

# HEALTHY AND HAPPY WINE LIFESTYLE CHECKLIST



[www.IBlameTheWine.com](http://www.IBlameTheWine.com)

## **You love wine. Me too!**

Whilst many health authorities prompt you to give up drinking and cut down to less than 14 units a week (that is less than 9 small glasses of wine to you and me), I decided to research and explore the issues around wine and health. As a result of my work and writing about wine and health at [iblamethewine.com](http://iblamethewine.com), I have developed a system (or a blueprint if you like) to help everyone make sense of that all.

I completely rejected an idea of giving up wine completely, so if you want to simply cut it out from your life, this guide is not for you. I applaud your sacrifice, but the goal of this work is to learn how to drink wine almost guilt-free. For the majority of wine drinkers following a healthy and happy wine lifestyle is not difficult - I will show you how.

The most important thing here is that you would need to do a bit of work, assessing your current situation - that is where this checklist comes into play - and then developing your own formula for the above mentioned healthy wine lifestyle. I simply want to combine some useful and proven tools for you, so you get fantastic results and improve your life from many angles.

Surely, if your condition is chronic, please do not delay and simply ask for a professional medical help; for the rest of you - I hope you find this guide and checklist useful and will share your opinions and results with [iblamethewine.com](http://iblamethewine.com) community.

Just before we start I wanted to be polite and introduce myself - my name is Dimitri and I am a founder of [iblamethewine.com](http://iblamethewine.com). I have a background in Digital Marketing, Wine and Spirits, Personal and Professional development, and also currently enrolled at Optimum Nutrition course and exploring the world of mindfulness. I am a humble person, so if you want to know more about my personal story and motivation to do this work, you can find it at the back of this guide, but for now - read more about healthy wine lifestyle.

### **Who is this guide for?**

It is developed for all people who want to learn how to enjoy wines (almost) guilt-free and with a peace of mind about your health (both physical and mental).

This blueprint is also about our dreams of being more social and confident in everyday life (how many times we may overcompensate with just a few extra glasses where we even do not want to drink anymore?)

Don't you think that our dreams co-exist in a direct contrast with our fears: we hate even the slightest thoughts of being lonely, awfully drunk or having a health condition because of our drinking habits.

People who implemented healthy changes in their lives are inspiring for us, but we are not sure how to do that all ourselves or how to get that inner clarity what exactly we need to do.

Have you found yourself in any of these descriptors? If yes, read on please.

### **Let's be honest with ourselves.**

What is the issue at hand?

If you are reading on now, does it mean you can see any immediate problems or issues connected with wine in your everyday life?

Is it your weight, sluggish mood, loss of energy or simply just too much wine? Oh no!

Your honesty will go a long way. I suggest we get a clearer picture of what is going on and this is where you will need to do some work. Do not cringe though - it is about simply reflecting on your own life: what do you like about how things go and what you don't, so it is not strenuous. Brew yourself a cuppa and get cracking with the following checklist.

### **A word of warning.**

Before we proceed, I just want to be very clear - you will not find any blanket recommendations here. Why do others dare to say that you are similar to anyone else. You are unique. This means you can experiment and find the best formula for your healthy lifestyle that is just uniquely

yours. The following blueprint also takes into account your mental health and happiness.

**Happy and healthy wine lifestyle checklist.**

I have created this checklist as a simple but powerful framework, that was proven to work for me in the past and also presently, so you can reflect, assess and make positive changes in your own life in a bit more structured way.

The main outcome is that you can have a healthier and happier lifestyle; and drink some wine with your dinners. Hooray!

## **Checklist on your happy and healthy wine lifestyle**

I just wanted to make a quick foreword to the main part of this guide. Being a marketer and a strong believer in coaching methods, I decided to combine what works for me in my professional life together and use a marketing plan template as a basis to our work towards a better wine lifestyle together with a coaching wheel to assess our current situation in a illustrative and easy to work with way. The resulting checklist is however not a plan or a wheel, but a puzzle. When you connect the elements of this puzzle and fill them in with actions, you will develop your own formula for a healthy lifestyle.

