn't drink and didn't drink during university but still engaged in social activities such as going to bars, going to parties, going out with friends, being the person who goes against the normality has always been, I've not been faced with rude questions, but it's always been surprising and frankly, a little unsettling to a lot of people simply because it is going against a normalised standard and a normality. And so, I definitely do think that it's something that can be considered unique when you don't drink. And that really speaks to how very normalised it is to drink, really.

Bill Naphy [00:04:34] Yeah. I think historically there have been all kinds of reasons, many of which you mentioned why people drink and the place of alcohol in society. But very often it's been associated with a ritual of bonding events. And because it has this effect on the mind, it's been interpreted as often as being something that allows you to be in touch with other things, whether it's the gods or spirits or stuff like that, but also with just wider thoughts. So, you know, the Greeks with the symposium, the idea that, you know, you get these really interesting ideas if you all sit around and drink a little bit. Obviously, what is really interesting historically is when an acceptance of drinking moves into a lack of acceptance of drunkenness. And there's always been that sort of tension there that the drinking to be merry, to be mind-expanding is okay, actually, maybe even good. But falling down drunk is very often seen as being not a social good and even a socially problematic issue.

Tilda [00:05:45] Yeah, I can definitely agree with the fact that it's often about expanding a mind. And looking back at my own sort of school experience, even before university, when I was in upper secondary school in Sweden and we had a philosophy paper due, this was around when we were 17, 18, 19. There was a philosophy paper due, and one of my classmates, he the night before hadn't written it. And so he came in the day of the paper being due, showing us his paper saying that, oh, well, I always get so philosophical when I am drunk. So he had had about six shots of tequila and then written this paper, which then didn't turn out to be the best paper but he had engaged in this theory of sort of expanding his mind. But I do think a lot of it comes down to the fact that when we drink alcohol, we don't have as many inhibitions on our thoughts and on what we say. So we definitely censor ourselves less because when we're sober, we might feel as though there will be judgement from those around us from what we say, but we also might just prevent ourselves from saying certain things. So I do think alcohol has an impact on what we allow ourselves to say and to express.

Natalie [00:06:58] Yeah, I'd really like to agree with that. I mean, I certainly have from personal experience, especially in creative writing as well, where you need that sort of creativity and that little bit more open mindedness. I certainly had a glass of wine or two before sitting down to write something before, which, you know, isn't necessarily a bad thing if it helps. But I think the problem comes in when, for some people knowing when to stop, like when you've reached that level of, okay, this is enough to help me get through this piece of writing, but I need to step back and maybe not go too far.

Bill Naphy [00:07:33] It can also quite often serve as a bonding ritual, an element of that, and that's where sometimes you find drunkenness does have a sort of social place where the humiliation that quite often can go along with being utterly drunk, falling down drunk is seen as something that bonds people together. I mean, you see that in modern society. But, you know, drinking clubs in the 19th century, an awful lot of what bound them together was the fact that when they were totally drunk, they humiliated themselves and they

shared these memories that were kept within the group. But they held the group together. They bound them together.

Bekah Walker [00:08:16] Yeah, absolutely. It's really interesting to hear all your guy's views and perspectives. I definitely feel that a lot of people do drink in fear of missing out from what their friends are doing and they potentially or maybe are not even that concerned or bothered about trying to drink, but because their friends are they feel like they have to too. And I think as well, definitely a lot of people will drink for a little bit of dutch courage, like it's much easier to chat to people, you know, you let all your inhibitions go. Sometimes that is a good thing and sometimes it's a bad thing. And I guess like you were saying, Natalie, in terms of creative writing and stuff as well. I suppose, it's when does that get problematic? Like, even having a drink a day, you don't have to typically be like an alcoholic who's drunk falling over all the time. But if you rely on that drink to, I don't know, attend a particular meeting or something, then that can still be problematic drinking rather than just your typical alcoholics. I think that can sometimes be an interesting perspective to look at as well. And we've kind of touched on that a little bit. But I wonder if you guys have had any personal experiences when you felt peer pressure to drink and have you been judged by your friends for choosing not to?

