

*"First we make our habits,  
then our habits make us."*

Charles C. Noble

Volume 2  
Winter 2014

# Day Thirty One

## The Newsletter of Moderation Management

### Holiday Greetings from Our Executive Director

Greetings to all in this holiday season!

Moderation is a lifestyle. I've been with MM for many years and have become fairly successful at moderating my alcohol intake. Am I perfect? No. I slip just like everyone else. The key and the solution are to get back up and continue. As Winston Churchill said, *"Never, never, never give up."* As we're fond of saying in MM, Your moderation may vary. Everyone's moderation may vary. The time it takes to become a consistent and conscious moderator can differ dramatically from person to person.

We gather up what we often call our "toolbox" which consists of counting drinks, logging them in, reading the Listserv and Forums, and attending live meetings if you have one nearby. MM is essentially a self-help group, and we are greatly supported by our membership and their contributions to everyone's progress with their wisdom, tips, and anecdotes. As has been said by many, moderate drinking is not for everyone. MM Old Timers have also said that it's essential to determine as quickly as possible whether or not moderate drinking is for you. If abstinence is more suitable for you, we advise you to join abstinence organizations such as SMART RECOVERY, the MM Absers, or AA, although there are many more organizations that might meet your individual needs.

Early on, it dawned on me that Moderation is not only an approach to drinking but applies to many aspects of our life. Eating is an important one, exercise, and many "indulgences" are best enjoyed moderately. Why? Because as Aristotle observed, *"Excess in all things is the undoing of men (people)"*.

I'm sure we know or may be in the process of dealing with our particular excesses. Patience, Persistence, and Practice are important factors in this process. Firstly, identifying the area to be dealt with is vital. If we deny or are

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Make this your newsletter; let  
us know what you need it to say:

**[editor@moderation.org](mailto:editor@moderation.org)**

## Support our Research Program

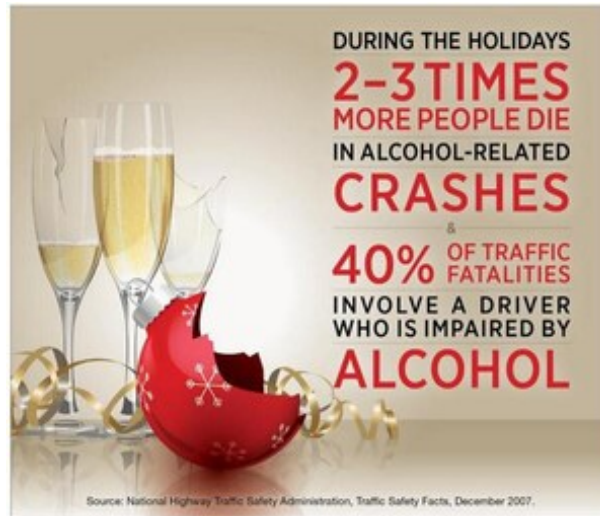
MM has a long and important history of supporting research on issues with alcohol. Research is a core part of our mission. This has created a number of important projects, which are listed at:

[http://www.moderation.org/about\\_mm/research.shtml](http://www.moderation.org/about_mm/research.shtml)  
<http://tinyurl.com/koqo5nx>

Your support of MM continuing this research can include a willingness to be considered as a participant. We have a private Listserv service (low volume) where individuals can volunteer to receive appeals to participate in research programs. Read about this:

<http://www.moderation.org/research/>

(Note you have no obligation to respond to these appeals, only to agree to receive the messages.)



National Institute on Alcohol Abuse & Alcoholism (NIAAA) "Rethinking Drinking"  
<http://rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov/>

*"Read the health article 'Sobering Up', written by journalist Gabrielle Glaser, now available online!"* <http://tinyurl.com/kvvlobs>

## Moderation Management Relies on Your Support

Moderation Management is a registered 501(c)3 non-profit corporation. We charge nothing for our services, and receive little outside funding. We rely on our participants and supporters for nearly all of our operating income. Your support for Moderation Management can be expressed as a donation to help us carry our program forward.

[www.moderation.org/donate.shtml](http://www.moderation.org/donate.shtml)

Contributions should be fully tax deductible; please consult with your tax professional.

## Our Newsletter Needs Sponsors

As we seek to expand our ability to deliver our programs and message, your help will be essential.

Please consider sponsoring our next issue. Write to:

[sponsors@moderation.org](mailto:sponsors@moderation.org)

## Consider How We Support You

If the programs, precepts, and services of Moderation Management have had an influence in your life, consider supporting us. Allow others to make the same discovery and to have similar life choices. With your support, what exists today is a promise of a new tomorrow...