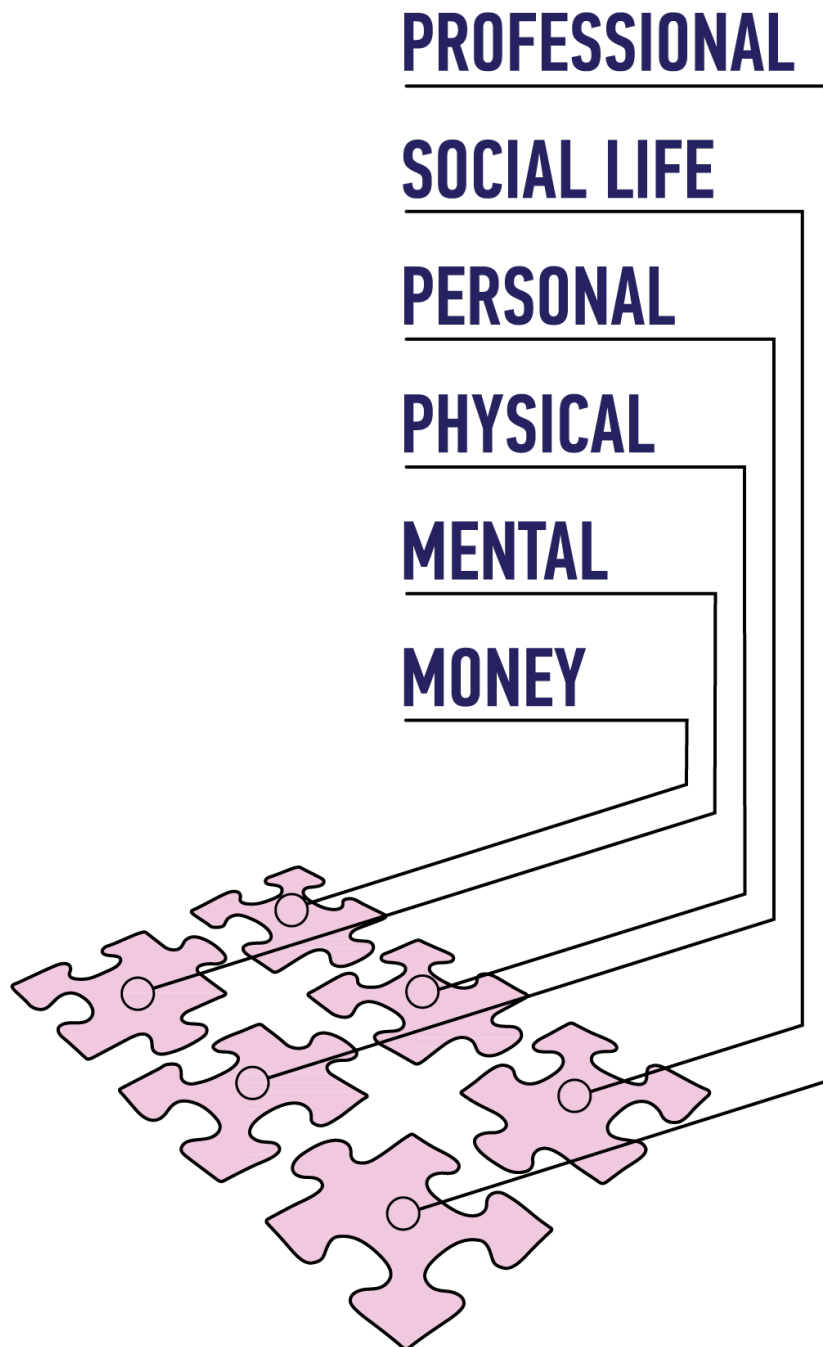
The following checklist assesses how wine affects different aspects of our life, including our physical and mental health and how happy we are about the current state of each of the elements.

Another important element is our social life including relationships, friends and family. Is your overindulgence harmful for any of the relationships in your life in any way?

Your personal development is key as it is where you start thinking of your purpose in life, passions or simply things you want to do.

Professional development is similar, but it focuses at your fulfilment at work, be it your career or your own business. Wine can definitely affect this all. How does it do for you?

Finally, too much wine can definitely affect your budget, money in the bank and immediate environment like your house or community where you live.



Please use any scale that you feel comfortable with, i.e. a scale of 10 and rate your satisfaction with that element in your life. I suggest you brew yourself a cuppa and allocate a reasonable time (30 minutes or more) to do this in an uninterrupted space where you can be alone and

in peace and quiet. Think about these elements, ask yourself how do you feel about them and how can you rate them, making some comments along the way about possible improvements. Also as a side thing, try to think how alcohol and wine affect some of the aspects you are not happy with.

- **Physical health:** what about your fitness; how often you get ill; how active, mobile and lively you are.

- **Mental health:** do you feel good about yourself; do you get overly stressed or lethargic often; do you feel confident and happy in general?

- **Personal development:** do you feel you have enough time or put enough effort to learn new things or do stuff you like doing? In example, I do like cooking, do I do it often and do I allocate a good time for me to enjoy the process and develop myself as a better cook? Or do I feel that there are some thoughts that prevent to be a better me? Do I create opportunities to work on it and become better?