Tilda [00:09:33] I mean, yes, I can definitely take this one as someone who doesn't drink at all, I've definitely been met with all sorts of reactions to my choice not to drink. And as a result, I've definitely made it a point to surround myself with people who won't be weird about it. And so, there's definitely reactions, but then considering especially just the reactions of strangers is very, very telling. I remember quite clearly when I had just moved to Aberdeen and was setting up shop in Hillhead, and I was at the local Lidl buying groceries, etc, that I needed. And I remember quite clearly the cashier who was ringing up my items was looking at me and went, why haven't you bought any alcohol? Because I'd only bought food and such. And I just told him, oh, I just I don't drink. And he just looked at me and went, well, three months in Scotland and that'll change it. So, yes, so I mean, it's definitely something that's extremely established in society and it really does, you know, the whole world becomes very worried about you when you don't drink and wants to change that very much. And then, I mean, more than judgement, I am very much faced with the preconceived idea that I can't have fun because I don't drink. So for me, what I think it has to do with this, the fact that so many people start to drink around the same time that they start to create their own social life. So it's around the time that you start to find friends that are outside of your familial circle. You know, they're not family friends, they're not cousins or siblings or people you've known since you were a child but they might be people that you choose to surround yourself with. And that usually coincides with when you start, you know, experimenting with alcohol. And so I think for a lot of people, those two become interconnected, the fact that you were having fun with people that you've chosen to have fun with, but you were also drinking for the first time. So I think a lot of people conflate the two in their mind and then it becomes you can't have fun without alcohol because that's when you started to have fun. And yeah, that did result in me not going to as many parties, absolutely. And in my first year of university, I definitely didn't socialise as much as I did in later years because during the first year, what it was about for most students was getting as drunk as possible and drinking to blackout. And so I distinctly remember coming in to a seminar on a Monday morning with a student who was speaking to his friend, saying that the Aberdeen nightlife is terrible, but as long as you don't remember it, it's fine. So there really was that mindset of drinking to blackout. It wasn't drinking to make friends, it wasn't drinking to make memories, and it wasn't drinking to sort of just have fun. It was specifically just to get us drunk as possible. And so obviously I didn't participate that much in that. But I've definitely spoken to people who, when I tell

them that I don't drink, approached me with a sense of, oh, I could never do that. I'd never have the courage to go out dancing. I would never have the courage to speak to anyone or be myself if I wasn't drunk. And I definitely do think that stems from the early years of really conflating alcohol with confidence and conflating alcohol with friendship and really just like leaving it all up to the alcohol instead of crafting your own night, and instead of just normalising it for yourself to go out and have fun dancing, because for me, I always joke that even though I don't drink, I'll still end up on a table dancing because I just don't have that crutch of alcohol to lean on. So I've kind of had to force myself to not take myself so seriously, even if I am sober. And that very much comes down to just the energy of the evening. And I think anyone is able to do that.

Natalie [00:13:26] Yeah, I would definitely have to agree with that. I worked in a bar during my first year here at Aberdeen. I also worked in a couple of bars before I started at university. And I remember quite distinctly one night I that went out with people from that bar job. And obviously you're surrounded by alcohol all the time that you're working, but you're the only sober one there, like serving all these sorts of drunk people. So it's quite an interesting scenario to be in, I think. But, that was a bit of a side note sorry. But I remember quite clearly one night that I went out with people from this bar job and we were celebrating that someone had moved into a new job, like a full time job. They were very excited. And I was just so exhausted, and I was like, you know, I don't actually want to drink anything. I'll usually just go out and I'll have a drink, and because of where we worked we would get like cheap, cheap drinks from other bars. And I was just like, actually, I really don't want to drink at all. And it was such a strange scenario to be in because everyone around me was drinking and we were always surrounded by alcohol when we were together. And so for me to say, actually, I'm not going to have anything, I'm just going to have like a diet coke was quite off putting for a lot of them. And I ended up sort of leaving quite early because I was just like, you know, I'm not having a good time and everyone's just being a bit weird about this. So I'm just going to go home. But it was an eye-opening scenario, I think, and something I hadn't necessarily experienced before.

