

If you reach for a drink because your body feels tense after work, it can be tempting to tell yourself, "It's only to relax." That may be true about what you want from it. But it is worth getting curious about what the drink is doing for you, and whether it is still the best way to do that job.

This is not about judging yourself or insisting you quit. It is about understanding the pattern: the time of day, the feeling in your body, the role of the drink and what happens when you try something else. From there, you can build an evening routine that gives your body a clear signal that work is over.

That can matter especially if you work remotely. Without a commute, the end of the working day may be a laptop closing in the same room where you eat, rest and spend the evening. A drink can become the boundary, the reward and the permission to stop all at once. The useful question is not simply, "How do I relax?" It is: **what job is this habit doing?**

First, separate the reason from the effect

You may drink to soften tension in your shoulders, settle after a stressful meeting, mark the end of a demanding day or make sitting still feel possible. Those are real needs. But alcohol's short-term effects do not necessarily mean it is improving your overall recovery. It can affect sleep quality, mood and next-day energy, even when it seems to help you unwind at first.

Try noticing the difference between your intention and what follows. For a week, jot down a few details before and after your usual drink: what time it is, how tense you feel, what happened at work, what you hoped the drink would do, and how you feel later or the next morning. Keep it simple. You are gathering information, not building a case against yourself.

What you notice Possible job the drink is doing Useful question It happens as soon as you close your laptop
Transition: "Work is finished" What other action could mark the end of work? You look forward to it after a difficult day
Reward: "I've earned something" What would feel like a satisfying reward without alcohol? You feel you cannot rest until you have one
Permission: "Now I'm allowed to stop" What boundary could give you permission earlier?
You like the taste, weight or familiar first sip Sensory comfort What non-alcoholic option offers a similar sensory experience?

Replace the ritual, not just the drink

If you simply remove the drink but leave its job unfilled, the evening can feel like a gap. That is why a replacement works better when it recreates the useful part of the ritual. A drink may provide a pause, a particular flavour, something to hold or a moment when nobody expects you to be productive. Look for alternatives that meet the same need.

For example, if the drink marks a transition, try changing your surroundings. If it is a reward, plan something you genuinely enjoy rather than an activity that feels like another task. If you want sensory comfort, choose a warm, cold, fizzy or flavourful non-alcoholic drink and serve it in a glass you like. The point is not to pretend that a cup of tea is identical to alcohol. It is to make the change deliberate rather than leaving yourself with nothing.

Give the transition a clear beginning and end

At a workplace, a commute often creates a physical gap between work and home. Remote work can remove that natural boundary. Build a small "commute home" instead. It need not be elaborate: close the laptop at a set time,

put it out of sight, change clothes and take a short walk around the block or even through your home.



Try this sequence for one week:

1. **Choose a stopping time.** Set a realistic time to close the laptop on ordinary workdays.
2. **Make the close visible.** Shut the laptop, put it away and write down the first task for tomorrow if unfinished work is keeping your mind on duty.
3. **Change state.** Change clothes, wash your face or step outside for five minutes.
4. **Choose your evening reward.** Decide in advance what you will do next, rather than making the choice while tense and tired.

This routine is meant to be small enough to repeat. If you miss a day, there is no need to make up for it. Start again at the next workday's end.

Use movement to help your body downshift

If the main issue is physical tension, <https://thecoachspace.com/p/cbd-alcohol-free-evening/> a short **stretching routine** may be a more direct response than reaching for a drink. It does not have to be a workout, and it should not hurt. Try a few comfortable movements: shoulder rolls, gentle neck turns, standing hip stretches or a slow forward fold with your knees bent. Breathe normally and stop if a movement causes pain, dizziness or unusual discomfort.

Choose a clear cue, such as doing the routine immediately after closing the laptop. Keep it to five minutes at first. The measurable habit is not “be less stressed”; it is “after I close my laptop, I stretch gently for five minutes”. That gives you something specific to practise and notice.