- **Professional development:** do you develop your career or yourself in your own business; do you learn new trade know-how and becoming an expert in your field; are you on your way to your own professional mastery?

- **Family, friends and social life:** are you happy with your social relationships? It is a very wide question, but so easy to answer! I bet we all can be more social and attentive to our friends and family. This age of Internet and being social online brings us a lot of benefits, but definitely moves us away from a real face-to-face communication with your loved ones, friends and family.

- **Money and immediate environment:** are you happy with your finances? I know, I know, we never are, but this is not a question of whether we can do even better, but is there something you feel more as a 'need' rather than a 'want'? Is there an aspect that can be improved

by just adjusting your relationship with wine (and alcohol in general)?

This is a very gentle, honest and reflective exercise. I personally do it at least once a year before New Years Eve and it forms a basis for my resolutions. It doesn't mean you should wait, you can do it now and adjust yours for this year. I sometimes come back to this list, change my rating for some of the elements (we all need encouragement and assurance that we are on the right track), so I can see the improvement and it gives me even more motivation to move forward.

Have a look at your list - do you really want to stay where you are now? Where do you want to be?



## Next Steps

How did it go with your checklist?

Hopefully you are now equipped with your own puzzle and managed to rate all aspects of your life. Well done!

You must congratulate yourself on this work as 'If one does not know which port one is sailing, no wind is favourable' was once said by Seneca. You are now in the know where to go and that's a big step forward.

As your next steps, it is quite obvious you will try different strategies and tools (tactics) to work on these elements. These can include looking at your nutrition, introducing a healthy diet, start looking after your body and mind more, spending time on things you love doing and also on your professional development. It will definitely contribute to your financial success, but you can think of actions to grow even more. Finally, looking at your relationships and family will get you to allocate more time on them and this will make you happier. Researchers also agree that a happy social life contributes to your longevity, so cheers to a longer life!

I am currently working on a book to give a further guidance on these 6 puzzle pieces, which are elements of a happy and healthy wine lifestyle. I will make sure to drop you a line when it is ready, so watch this space.

In the meantime, as a bonus, I have collected a selection of the most popular posts from [BlameTheWine.com](https://www.blamethewine.com), a wine community that I manage, which are related to wine and health. Treat this as a food for thought: this is a selection of facts and my own observations that you can make your own opinion about. There is no single recipe that you can just copy and it will work, it is all in a way a matter of trial and error. You should see what works for you and incorporate it into your life. It will become your own formula for a happy and healthy lifestyle with

wine in it.

Cheers!

Don't forget to join our community and/or get in touch!

[IBlameTheWine.com](http://IBlameTheWine.com)

Email: [cheers@iblamethewine.com](mailto:cheers@iblamethewine.com)

Twitter: <http://twitter.com/iblamethewine>

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## Appendix 1 - useful reading

### Healthy eating pattern and wine lifestyle

Have you fallen into a trap of deciding which diet recommendations to trust and follow?

We are bombarded with articles, expert advice and celebrity endorsements, yet it seems that everyone just quite a few miles away from each other on terms of agreeing on fundamental principle – how much carbs, protein and fat you should consume on a daily basis to be healthy and maintain weight. Knowing that alcohol is calorific, but doesn't carry much weight in terms of these elusive carbs, protein or fat for that matter (even though the amount of calories per gram is 7, which is higher than sugar, which 'weights' 4 calories per gram). So what shall we do with it?

I can only vouch for things that work. In the beginning of my journey to getting rid of being overweight, I have tried a method, which consisted of drinking a lot of water, following a calorie controlled diet, doing quite a lot of exercise and also following a healthy sleep pattern. This whole thing helped me a lot as I have lost a couple of stone in a quarter when I was in my early 20s!

For those who want to check it out, just have a look at the bestselling book called [A Flat Stomach ASAP: The Look You Want in Just Six Weeks](#), where Ellington Darden argues that the ideal ratio for carbs/protein/fat content is 60/20/20.

I am also a believer in the fact that there is no diet that fits everyone. Most probably the above method worked really well with me as I was much younger. I am now not too sure that 60% carbs in my daily consumption is a good idea – it is way too high! If you think about it – you are advised not to eat starchy and rich in gluten carbs, and

definitely not much sugar, so you are left with some lighter to your gut gluten free carbs, but whole 60% of them for the whole day?! Would you think that a cheeseburger that has a lot of carbs (a gigantic bun), some greasy fats from bacon and sauces, and a lot of fried red meat (putty) is your everyday healthy meal? I don't think so!