Tilda [00:15:11] Yeah, I'll sort of just piggyback off of what Natalie said here and say that that's actually a very common occurrence for me as well, especially with people that I don't know very well. They'll often be quite taken aback if I say I oh, I don't drink and immediately assume that I will judge them if they do. So, I think there's very much someone who does drink and then gets confronted with someone who doesn't that they might feel as though they're no longer in a sort of safe position of their peers because it might just come down to that they are worried that I'll remember what they said the next night or things like that. So when I sometimes say, oh, I just I don't drink and they'll just go, oh, is it okay if I do? Of course, it's okay that you drink. But there is often sometimes that sort of discomfort in the situation then because they just frankly feel watched, I think. And those are the types of situations where I would also just leave early.

Natalie [00:16:14] Yeah, I think especially in that sort of like group of people, I found that because I had been out drinking with them previously as well, like we did go out a lot. And when we were working, we were always surrounded by drinks as well. So it was an integral part of the sort of relationships I built with them. So I think for me to say, actually, I'm not going to have anything on this one specific occasion was just such a, gosh, I can't think of the right word, but it was an odd sort of decision, they thought. I think they couldn't quite work out why I wasn't drinking, even though it was just because I was too tired and I just didn't want to, you know, and that didn't seem like a good enough reason for them, for me not to drink.

Bill Naphy [00:17:06] I do think there could be considerable cultural differences as well, so having grown up in the United States where, you know, quite a percentage of the population will be teetotal, often for religious reasons, if you say you don't drink, it doesn't seem that strange. It just means you don't drink. And coming here, what really struck me was not that there was pressure to drink, but there was pressure to be drunk. And that was something I'd never really experienced before. And particularly publicly drunk. And that really, really struck me that how very different the drinking culture was from the United States and here, and how much here the drinking culture revolves much more around being drunk.

Bekah Walker [00:17:48] Yeah, absolutely. And that's definitely something I can resonate with. I feel that there's a lot of different cultural differences in terms of drinking, and I feel that a lot in the United Kingdom, and possibly, particularly Scotland. I don't really know how it compares to England, but it is a lot of drinking to get drunk. And I'm going out to get drunk. I'm going out and it is kind of seen as that rather than, oh, I'm going, as you were saying Tilda, to like have fun with my friends but it is seen as I'm going out to get drunk and I won't stop until I'm drunk, as such. And I mean, yeah, if that's what you want to do, I suppose that's fine. But there does become some dangers involved with that as well. And that's something that I guess people need to be aware of. And I personally, I have a friend that I go out with, when we can go out, obviously we can't go out just now during Covid times, but I've got a friend who doesn't drink and I always feel so much safer on a night out when she is there, because I know that she's going to look after me if I maybe have one too many. And I always feel I just have that security blanket of her, not that I get like that very often, but obviously I have at times, especially when I was a student and just having someone there, that could take me home at the end of the night. I just felt so much safer. So I think it's not a bad thing to be going out with people that that don't drink. I personally quite like it.

Bill Naphy [00:19:10] I think there's also a difference culturally with the United States. Most of the time, drinking involves having to drive to something. So almost all groups will have one person who's the designated driver. So the idea that in a night out someone isn't going to drink seems actually quite normal in a culture where most people are walking to and staggering back from drink, it's much less of a, you know, an expectation that there'll be someone in the group that's going to be absolutely, totally sober. So I think that also introduces a sort of a different element. If you know someone is always going to be sober in your group, then the idea of pressurising people becomes a little less what you're likely to do. Because it seems strange then.

