

'Dom opens people's eyes to show them that
what's holding their life back might be
hiding at the bottom of their glass...'

Chris Williamson - Modern Wisdom

🍺🍺 I'M
NEVER
DRINKING
AGAIN 🍺🍺

**How to stop drinking so much
& change your relationship
with alcohol**

DOMINIC MCGREGOR

“I’M NEVER DRINKING AGAIN”

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**HOW TO STOP DRINKING SO MUCH & CHANGE
YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH ALCOHOL**

DOMINIC MCGREGOR



CAPSTONE
A Wiley Brand

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To every person who's managed to make a positive change in their lives. Any positive change, no matter how small, can open the door to a world of possibilities.

I didn't believe I'd make 7 days, but here I am 7 years later.

Thank you to everyone who has supported me on this journey.

To my wife, Georgie, thank you for everything.

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PREFACE

On 24 July 2016, I made a decision in my life to go sober. This wasn't a decision I wanted to make, it was a decision I had to make. I had founded a company at the age of 19 with Steve Bartlett now of *Dragon's Den* and *The Diary of a CEO*. We were working with the likes of Disney, Spotify, and Microsoft and we were one of the fastest growing, most exciting companies in the United Kingdom. I couldn't handle the pressure, so I decided to drink to numb the pain that this was creating in me.

After months of managing to hide my alcohol dependency, I ran into a number of problems, all self-created, which meant I almost lost everything: the business, my friends, my family, my partner (now wife) – everything I spent my life working for. Like Icarus who flew too close to the sun, I was a 23 year old who had played with fire too much and was left with no option but to make a change in my life. So at 23 years old, after an intense period of therapy, I tried going sober. The first few thoughts that entered my mind after making this decision were centred on how my life was going to look without being able to drink or go out. Up to this point, I had experienced life and alcohol through a very narrow lens. This felt like a huge change, and I was uncertain about how it would work.

At the date of publication, I am 30 years old and 7 years sober. I have now officially spent more time in recovery than

I was ever legally allowed to drink. In that time, I have managed to take my company to the public markets – listing it on the German Stock Exchange – as well as start my second business, host a TEDx talk, win countless awards, invest in over 20 companies and marry my best friend. Removing alcohol from my life has allowed me to reach my full potential and grow into a person whose life is rich with friends and meaningful relationships, and who has hope for the future.

While alcohol has become a social norm in much of the Western world, and many people believe they have a healthy relationship with it, it is still an addictive drug. What is insidious about it is that when life is good and stress is low, you are able to enjoy it “carefree”. During those times, when the hangovers don’t take days to get over, when the anxiety in the morning is manageable, when your body bounces back, it’s all okay. No one in those situations would admit that their relationship with alcohol is negative. But our relationship with any addictive substance is deeply rooted and can swiftly change when circumstances around you do.

I am fortunate to have gone through what I did at 23 years old. The strain of running a business with over 100 people at that young age artificially increased my dependency on alcohol and effectively fast-tracked me into having serious issues. My issues with alcohol happened at 23, however, without addressing the underlying issues around my relationship with alcohol, these issues could have happened at 33 or 43, as I never questioned my relationship with alcohol *until* it became a problem. This book is for everyone, *everyone* who can enjoy a drink – to help you understand

any current or future warning signs. It's for everyone waking up with a hangover on a Sunday morning and thinking to themselves "I'm never drinking again."

There is a shared experience for many who have gone "sober": most people have a rock bottom that acts as their wake-up call, and I was no different.

What I learnt when I hit my rock bottom was that the answer for me was sobriety. It was the only option I had. Not everyone is like me, there are others who can manage this relationship better. My relationship with alcohol, however, was so bad that it had to end. I have experience in staying in relationships too long and I end up doing significant damage to myself. If you're anything like me, think to yourself: Do I have a healthy relationship with alcohol? Do I have a healthy relationship with stress and anxiety? Is my mental health okay? What do I do in those situations when I don't feel well? Do I reach for the glass of wine too quickly?

The debate around alcohol has shifted in the past 7 years, the time I've been sober. At 23 years old I told my friends that I was "Never Drinking Again" and they looked at me as if I had just insulted their entire family with some senseless joke. It was a statement no one believed, partly because of who I was, but also because it was very rare. Seven years later I've been exposed to the sober community, which is full of wonderful men and women from all over the world and from so many backgrounds. I have never felt so welcomed.

Now at 30 years old, I am frequently told by peers, strangers on the internet and those closest to me that they

“wished” they could stop drinking, but it’s become too ingrained within their life. I have also experienced firsthand the damage alcohol can do to families and relationships, having been a drunken disgrace previously. I now witness that with people close to me, who don’t know when enough is enough. This has led me to write this book, sharing some of my experiences, the experiences of others in the sober world, and my learnings from going from someone who had a stable, loving upbringing by an incredible Mum and Dad alongside a solid private school education to a 20-year-old Jack-the-lad to a 30-year-old sober husband. It’s my heartfelt wish that my experience and tough lessons learned will help anyone who might need to change their relationship with alcohol too.

