



Dear Barry,

My friends all say I have a drinking problem and it is really getting old. I am a 32 year old guy, who when he goes out, likes to have fun. People seem to gravitate to me, as I am always laughing and talking. I have a good job, show up for work everyday, pay my bills and am in a relationship.

When I go out on weekends, we tend to end up at the clubs, and I can put away quite a few drinks. During the week, when I get home, my partner and I will have a few cocktails to unwind from the day. It relaxes me and helps me sleep.

I have seen what people look like that get drunk and sloppy, and I do not believe that I get like that. Growing up, I would watch my father drink every night until he passed out. I make sure that that does not happen, and control how much I drink during the week.

My friends have started to pull away from my partner and myself lately, after I told them to get over it, that they were way off base.

What are your thoughts? Do I have a problem, or do I just find new friends?

Signed Not a Drunk

Dear Not a Drunk,

First, I give your friends a lot of credit for addressing the drinking issue with you. They must care about you, probable more than you care about yourself.

If you are not an alcoholic yet, you're on your way. Your father was an alcoholic (so it runs in the family genes). You are drinking every day, and have found a drinking buddy in your partner. On the weekends, you end up at the clubs and drink excessively. The most telltale sign is that you acknowledge that you have to control the drinking during the week.

So, yes, you have a problem, and it is becoming a big one. Your friends are basically saying they don't want to hang out with you. They don't want to end up at a bar on weekends. They obviously see that your behavior, the laughing and talking is loud and obnoxious. What message are you missing, except your own denial?

If you change friends, (which you may have no choice –as your friends might just dump you) I am sure you will just end up with others that validate your drinking. Don't end up like your dad. Just because you hold down a job now, pay your bills now and are in a relationship now, does not mean you are not a drunk. Get some help, get sober, and take back ownership of your life that you have given to the alcohol.

Barry