Tilda [00:19:57] Yeah. And I think as the designated sober person, you know, by default, it becomes very, very telling. This is not to say in any way that you, Bekah, have this experience or that your friend has this experience. But I would often find with my friends who I was more sort of acquaintances with, who were a little bit more on the, you know, we weren't just fantastic friends, would very often have the approach of, oh, fantastic, you're sober, you will take care of me for the entire night. And then they would proceed to not, you know, care what happened for the rest of the night because they had someone who would take care of them, not necessarily caring if I had a good time, just because since I was out and I was sober, of course I would, you know, hold their hair back if they ended up being sick or, you know, keeping charge of their credit cards or making sure they don't spend too much money, all of those aspects that they would normally have to care for, for themselves, they now had someone who could sort of nanny them in that situation. So very early on for me when I was going out with my friends became something that I would be very clearly setting boundaries against, specifically saying, you know, okay, tonight I

also want to have fun. That means that I don't want to be in charge of your credit cards. I don't care if you spend too much money. That's something that you have to care about. And my sister, who also doesn't drink, and has just sort of starting to go out, she had this experience. She was talking to me. She was like Tilda, they just want me to take care of their stuff and they just want me to, you know, make sure that they don't, you know, spend too much money or go home with that one guy. And I was like, well, don't. Literally let them make their mistakes because you have to go out and have a fun night for yourself. So I think, you know, I guess sort of advice for people who are looking into not drinking as much or things like that. The importance really lies in making sure that you find the right people around you who understand your reasonings for not being drunk and also understand that that doesn't mean that you can't have a good time of your own and that because you can't it's difficult to conflict. Of course, you can have a fun night. And of course, I love my friends and of course, if they got sick I would take care of them, but there is that sort of difference between me caring for someone because they are my friend and I am having a good night out with them and me having to put my night on hold because I have an entire group of, you know, children who want a nanny in that sense. So I think there's a really important sort of conversation that needs to be had with people who are teetotal, and, as we see, a lot more people are going teetotal for various reasons. And I think the conversation that needs to start being had is, you know, how do we engage with people who don't drink on a night out?

Bekah Walker [00:22:39] Yeah, I think it's really interesting to hear that perspective. And it definitely depends on, like the friendship you have with that person. And, of course, it's that person's responsibility ultimately to look after themselves. I mean, I would never dream of asking someone to look after my cards, I mean, maybe some people do, but I'd be more concerned that I got split up from my friends and that I wouldn't be able to pay to get a taxi home. Yeah, it's really interesting to just hear, like, both sides of the coin that maybe why people are drinking and why they don't, and the experience that other people maybe have when they're not drinking. We've spoken a little bit now about why people drink. And I'd like to explore a little bit now of the impact that it can have both long term and short term on our health. And do you guys think that enough people know about the dangers and possible consequences that it will have on their health, like physically, mentally, and socially as well?

Bill Naphy [00:23:40] I think very often people do know, but the younger you are, the more you think you're immortal and you just don't care. I mean, you're just as well to say, do people realise the dangers of skydiving or playing rugby or anything else like that? Quite often they do, but they're making perhaps incorrect risk assessments. But they are making an assessment about this may be dangerous, but in these circumstances, I'd rather do X and I think that that's something people do all the time. And so it's not something that you just single out when it comes to drink. And obviously, much of the discussion about the dangers is actually talking about drunkenness rather than drinking. Cultures where people will have some wine with a meal is very, very different, than getting falling down drunk in a pub,