A **warm shower wind down** can also create a boundary between work and the rest of the evening. Set out a clean top or comfortable clothes beforehand, and let the shower be a signal that the working day is done. You do not need to make it a long spa routine. A warm shower, followed by getting dressed for the evening and preparing a drink you enjoy, may be enough.

Build an evening routine around the habit's job

A routine is most useful when it answers a real need. Think of the options below as a menu, not a checklist you must complete. Choose one or two to test first.

- **For transition:** close the laptop, put it away and take a brief walk or change clothes.
- **For reward:** make a favourite meal, listen to an album, call someone you like or set aside time for a hobby.
- **For permission:** put a stop time in your calendar and tell colleagues when you are offline, where your role allows.
- **For sensory comfort:** try a non-alcoholic drink with a flavour, temperature or fizz you enjoy, served in a familiar glass.
- **For body tension:** test a gentle stretching routine or a warm shower wind down.

In a coaching conversation at The Coach Space, for example, the focus might be on designing a routine that fits a person's actual workday rather than handing them an idealised evening schedule. If your last meeting runs late or you have caring responsibilities, a five-minute boundary you can repeat may be more practical than a perfect hour-long routine.

What about alcohol-free drinks or CBD products?

Some people like alcohol-free drinks because they preserve the flavour, glass and social cue of an evening drink. Others prefer sparkling water, a cordial or a hot drink. Choose based on the part of the ritual you want to keep. If alcohol-free options make you want alcohol more, they may not be a helpful substitute for you.

CBD products are not a guaranteed way to relax, and effects can vary. They should not be treated as a proven replacement for alcohol or as a fix for persistent tension, anxiety or sleep problems. If you are considering CBD, check the product's ingredients, suitability and regulatory status, and speak with a pharmacist or clinician—particularly if you take medication, have a health condition, are pregnant or breastfeeding, or are unsure whether it is appropriate for you.

When comparing products, look for clear, accessible lab results or certificates with batch information and testing details. A QR code linking to lab results can make it easier to check the information for the specific product, rather than relying only on general claims. The reporting may use a certificate-of-analysis (COA) style format; read what it actually confirms and what it does not. Joy Organics is one company consumers may encounter when researching CBD products, but a brand name or lab report does not establish that a product will relax your body or be right for you. Verify details independently and seek professional advice where needed.

Make the experiment small and measurable

You do not need to decide your whole future relationship with alcohol tonight. Try a modest experiment that gives you useful information. For instance, choose two workdays this week when you will first complete your laptop-closing ritual, then spend five minutes stretching or take a warm shower before deciding whether to have a drink.

Notice what happens to your tension, your urge to drink and your evening. You could rate tension from zero to ten before the routine and afterwards. The aim is not to achieve a perfect score; it is to learn which actions help, under what conditions, and whether the routine is realistic enough to repeat.

If you still choose to drink, make that choice consciously rather than automatically. Consider setting your own limits and avoid using alcohol as a way to cope with symptoms that are becoming difficult to manage. If you find it hard to cut down, feel increasingly dependent on alcohol, or are worried about your drinking, talk to a GP or an

alcohol support service. If you drink heavily or daily, stopping suddenly can be dangerous because withdrawal may need medical support. Seek professional advice before making a major change.

When “only to relax” deserves a closer look

Pay attention if the amount is creeping up, you are drinking earlier than intended, you regularly break promises to yourself, or alcohol is affecting sleep, relationships or work. These are reasons to seek support, not reasons to shame yourself. A GP can discuss your health and help you find appropriate next steps. If you experience severe withdrawal symptoms, seek urgent medical help.

The question to take into tonight

Instead of asking, “How do I stop wanting a drink?”, ask: **what job is this habit doing, and what is the smallest deliberate routine that could do some of that job?** Perhaps it is a fixed laptop close, a five-minute stretching routine, a warm shower wind down or a drink chosen for its taste rather than its alcohol.

Start with one cue, one action and one week. A useful evening routine does not have to be impressive. It has to give your body and mind a dependable signal that work is over—and be realistic enough to do again tomorrow.