As you may know, I do not have a scientific degree in nutritional sciences, I am more of a self-taught cook and healthy eater, so I wanted to get more information and preferably from the sources that I would trust – from people who learnt all this from their experience working in kitchens, accumulating research from different sources and making use of it. I stumbled upon a book that has a bit strange name, but offered just what I needed – [Nutritional Grail: Ancestral Wisdom, Breakthrough Science, and the Dawning Nutritional Renaissance](#). This book was written by Christopher James Clark who is also not a scientist or has a degree in nutritional studies, but put quite a few years into researching both scientific and practical sources and making them work as guidelines.

He stated that,

a) there is no harm in eating healthy fats found in virgin olive oil, coconut oil and natural sources of it like rich in omega-3 fish (don't we all take some fish oil supplements here in the UK?), so we can increase this content without thinking of getting fat from eating foods that are naturally fatty but organic and healthy (avocado, nuts). Afterall, nobody says it should go above 30-40%;

b) that protein was somehow left out with the 20% recommended ratio even though protein is a very healthy way to aid to muscle growth and thus keep your body toned and healthy. He added that by increasing your protein intake to 30-40% (double the previous recommendation) and insuring your carbs are low in GI (think gluten free, wholemeal, rich in fibre) will aid to your well-being greatly. Protein should preferably be

from either fish or white meat (poultry or lean pork), but always think organic and grass-fed for the best results.

Follow me on this course of transforming your eating habits and incorporating a **low-carb diet that is protein-rich, full of healthy natural fats and low in GI carbs** that do not make your feel bloated (gluten free, some healthy fibre and also organically sourced). When it comes to wine, it is good to consume it in moderation and with food (it binds perfectly with proteins) and drink a lot of water (think a glass of water per a small one of wine).

One last note to support this claim is to look at centenarians – the largest percentage of them live on Mediterranean island of Corsica, where they consume mostly fish with vegetables, occasionally game, and always have a glass of red with their meal. Check ‘How to live to be 100+’ TED talk [here](#), it is quite an exciting watch!

## **Healthy BMI and cholesterol: facts or nonsense?**

On the 12<sup>th</sup> April 2015 I have come across a Sunday Times article that contained quite an interesting and factual piece of work about health guidelines (i.e. healthy cholesterol levels and BMI), and how little we know about whether they have any sense at all.

Intrigued? Well, so was I!

I must refer you to the source if you want to know more, but I will exploit this source to highlight a few points.

First of all, it is easy to completely drown in the facts like ‘when obesity will kill me’, or ‘dementia risks can be reduced with BMI above average levels’, etc.

GP Malcolm Kendrick started to look into the reasons of obesity, and as all of us was trying to find the grounds to a healthy weight range and, as

a scientist, to find a justification for the numbers.

Body Mass Index is believed to show obesity when the number is greater than 30. Who said so? Apparently, as he argues in his book '[Doctoring data: how to sort out medical advice from medical nonsense](#)', this number was arbitrarily chosen at World Health Organisation conference in 1995. Oops. On top of that the evidence suggests that people with BMI of 25 to 30, which are considered as overweight (I am in that bracket now with 26!), are thought to live longer than the ones with 19-25 range. One more oops. Good oops for me though!

Some even greater nonsense lies with the cholesterol levels – back in 1984 in America they have identified that the levels of 5.2 – 6.2 of serum cholesterol were healthy and did not show any effect on heart mortality. The reason for the cut off point at 5.2 was that the research institute wanted to have a larger sample for their own research purposes. Shocking!

EU then went further and rounded this figure down to 5.0.

I do have a private medical insurance from a provider that actually provides some additional benefits for healthy BMI and cholesterol levels. So my current 5.3 level is deemed as high and was recommended to exercise more! That is when I go to the gym every day (I do lunch time gym breaks), which include some days of weights, swimming or yoga. Do they want even more? I don't want to live in the gym!

OK, my rant is over. After a good meditation I would be free from this medical nonsense.

## **10 easy tips how to drink well but less**

It is definitely not a guide from [drinkaware.co.uk](http://drinkaware.co.uk) (which is actually quite a set of rules and guidelines for the ones who want to know more about alcohol and its influence on human body), it is also not a confession of an alcoholic (there are AA meetings for that), but simply a set of simple but effective ways how all of us can live healthier and happier by drinking less, yet still enjoying good wine.

We all have those moments when we think we can live a happy life and drink less, but as always *'something happens'* and we drink more than needed. Have a look at my recent review on [alcohol units and wine and calories](#) to know more about it. In general, we are talking about 2 small glasses of wine for a woman a day and up to 3 small glass (not quite though) for men. (January 2016 update: guideline limits for men are reduced to 14 units per week, see more on our [Forum](#))

It has been agreed by experts that it doesn't mean you can just consume your whole weekly allowance in one go and then just sit tight during the week, so it is about having some wine but rather regularly as it can yield some health benefits. Whilst the latter is a separate topic, I would like to go through some pieces of advice I have collected during last couple of years and also tested, so I can judge how it works!