Tilda [00:24:43] yeah, I mean, that's very, very true. And I think having been raised in Sweden, I have a little bit of a different perspective here, considering the way our socialist government engages with alcohol and specifically the sales of alcohol. So we have a monopoly on where the government engages in the only place where you can buy alcohol over a certain percentage, and that it's open only on set days and only at set times and things like that. So there is very much a system. I mean, Swedish people get drunk, Swedish people are fairly known for being able to handle their alcohol. Most of our

holidays surround schnaps. And, you know, I was singing schnaps songs when I was very young because I lived in a family and I've have grown up in a culture that's likes to, you know, drink. But it does mean that we are not exposed by, you know, buy two for price of one or special deals on special drinks or trying to get us to buy more, when it comes to alcohol. Our stores where we buy them from are very, very, very good, the staff are experts at, you know, food pairings, at wine pairings, at recipes, at what kinds of drinks go with what? So they are way, way more concerned with making sure that you get quality rather than quantity. And that is something that I think is, you know, I mean, it's proven it's scientifically proven that it has had a huge impact on lowering the general alcoholism levels of Swedish citizens, because not only can you just not access it whenever you want, but you can also be denied if you're too drunk and there isn't all of that sort of push to buy more. So I think that's a big one for me. But then, I mean, if we go back to the health risks and the implications that alcohol has, I'm quite a big believer in that, if we skipped just ahead, one generation of people not drinking, if we had one generation where nobody drank and then someone came and tried to introduce alcohol, I mean, that would be banned immediately. It wouldn't be, like, all of the health risks that's associated with alcohol and all of the ways that it affects us are not something that I think any government would really legalise in today's sort of society. I think it's a very, very interesting example of sort of the only drug that we publicly allow. And, you know, we've seen banning's with it. We've seen attempted banning's during Prohibition, and we've seen how that works out. But I think it's a very interesting societal phenomenon, the fact that we have alcohol as such a publicly sort of accepted, you know, negative influence in our lives really.

Natalie [00:27:28] Yeah, I think I just like to jump off that as well. I have found even just between sort of my introduction to drinking and like my sister's introduction to drinking. There's quite a big difference, I think, culturally here as well in what that has been because of laws that have been brought in by the government. You know, we're not allowed to have happy hours, buy one get one free is sort of not a thing for alcohol anymore. Even, you know, the sort of minimum sales price for alcohol as well. All these things were not in place, you know, when my sister was first sort of like drinking and being introduced to alcohol, whereas for me, a lot of these things were already in place. And so I didn't necessarily have those sort of pressures that are perhaps still there. You know, down in England, where happy hours are still the thing, you can get really, really cheap shots and alcohol and stuff at bars, I think as well, for me on the health impact of stuff, I really noticed a lot of this sort of shorter term impacts of things when I was working in bars, because obviously part of my job in that was to make sure that people were not getting to drunk, people were looking after themselves, and to be a sort of voice of reason for people as well when they perhaps had had a little bit too much. And I think firstly, that was a really difficult position to be in, because once you've had a few drinks, you don't necessarily like being told no. So there's sort of ways to go around that, that we sort of have to work out as bartenders ourselves how best to sort of approach people who were a bit too drunk to say, hey, maybe take a step back. Here's a free coke for you, have one later on. But I think as well, you know, I got to witness a lot of times when people did go overboard and weren't able to look after themselves. And it was a bit... it gave me a new perspective on how I should act when I'm going out drinking and sort of not to be that person.

Bekah Walker [00:29:35] Yeah, absolutely. I think it's so interesting. I was actually going to say that. Alcohol is like the only drug that it is legal and there's more deaths in the United Kingdom related to alcohol than there are drugs, and drugs are illegal, which is really, really interesting to think about because there's obviously so much physical risks as well as mental risks in terms of effects of alcohol. So your physical thinking about like the high blood pressure, increased risk of cancer, all that stuff that I'm sure everyone's aware

of, also, it can impact on your risk of fertility. So if you're consuming too much alcohol and on a regular occasion, that's something that you might want to think about. Maybe it might not affect your life now, but it might affect your life in the future. And in terms of the mental risks involved as well. Alcohol's a depressant, so people can suffer a lot from depression with it and struggle a little bit with their memory and concentration. And even like the social aspect in terms of families can be broken up if there's been too much alcohol consumption or people could have financial problems if you then become addicted and dependent on alcohol. So I guess that leaves me quite nicely on to how much is too much? Is it when it has started to impact your health or your work or those around you? What do you guys think?

