

I'm An Alcoholic, but I'm Not a Drunk

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Drinkers always find drinkers. We travel in packs.

I started on the bottle when I was 14 years old and drank with enthusiasm for 35+ years, so it should come as no surprise most of my best friends, okay, pretty much all of my best friends, are high functional, social alcoholics.

I play rec league hockey for a team named THE BEER TEAM. Literally, we played for beer.

And then I stopped drinking. And I get my life halfway in order. Lose a bunch of weight. Write a self-help book and start traveling around giving motivational speeches that really aren't about motivation at all.

And all of my used-to-be-drinking buddies think it is hilarious. Because they knew me back when. *"Dude, what do you even talk about? You're just a guy who quit drinking."* What they mean by that is I never hit rock bottom. I never crashed my car and put myself or any innocent bystanders into a coma. I did not get drunk and gamble away my kid's college money, ruin my marriage, or wake up in a Turkish prison with six balloons of heroin in my colon. All I did was quit drinking. Not much of a story really.

And that is why I never thought drinking was a problem for me – because it had never caused a problem for me. Nothing insurmountable, anyway. Sure, I drank away my college scholarship. But I still managed to get a degree. And sure I had banged and scratched up a car or three over the decades, but nothing I couldn't handle without notifying the insurance company. And most importantly, I *knew* I did not have a problem because I never had a DUI. I had been pulled over, three sheets to the wind, more times than I could count, and always managed to talk my way out of it.

At the age of 16, I took my driver's exam, and passed after downing a sixer on the ride home from school. I had a license to drive drunk. **I spent 35 years waiting for the other shoe to drop. And it never did.**

But being lucky and being responsible are not the same thing. It took me getting off the bottle to realize that. I spent decades operating at less than capacity because I was hungover or more interested in partying than taking care of business. I spent untold amounts of money, tens of thousands, maybe hundreds, on booze and partying. I cringe now at all the times my life, and the lives of people within striking distance, that could have gone horribly, horribly wrong and the only reason they didn't was just sheer dumb luck.

We have all heard the expression, "you are the average of the five people you spend the most time with," from author Jim Rohm. What most of us do not think about, though, is that means

the five people you spend the most time with are, in part, a reflection of you. We are all receivers, but we are also transmitters.

The life you lead is the story you tell the world. And the story you tell the world, changes the world.

My drinking buddies and I spent a lot of time at three in the morning kidding about who was the bad influence. Which one of us was dragging the others down into our little mud puddle of debauchery and mediocrity.

It turns out we were all bad influences. We were dragging each other down. We were our own enablers. But we can be a positive influence on each other as well.

There is a video a YouTube of 32 metronomes all dancing to the beat of their own drummer. Google it, it's pretty cool. Over the course of a few minutes, the metronomes can't help but synch themselves together one by one. Until there's only one stubborn holdout, trying desperately, *unsuccessfully* to maintain its independence. Drinkers always find drinkers. We travel in packs.

THE BEER TEAM is still THE BEER TEAM. Says so right there on the jersey. But that is only because Iced Tea and Chicken Pecan Salad does not fit. These days, our team outings are much more likely to end at 9:00 p.m. over a casual meal than at 3:00 a.m. chugging road rockets in the parking lot of some dingy bar.

We never had a team meeting. We did not take a vote. And I am really the only teetotaler in the bunch, but that is only fitting. After all those years of arguing over who was the bad influence, who was keeping us out until three in the morning, it is obvious now it was me.

I spent decades waiting for the other shoe to drop, and eventually it would have to. Statistics demand it. If not on me, then on one of my friends. Fortunately, by sheer dumb luck, that is less likely to happen to me these days.

You do not have to get sick to get BETTER! You do not have to hit rock bottom to turn your life around.

Terry Lancaster helps people create **BETTER!** lives and build **BETTER!** businesses, one step at a time, starting right here, starting right now using the science of habit formation, focus and flow. He's an entrepreneur, a speaker and the **#1 Best Selling Author** of [BETTER! Self Help for The Rest Of Us](#).