Before we go to the cure part, let's just think why do we drink in the evening after work? Is it because we got used to have wine with food (nothing wrong with that!), or we are just bored and want something to get that extra spark to our life (ding dong, I can hear some alarm bells here), or it is our way to relax and unwind (especially after that enormously stressful day)?

It is such a good question, so answering honestly will be your first step to getting your own answer to ***'how to drink well but less'*** right! Let's explore these tips based on the case.

First stop is our **Food** related wine consumption.

Again, I will repeat myself that there is nothing wrong with it. Yes, there are some facts like that famous French paradox that basically depicts that fat that French consume loads of fatty foods with quite a lot of wine and stay healthy with regards to heart diseases. I would like to underline that it does matter how much wine do we consume with food. Yes, it is also quite important what exactly do we eat (to keep us healthy), so for many people meat based diet (red meat everyday) would not just mean the temptation to drink more wine, but also quite an unhealthy diet. According to the well known '5 a day' recommendation, vegetarian diet is a healthy one. I will not survive on just vegetables, but to make my lunches and dinners truly nutritionally great I will cook as many vegetables as I can to accompany either meat, poultry or fish. I have learned how to make it exciting by simply varying the way those veggies are cooked: you can steam them, roast them, mush them, put them in air fryer, blend them, and more many options. Let's start with the tips though.

The first one is actually cooking a **vegetarian** dinner. Just imagine an aubergine spicy burger with some onion relish and humus. Does it sound quite appetising? I think so! Yet if you think about it, it does not call for your regular glass of red or white for that matter. You can simply substitute it with a soft drink. Go online, search for some veggie recipes and cook a few that float your boat.

I have mentioned a **substitute**. Well, one of the greatest tips that I have read on one of the diet and wellness forums was to mix **sparkling water** with your favourite fruit juice. I can tell you that – for the most everyday dinners I can just mix Pellegrino with [Waitrose](#) cranberry juice drink (think of potentially adding a slice of lime to it). You can think of your own mix – I also like tonic water with the same cranberry drink (it can remind you of a cocktail!), but in essence you are playing a trick on your mind – you are to drink something bubbly or reminiscent to



alcohol, but actually it is just a soft drink. Try it one day and experiment with your own mix – you can create your own ritual with it!

Talking about red meat – it is indeed not too healthy to have it everyday, so think about having **fish days**. I love to cook, but sometimes I feel tired or simply not motivated to spend more time in the kitchen. Fish supper is the answer – you can steam vegetables and grill a fillet of sea bass or sea bream in under 10 minutes, sprinkle some chopped herbs and bold olive oil and you are sorted! Serve it with water served with lemon and feel those wonderfully delicate fish flavours – I bet you remember a smell of ocean from your last beach holiday, don't you?

I have mentioned your everyday dinners. Do you eat a lot of **oriental** dishes? I can bet that you're not – you do not drink loads of wine with the spicy or fragrant oriental dishes. I have recently cooked Malaysian prawn laksa dish, all from scratch by making my own laksa paste from a dozen of spices, herbs and other ingredients (read, have done something absolutely different and proud of myself). I can say that even though many wine critics suggest drinking off-dry white wines (i.e. Riesling or Gewurztraminer) many oriental dishes are much better with either a light beer or ginger ale (my personal favourite). You simply switch to Thai supper once a week and guarantee yourself a wine-free evening. Experiment with other pan-Asian flavours and make those evenings fun!

You can experiment with different cuisines that 'do not match with wine', but do not forget two important things about wine a food: I remember when I did my ['5x2' diet experiment](#) it clearly showed how calorific is wine and you diminishing what you earned by your hard work in the gym by simply drinking those extra few glasses of wines. Lastly, do not forget to match a glass of wine with a properly large glass of water. Alcohol is dehydrating you, so when sharing a bottle of red with a few friends, make sure you share and actually finish a litre bottle of

still water as well!

Before I move to something that I call of a ‘paramount importance’, let’s move on to **money and quality** factors. When you’ve read my statement about drinking well, but less I bet you thought – ‘*oh yeah, right, he will just promote expensive stuff!*’

Even though I do believe there is a correlation between price and quality, there is also a bullshitting factor – wine brands can decide to put up expensive price tags just to position themselves as ‘super quality’ ones. It is not necessarily true. Have a look at [The Best Organic Wines](#) top list – there are wines under £10 in it which taste superior to some £30 expensive pretenders. The problem is that there are thousands of wines and we cannot taste them all ourselves. Yet we can share! That is how the top list and the ‘[avoid](#)’ list are made. Share your tasting notes as well! Just send me your notes via [email](#).