Bill Naphy [00:30:52] Obviously, any time you start to have an impact on your wider life and your physical wellbeing and your work, that is a problem. The problem we face is that first of all, tobacco is still a perfectly legal drug and is extremely dangerous. There's a substantial difference, though. I can't grow tobacco. I can make alcohol, anyone can. All it takes is fruit, a bit of sugar and some time. Distilling alcohol is much harder to do. But that's sort of the problem with making something like basic beer is really, really easy to do. So the question is, you know, how do you stop it from becoming a serious problem? And a lot of that is partially education, but partially society taking responsibility, as in Sweden with minimum pricing. Just to say, you know, there are going to be certain hurdles you have to go through to get this. And in general, society is going to try and make sure that if you do get it, you don't get stupid with it. There's no particular use of nicotine that's good for you. It has no value. You can quite easily argue that small consumptions of certain types of alcohol aren't going to hurt you and might actually have some beneficial value to you. The thing is, though, is making sure that that doesn't then shade into something else. And this is really problematic in a culture where drink is being drunk. Rather than a glass of something with a meal in a social context where other stuff is going on. That to me is the real issue there, is what needs to be dealt with is this cultural idea that the drunkenness is a goal.

Natalie [00:32:48] Yeah, I would have to agree. I think the sort of binge drinking culture that is still so prominent, especially in sort of student population, is really concerning, and it's something that I think is quite difficult to manage as well, because a lot of, you know, a lot of students are probably not going to listen if a university or the government says, hey, don't drink too much, you know, they're sort of exploring their independence and are sort of shirking the well-meaning help that has been offered to them or advice that's being offered to them. I think sort of how much is too much is sort of a personal thing as well, because, you know, for some people, they're happy to have a glass of wine and call it a night, you know, after that is just too much. But I think the real problem is when is this sort of like constant binge drinking and need to get drunk for the sake of getting drunk instead of to, you know, socialise or have a good time with your friends. I think that's sort of where the real issues start to arise. And I think that's something that people need to be aware of not just, you know, once in a while, but consciously as they're drinking, which is admittedly quite difficult. But, you know, just to think actually, do I really want another drink or am I happy at this sort of like tipsy level? You know, do I really need another drink to satisfy me or to make this a good night?

Tilda [00:34:29] Yeah, I think it comes down to any other bad habit, really, when it becomes a habit is when it's no longer, you know, beneficial to you if you have a glass of wine on a Friday night, because that's, you know, a special occasion and you have a really nice meal and you want to have that, fantastic. If you then start to, you know, suddenly, you want to have it on a Saturday as well, and all of a sudden, you know, it's Tuesday and

I'm having a really nice piece of, you know, pasta or whatever so I want a glass of wine with that. So then eventually, as it sort of increasingly becomes a habit, when you stop thinking about it as something that is a special occasion and it becomes just a part of the meal or a part of your weekend, your weekend is just when you go out and get binge drunk like those are no longer conscious decisions, that's when I think that you need to think, and that's the tricky part because they're not conscious decisions anymore. So you're not aware of that. That it's sort of becoming a habit, but that's when it's, I think, problematic. And that comes to, you know, that isn't just about alcohol. I think that's a fairly good litmus test for any bad habit. Once it becomes a habit, it's not a good thing anymore.

Natalie [00:35:37] I think just to add to that as well, especially during this lockdown and throughout the last year of this pandemic as well, there has been an increase in drinking, especially at home, because we can't go out, we can't do stuff. And, you know, I think for a lot of people having a glass or two of wine or beer or whatever at night has become a bit of a habit because there's not much else going on in people's lives. And I think that is also something that can be really concerning, because that's the sort of slow creep that you perhaps wouldn't notice consciously but is going to be detrimental sort of long term.

