Framing the issue; we’re advocating for responsible drinking, not prohibition: “I like to have a drink now and then. As an alcohol policy advocate, am I being a hypocrite?”

Julia Sherman, Coordinator of the Wisconsin Alcohol Policy Project, responds:

I hope not. You are age 21 or older, right? (:  

Actually, yours is a relatively common reaction to working on alcohol policy. We know that about 66% of the Wisconsin population over age 18 are regular drinkers, so chances are good that you are a drinker. I am. Consider it as a chance to model sensible consumption and prove that moderate drinkers have active social lives; I bet most of us do.

If you want to, have a drink, but people will notice if you over-indulge, so have a moderate drinking plan and stick to it. As for me, I enjoy a number of different alcohol beverages. Because I limit the amount I drink, I enjoy a more expensive beverage from time to time, one that most people would linger over. I’ve become a fan of wines that are naturally lower alcohol - Vinho Verde wines from Portugal, for example. I’ve also been served wine spritzers—equal parts wine and club soda with a lemon – whenever I ask for one. I’ve had some interesting interactions with hospitality professionals. Once I refused an offer to finish off the bottle “on the house” because I limited myself to two glasses of wine. My server looked surprised and then said, “Good for you.”

Of course, I’m still called a neo-prohibitionist from time to time, but only by people who don’t know me. I’ve offered to prove my “current drinker” status to members of the Tavern League-- if they are buying. Remarkably no one ever takes me up on the offer.

Julia

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For more information about Community Health Improvement in Action (CHIA), visit our website. CHIA is funded by a grant from the UW School of Medicine and Public Health from the Wisconsin Partnership Program (WPP).
Looking to discuss best practices with your peers across Wisconsin? Join the CHIA Google Group. This online forum/listserv is one of several CHIA activities that aim to deepen knowledge and expertise in implementing and evaluating community health improvement strategies, with an emphasis on policy, systems, and environmental changes that address unhealthy and risky alcohol use in Wisconsin communities.