The tip here is a bit different though – go for quality wines (they will normally be more expensive), savour its fantastic taste, enjoy the complexity and flavour concentration. When all these aspects come together you will need much less wine as your one glass will contain so much more flavours in it! It is a matter of trial and error as well as you need to know what you like more – a powerful woody-vanilla composition of matured Rioja or beautifully elegant rosemary-thyme combo in Cotes du Rhone Villages wines. Yet the recipe is the same – learn what you like, go for a better quality (usually pricey!) and drink well, but less.

This could be that sweet end to this review, but no, money is not the only answer to it. Oops, I meant quality! Still not though.

I want to add a few hints and tricks to deal with effects about how your **Mind** affects how much you drink.

You come back home tired, you pour yourself a long drink. You feel

undervalued and you compensate by having a very expensive drink. You wasted your day with doing some rubbish and you're unhappy because there wasn't any self-realisation or self-improvement during the day and you have a glass of red to make yourself better. Come on, whom I'm kidding, that is not necessarily about you. Is it? I must admit, I can remember all of these instances in the last year, easily!

I am in my mid-thirties now and I can share what helps me.

Do all the things you can try easily and without any investment to it – **running, walking with your dog** to a big park (yes it is a bit further away!), doing some **stretches**, or even yoga (no farting in front of your partner though!). I can add some breathing exercises to it – you do need to call it yoga **breathing** or Pranayama – it can be just your 5 or 15 minutes of 'me' time when you simply concentrate on your breathing and think about something nice (or do not think at all). To make it more therapeutic my favourite exercise is 'Alternate Nostril Breathing'. You press your thumb against your right nostril and inhale (for a count of 5), hold it for 5 and then after releasing that right nostril press your left one and exhale (for a count of 5 or more). Repeat from left to right and so on. It creates an amazing feeling of calm and tranquility, no one says you can't have your drink, but trust me if you are stressed, just do this breathing for a few minutes (5 would be even better) and you will need less drinks tonight – tried and tested!

One more important thing or rather a word that made my life much better - **mindfulness**. A few years back I have discovered [Headspace.com](https://www.headspace.com) - a wonderful tool that allows you to start meditating (hence reducing your cortisol levels, reducing stress, making your sleep better, improving your creativity, reducing anxiety and helping to focus on the things that matter) with a free 10 short meditation sessions, so you can get a taster and then continue as a paid member. This is the best decision I have ever made in my life - I am now doing some focused programmes tailored so you can work on the things that are of

you own particular interest (for me so far 'Focus' was the best programme yet). If you want to know more from another source, I recommend having a go at ['Sane New World' by Ruby Wax](#). She is hilarious and at the same time straight to the point on Mindfulness and its what, why and who. Buy your own copy, you will get a very entertaining read (the link above will get you to its Amazon page)!

Lastly, let me ask you a personal question. Are you drinking more because you are **bored**? Think about activities you always wanted to do but something was in your way. Ditch 50% of your TV time – it provides just a distraction. I am sure you are experienced in something – share it with the world, or maybe there is something you've always wanted to learn – if not now then when?

This claim is also true with another tip – **get an alcohol free day a week!** I find it a bit harsh to follow all those sober-October nonsense, but to have it in your mind that you will stay without alcohol for a day, just once a week is completely doable. This is where you can set an no compromise agreement with your mind. It is easy to follow as you can move some drinks with colleagues around and leave, let's say, your Mondays as alcohol-free days! It is a mini-detox for your mind and body that you will start to appreciate more when it becomes your habit.

You can see it is not as simple as I portrayed it when started this article. I know it is not. Yet it is all in our hands to make your life more tranquil through exercise, meditation, yoga or football for that matter; you can also make some clever tweaks with your food regime, drinks menu and shopping list; yet not forgetting to buy those wonderful organic gems that cost a fortune but you enjoy them sip by sip. What a wonderful life!

## **Appendix 2 - My story (if you are so inclined)**

It has been near to 15 years since a friend of mine looked at me critically and I have read in her eyes: 'You are overweight, your skin looks greasy and covered with spots. Your attire is also quite awkward'.

I am still friends with her, but I started to look after myself since then.

Here goes a story about my own journey towards to a healthier and happier lifestyle. I must add that it is indeed a journey, meaning its ongoing and I am still exploring, implementing and finding out what works for me. Hopefully you got this warning in the beginning of this checklist guide and ready to explore yourself?

Anyhow, here goes.

The story starts from the reasons for that sad state of me I've found myself back then.