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To my family:

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dominic McGregor is a 30-year-old entrepreneur and mental health and sobriety advocate. Dominic is currently a Founding Partner of investment fund Fearless Adventures and ex-COO of the global marketing agency, Social Chain.

Along with his co-founder and fellow university dropout, Steven Bartlett, Dominic helped grow Social Chain to a US\$300 million turnover business with 750 staff in offices around the world, including New York City, Berlin, and London.

After building a global client portfolio that includes the likes of Apple, Amazon, McDonald's, and the BBC, the pair took the company public in 2019 and then exited in late 2020.

Post-exit, Dominic co-founded Fearless Adventures, a company which invests in founders who are looking to rapidly scale their business. Through this venture, Dominic passionately uses his experiences and huge wealth of knowledge from building and scaling a successful business to nurture new talent and support other entrepreneurs on their journeys both financially and emotionally.

In early 2021, Dominic was appointed by the Cabinet Office as a government policy advisor looking at social media and digital communications.

More recently Dominic and the Fearless team have created Basecamp Academy, with a mission to nurture, coach,

and up skill in all things digital, creating industry leading talent. The Basecamp co-founders believe that businesses need cultural and professional diversity to succeed, and they are helping to provide life-changing opportunities and enable the business community to build teams with different perspectives.

In 2023, Dominic became a feature in the BAFTA nominated and award-winning documentary series *Hollyoaks In Real Life*. His episode 'Alcohol Free At 23' saw him talking to *Hollyoaks*' long-standing cast member James Sutton about his journey with alcohol addiction. He also talks candidly about the pressures of running a successful global corporation, the expectations within that Wolf of Wall Street environment and how he felt during his journey to sobriety along with the changes he has seen since.

Alongside all his business and career successes, Dominic has found time to become a public speaker at a variety of events, including the likes of Capital One, Microsoft and many more, along with featuring in globally recognised news publications. He brings forward topics such as mental wellbeing, tech and digital skills, business strategies and success, and more besides, utilising his own journey through a variety of bespoke keynotes, opinion pieces, feature interviews, commentary, and panels to inspire and educate audiences of all sizes.

CHAPTER 1

TOP OF THE SLOPE

I'll never forget the day when I felt like I had completed life. It was 26 September 2015. I had just flown into New York to attend the UN's Global Goal festival, which Beyonce, Ed Sheeran and Coldplay were headlining.

I had been invited by a major Venture Capitalist Investor who had invested early in the music platform Spotify. This was the world 22-year-old me was living in.

A world of investors, business class flights, top hotels and amazing food. This was probably the fourth time I had been to New York that year. We were considering opening up an office in the United States for our company, so the trip had a real purpose behind it. This was going to be our third office location and in time, hopefully our biggest.

I had fallen in love with New York when I first saw it as a 19 year old. There was a special feeling about seeing the lights in Times Square at 4.00 am after flying down Fifth Avenue drunk in the back of a yellow taxi cab, which I believed were just from the movies until I travelled to the United States. The next few times I visited I began to fall

in love with Central Park and other areas of the city more occupied by locals than tourists. At 22, I felt a strange feeling of belonging, being comfortable in New York, knowing my way around and starting to feel like it was home.

So, on 26 September, here I stood, at the top of my slope, unaware of what the months ahead held. As the day started, I woke up in the city that doesn't sleep after a glorious business-class flight into New York. I was staying in a 5-star hotel just off Central Park. My business partner Steve and I had been invited to the Global Citizen Concert and we were in the VIP section; because the concert was in Central Park there was no alcohol allowed in the regular areas. I think if I'd had a normal invite, I would have politely declined – the ability to drink and party was a major pull. We arrived at 12.00, walking past the Strawberry Fields – the tribute to Beatle John Lennon, a nice little reminder of the power that music has to move people.

Ultimately, we were out of place here – two young British entrepreneurs in New York at this global event. The speakers included Leonardo DiCaprio and Michelle Obama, and it was hosted by Hugh Jackman and Olivia Wilde. This was the day of days. It felt like everyone who was anyone would be at this event. They'd be in the VIP section, and more than likely at some point we'd see them. So we infiltrated the bar and began to give ourselves a bit of "Dutch courage".

It was here that I started seeing people I recognised. I caught sight of a beautiful woman with long ginger hair – I was sure I knew her and I was pretty sure she was British, but I couldn't place her. Google didn't let me down – Bingo!

Bonnie Wright who played Ginny Weasley in the *Harry Potter* movies.