Bekah Walker [00:36:17] Yeah, absolutely. I was kind of looking to build on that comment as well, Natalie, that during the past year, a lot of people have admitted to drinking more than they normally would because it's hard, it's a hard time. A lot of people have alcohol to chill themselves out maybe if they have had a stressful day at work and people are probably having more stressful days at work now than they maybe would have this time last year. So I think there is a lot of people that definitely are drinking more and it's quite interesting because the national guidance for the United Kingdom in terms of what is too much, they always say there's not a sensible amount to be drinking because all alcohol carries a degree of risk. But they say no more than 14 units of alcohol a week. And to kind of put that into perspective, that's like six medium strength beers a week. And they recommend that you don't drink that. Obviously, if you're on a night out, you're going to drink way more than six beers. And, you know, they're saying this is for the whole week and to kind of spread out just to limit the risk and the implications of alcohol on your health. So it is really interesting, I think, that a lot of people within the past year and because of the lockdown, a lot of people probably tend to binge drink but don't drink regularly, if that makes sense. Like so they'll keep maybe keep all their units to, maybe one night or two nights or something and probably go over and beyond that at times as well. But I think now with the lockdown, I think a lot of people probably are drinking more regularly, but maybe less often, you know, having a couple of glasses of wine in the evening after a stressful day or like you say, but with an enjoyable meal. So it definitely is changing that little culture as well, I think. And yeah, it will be interesting to see how things go when we're all out of lockdown again and back into clubs. And if people will be more content with just a glass or two or if it will go completely the other way, I have no idea. They're probably a mixture of both.

Natalie [00:38:18] Yeah, I think just jumping off that, you know, I admittedly previously didn't drink that much. You know, I'd have a couple of glasses of wine maybe once or twice a month. But I have certainly noticed for myself that I have been drinking more over lockdown, whether that is just to socialise with my flat mates, you know, we don't have anything to do. So let's just crack open a bottle of wine, we can watch a movie, and then you're like, oh, I've made it through two bottles of wine between the three of us, woops. But also, I spent some time over Christmas in our flat by myself and I noticed then as well, I was like, maybe I'll just have a little like gin and tonic this evening because I've got nothing to do and no one's here. So I'll just have one, and that for me was something that I

noticed was quite different because I usually don't drink alone at all. It's just I don't find it enjoyable. But that was certainly something I noticed. I was like, oh, I better keep a note of this and just like be mindful of this, because I think that was a sort of creep that I was talking about, like it's okay once in a while to have a little drink by yourself. But if you're going to be doing it constantly, I think that's when there's a bit of a problem.

Bekah Walker [00:39:30] Yeah, I totally concur, Natalie. That's when it kind of does creep up on you. You maybe haven't noticed and then suddenly it's like, oh how can I have finished this bottle, I only bought it last week in my weeks shop. How come, I've finished it, I have to buy another one? So yeah, it's something to maybe just to, to take note of it. And it is okay to you know, we're not saying not to have a drink. I mean that would be unreasonable. And it is good to have a drink if you enjoy it and if it does relax you. I suppose it is just with that barrier, the fine line of how much is too much and when is it a problem? So I suppose I would just like to say to any of our listeners, if they're concerned maybe about their own alcohol consumption or about someone that they love, there is a lot of help and support available, local services in Aberdeen, so I can share the links to that in the episode description so that people can access them if they are struggling. And I would just like to thank you guys for joining me today. I really appreciate you giving up your time and effort to have a discussion about alcohol with me. I've learnt from all of your perspectives and experiences and it's been really interesting for me. So thank you so much. And I would just like to thank our listeners for listening and for their continued support with our podcast series. And I hope you've enjoyed the episode. Take care and I will see you next time.

Voiceover [00:41:03] This podcast is brought to you by the University of Aberdeen.