For starters I was doing something I hated - I was doing my Masters at the University of Radioelectronics, a computer geek to you and me. I knew for a long time that this is something I did not want to do, but kept on pursuing the diploma. To disguise my dissatisfaction I have been drinking almost a dozen pints of beer after classes, topping it up with salty fishy snacks and crisps, obviously skipping gym and any sort of exercise. Hours spent at home banging on the keyboard at the chat rooms does not count.

Fun times? Maybe. Could be better.

So close to my graduation day that 'glance' happened and it got me thinking about turning things around. We went on to create a local branch of a youth association AIESEC and the whirlwind of events and finally trying to do something that I love got me busy. The amount of beer reduced, but not that much if to be totally honest. Better times as I have had a life changing opportunity to try myself in different functions - from HR to marketing, from a public speaker to a general manager. I cannot possibly give a better advice for anyone who is trying to find themselves professionally - you simply need to start looking! It is a matter of trial and error, nothing else. I highly doubt it comes when you

are asleep or your X Factor auditions in your shower.

Next life changing even was shortly after - a person I fell in love with rejected me saying that I was not attractive enough as I was overweight. Blunt? Most definitely! Yet very helpful in a long run.

Next three months to follow were not as torturous as some people can imagine.

So the changes implemented were:

1. No beer (it doesn't mean you need to go dry, but if you realise there is a problem it helps to eliminate it).

2. Proper gym session at least twice a week (I still remember having a milk shake after a session on Saturday with a friend) - some sort of habit is very helpful here.

3. A so-called French slimming diet. I unfortunately cannot possibly recall the exact name, but the idea is simple: it is a calorie and portion controlled diet with a help of a glass of lemon water 15-20 minutes before your meal (it tames your appetite a bit). You don't go super strict, so you do not feel hunger, but at the same time you make a clear connection between calories and how much you need to work in the gym to burn them. Works like magic.

The results were astonishing: I lost 27 kgs in 3 months (some experts will say that it is unhealthy, but hey ho, it was done). I did not continue with the diet as such, but after following it for 3 months it got me to the point that I finally started to think what I was actually eating.

***Looking back:***

1. Do what you love
2. Control your alcohol intake
3. Exercise
4. Attempt a reasonable diet plan
5. Hydrate

I moved to a capital, started to work in marketing. Yes, that is what I discovered I loved the most. My career started very well and I think I have let go of my healthy eating habits for a while. A single guy in a

capital and not fit - oh please you are just not competitive on that dating market anymore! I have resumed my gym sessions and started looking into another diet to adopt.

My next one appeared to be based on the bestselling book called [A Flat Stomach ASAP: The Look You Want in Just Six Weeks](#), where Ellington Darden argues that the ideal ratio for carbs/protein/fat content is 60/20/20.

It is not just that, it is a system that incorporates a set of exercises (pretty basic, but you need to do them really slowly); super-hydration (these 6 weeks I needed to do from 2 to 4 litres of cold water a day - you basically start and gradually increase your intake so the majority of time you are actually to drink 4 litres); ensuring good, uninterrupted sleep in a cool condition (no overheating yourself); and a set of smaller meals taken rather frequently (men aim to eat 2000 calories and women 1500 calories a day and try to break it down to 5 meals a day even if one or two of them would be just snacks). A word of caution - some researchers also warned that super-hydration only suits people with healthy kidneys, so consult your GP if not sure.

My results were of course a bit more modest than last time but I simply got to my previous measurements that I had after my previous diet plan. I was very happy and to my sheer surprise some of my friends who followed this plan to a T got even better results. Oh, bless their willpower!

At that point in my journey I have also added tennis to my exercise. I loved playing it when I was a kid, so I thought it will help me to be active during a few more days a week. I was right. Yet I have gained an additional benefit - it is also fun and competitive, so you are actually looking forward to these sessions rather than simply weight lifting.

***Looking back:***

1. It should be a journey and not a one-time thing you do and forget.
2. Exercise should be fun.
3. Commit to a systematic approach. Gorging on desserts and chips to compensate on your gym sessions will not get you to a desired result.

The chapter to follow was to relocate to Gibraltar. I always felt that Ukraine was not really for me. It is a separate story that I may be convinced to touch over a glass of good red, but now here not now. My time there was brilliant, but the story repeats itself - a single man in a small marketplace if we can call the dating scene like that needs to keeps himself fit. The gyms were great, a lot of outdoor living as well and plenty of swimming. One cannot complain. Yet social scene was somewhat boring and plenty of alcohol everywhere (it is VAT and duty free overthere) took its toll.