Slightly star struck, I took a bit more Dutch courage to navigate the occasion. Bonnie Wright was a big name, but she was far from the only one. Turning around to see Jaden Smith and the (real life) Winklevoss twins (who inspired my entrepreneurial journey in the movie *Social Network*) really blew my mind. The alcohol flowed to give me the confidence to be around these people. I felt like an imposter. My mind was racing . . . *What am I doing here with these people? I'm just a young guy from York – this doesn't happen to other 22-year-olds. This is wild.*

I knocked back another drink to quieten the thoughts running around in my head. The day continued with talks from major world players. We watched Coldplay open the show from the VIP section, which was literally 10 yards away from the stage. Behind me 60,000 New Yorkers were thoroughly enjoying their day, despite being unable to get a drink. While at the bar, I looked at the TV and noticed Leonardo DiCaprio on stage giving his speech – I hadn't realised he would be here.

I turned to Steve in disbelief and asked, "Is that here, is this live?" He said, "I think so." Something came over me and I said, "I'm going to find him."

I had an irrational determination to find Leonardo DiCaprio. I had no idea how I'd do that. I had no idea what I'd do when I did, but I became fixated with this quest.

So I set off.

During the show, I'd seen a small gate with two rather large security guards. By now, I was well "on my way" and my

drunken conclusion was that there was probably a VVIP area or Green Room where the performers and speakers would be. This gate seemed to me like the logical target – if I could infiltrate it, I might find Leo. I knew my time was limited, it wouldn't be long until he was off stage and more than likely heading somewhere else (people like him do not hang around for long). I made a beeline for the gate, approaching the security guards with the utmost confidence, covering my wristband with my sleeves so they wouldn't see what category of guest I was. I walked up, head held high, and without being asked a single question, walked past them and into the other behind-stage location.

Steve followed me. Part of me felt like we had done it, we had made it. As we stepped into the backstage area, Leonardo DiCaprio was coming off stage – surrounded by security guards. Noel Gallagher right in front of me. I came within touching distance of Leonardo, manoeuvred between his security guards, reached out my hand and . . . stroked his arm.

What a crazy guy I was – who did I think I was, stroking Leonardo DiCaprio? He didn't even really seem to notice. I was buzzing. The day continued and the alcohol continued to flow. We partied with huge A-listers like Jay Z, Kanye West and Chris Rock, but the highlight for me was following the prime minister of Japan into his Green Room. It was a total blag. As he came off stage, I joined his security guard, who were all Japanese, dressed in suits, and holding shoulders to form a human shield. In my purple jumper and jeans I didn't think I'd get away with it, but I joined the back of

the train and when a guard asked, “Are you with them?” I confidently said, “Yes”.

Now, what I learnt was not only was the security terrible, but that drinking gave me a deluded confidence. I was probably close to committing a few felonies or at least breaking some international law that day, but not for a second did I think about that. I was just thinking, *this is the life; this is what you're supposed to be doing at 22 when you've built this business.*

Little did I know then that this was far from what I was “supposed” to be doing. Before this I was always a drinker, always someone who would have fun. I remember the end of year awards, when your school year voted for ‘The most likely to do x and y ’. We had the usual categories: most likely to be on Spotify, most likely to write a book (which I would have probably been bottom of), and most likely to be a spy – the usual trivial things that 18 year olds go for. The award that I proudly won – ‘Most likely to be drunk right now’. That was me, a Lad. In the intervening four years, little had changed. On 26 September 2015 aged 22 I reached the peak of my alcoholic adventures. From that day on, every day slowly unravelled in my life and the journey to rock bottom, to a place of nothing but pure personal torture, had begun.

ASCENDING THE SLOPE

Being a VIP at a high-profile event in New York was a very long way from my first home – Old York. After the house

parties and turning 18, I managed to scramble my way to university to study Sport Science – not that I knew what I wanted to do ‘when I grew up’ but I knew for sure that I’d love to work in sports. I had always loved sports and when choosing a course to study I thought about the old saying, “If you do something you’re passionate about you’ll never work a day in your life.” This was probably the main bit of life advice I wanted to follow. I believe I went to university well rounded. University is the first time a lot of people have the freedom and opportunity to live their lives. Away from the watching eyes of parents, many people begin to find themselves and experiment. From my point of view, I had already done a lot of that while in my late teens. I would say that I was an early drinker.

My first alcoholic drink was at my Dad’s 40th birthday party. At that party there were WKD alcopops, which were the craze at the time – the ones that looked like fruit juice. I was 13, a month away from my 14th birthday, and way below the legal drinking age, but being surrounded by my older cousins who were at the time 16, 17, and 18 years old, I was able to steal a taste of my first drink.

You might think there’s nothing unusual in that, but the age at which you begin consuming alcoholic drinks is more important than you probably realise. Studies^[1] show people who begin drinking before age 15 are four times more likely to become alcohol dependent at some time during their life, compared with those who have their first drink at age 21 or older. There I was, unaware that I had increased my chances of becoming addicted by 400%, just for a bright blue drink and a bit of fun at a family party.