I guess I always liked a glass of something and quite recently it was just wine. I don't think I knew much about it back then. You could get Casiliero del Diablo (Chile) as a premium wine in Ukraine back then. Wine became more accessible - both financially and in general a lot of options what to drink. I think when you do not have even the basic wine knowledge you buy some really shitty examples and thinking that they are 'not too bad', but you do not know which are better than that and most importantly you do not why.

That is how you start to drink too much.

I have spent two years in Gibraltar and then almost a year in Malta, which happened to be of a similar experience. My answer to my somewhat excessive wine drinking was a so-called 'Promise to myself' - for each wine drinking session I should then had been to the gym before. So in my view back then I am paying myself with wine when I fulfil my commitments. Was that crazy?

In some wicked point of view I have been keeping fit with my 5 times a week gym sessions. Yet as I have discovered later on it is not particularly healthy as you need to re-hydrate yourself well and going to the gym when you had a drinking session before isn't great as well.

Diet-wise it wasn't too bad - luckily Mediterranean cuisine suggests a lot of fish, good organic red meats and plenty of vegetables.

### ***Looking back:***

1. Are you social circles alright?
2. Are you keeping yourself busy with your hobbies and have



opportunities to develop yourself personally?

### 3. Are you drinking too much?

Since January 2011 I live in London and I call it home now. I remember my first visit back in 2006, I decided back then that I will do my best to move there and have a great life. Well, 10 years since I am here and it is going really well for me.

Yet I am not here to pat my own back. Did I mention I was also a smoker? I guess not.

I have never been that big of a smoker and could definitely live without it, yet it was a habit for my social life and sometimes also an anti-boredom mechanism. I have had several attempts to quit, but eventually I had the same mental response of 'Why bother and stress out much? I'd rather smoke a few and would be alright'. I lived like that until London Olympics and then a miracle happened. One date of mine was smoking so much, in fact even in the bedroom, that after waking up several mornings with a proper pounding headache, which I almost never have, so I had been so disgusted I never had a ciggy since.

You are probably thinking, what is wrong with him and his dates? Me too!

#### ***Looking back:***

1. Smoker and non-smokers cannot co-exist. I now find smokers disgusting (smell-wise!). Decide for yourself what camp you would be playing for and why. The main question here is 'why' - what aspects of your life will quitting help to improve?

2. It is also about getting out there. Being social means your ideas and beliefs are bumped up with somebody else's. You can get unpredictable results.

I am still in London and it is a last part of my story so far. I want tell you a mini story. When a friend of mine was considering relocating to London from Kiev, he told me that he was scared because he is well-known in Ukraine (he was a top manager in a digital agency there) and in London he would be 'nobody'. You've got the point.

He did not relocate. I since won an industry award and started to be recognised as a digital marketer working for one of the most competitive online business sectors. Whilst I do not have this award anywhere in my house or on my work desk, it still works as a proof that you can build yourself up from scratch. What's the secret? My next statement won't probably be a revelation. The secret is about being useful.

This checklist and my upcoming 'Don't Blame The Wine Book' are elements of the same - my quest of making myself useful for you. It is a continuation of my search for mastery. It can encompass me and marketing, wine and happiness, wine and health and a weird combo of all put together.

I started to think that I getting myself too busy. My focus now is on wine and health issues including mindfulness, but also on setting up my own store, creating these materials on helping you to be healthier and happier. Yet sometimes I feel overwhelmed with work and how busy I am. That is not a good feeling at all.

My recent conclusion are that if I practice mindfulness, it helps to know more about wines, enjoy and, strangely, drink less. My body feels better. Same goes with my mind: some time ago I did think about meditation as a complete mambo jumbo. Right now I cannot get enough of it - it relaxes me and makes me more focused. I experienced a few breakthrough thoughts whilst I was meditating, so it works out well for me.

Similarly, I just hate running. I do that a little bit in the gym, but I know it is not me. Yet some people say that it clears their mind well, so if they like it then why not.

***Looking at it right now:***

1. Mindfulness and meditation is about living in the present. It requires regular practice to really feel the difference and it is amazing.
2. Think about your own mastery - it will direct you, motivate you and drive you forward. You won't think about over drinking or procrastinating, you would be in the zone!
3. Even if you start from a blank page, do it - focus on the things that

matter to you.

Cheers!

P.S. I have written about my journey so far only from a point of from making use of hundreds of books, articles and online resources which I've read and dozens of different recommendations tried. I hope this will save you some time, effort and provide a concise guidance on how you can make your own sense out of it. I am also finishing my 'Don't Blame The Wine' book, which will guide you through the checklist further and give recommendations on the checklist elements. I will send you an update if you are subscribed to our newsletter at [IBlameTheWine.com](http://IBlameTheWine.com); please do that if you are interested in hearing more from me!