## Values of Moderation Management

Moderation Management (MM) is a behavioral change program and national support group network for people who are concerned about their drinking and who desire to make positive lifestyle changes. MM empowers individuals to accept personal responsibility for choosing and maintaining their own path, whether moderation or abstinence. MM promotes early self-recognition of risky drinking behavior, when moderate drinking is a more easily achievable goal.

**MM is run by lay members who came to the organization to resolve personal issues and stayed to help others.**

- Members take personal responsibility for their own recovery from a drinking problem.
- People helping people is the strength of the organization.
- People who help others to recover also help themselves.
- Self-esteem and self-management are essential to recovery.
- Members treat each other with respect and dignity.

## Helpful Resources

There are as many people in the world as there are triggers for unhealthy behaviors, so it seems logical that different triggers require different approaches. Those of us who are digital natives (and if you have no idea what that means, you're probably not one yourself!) might resonate with a web app, and those who feel alone in their struggles and long to talk to like-minded people might respond best to the regular Chats we offer at MM. We've highlighted a few below to help you through the holiday season and beyond.

### MM Forum

The forum is a great way to interact with other MMers online. The message board format makes it easier to navigate threads with multiple messages, as well as access older posts. Users are often too busy to read 100+ posts per day on the Listserv but can generally keep up with the forum. Many users find the added accountability as much of a benefit as the sharing of ideas (e.g., how to cope with insomnia during 30 days of abstinence.) There are plenty of MMers across the spectrum of experience (e.g., just starting an MM path to veterans who have been at it over a decade) as well as different forums that focus on specific issues such as permanent abstinence, the moderation challenge, significant others, \*Abstar\*, and more.

<http://forum.moderation.org/>

### Moderate Drinking

Moderate Drinking is a subscription-based training program and web app with affordable monthly and annual rates. It is helpful for people who want to change their drinking by moderating or abstaining their use of alcohol. With



features like customized email and text messaging, you can use it to remind yourself of your reasons for changing, your plans to deal with your triggers, etc. These features are embedded in exercises in the app and also available on your My Account page. You can read about this scientifically proven program at

<http://www.moderation.org/software/index.shtml>.

### Reader's Digest Article is Online!

Read the health article "*Sobering Up*", written by journalist Gabrielle Glaser, now available online! This article from the March 2014 Issue of "*Reader's Digest*" features our own Donna Dierker and provides simple steps you can take

today to take control of your drinking.

<http://www.rd.com/health/conditions/alternatives-to-aa-women/>

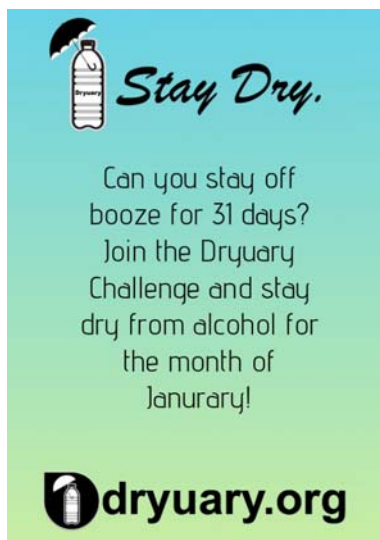
### Join the 2015 Dryuary Challenge!

Please join MM in our newest initiative:  
**Dryuary**

Dryuary offers an online interactive forum to kick-start a healthier lifestyle and inspires individuals to bring awareness to their relationship to alcohol.

Simply visit: <http://www.dryuary.org>

Sign up, and prepare to welcome a new you in 2015!



### Who We Are

#### Moderation Management Network, Inc.

2795 East Bidwell Street  
Suite 100-244  
Folsom, California 95630-6480  
Email: [mm@moderation.org](mailto:mm@moderation.org)  
Website: [www.moderation.org](http://www.moderation.org)

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#### SELECTED SERVICES

Find or Start an MM Meeting  
[live@moderation.org](mailto:live@moderation.org)

The MM Main List Listserv  
[admin@moderation.org](mailto:admin@moderation.org)

The MM Forum  
[forum@moderation.org](mailto:forum@moderation.org)

The MM Chatroom  
[chat@moderation.org](mailto:chat@moderation.org)

\*ABSTAR\* Drink Counter  
[abstar@moderation.org](mailto:abstar@moderation.org)

Sponsorship at moderation.org  
[sponsors@moderation.org](mailto:sponsors@moderation.org)

Media Contacts  
[media@moderation.org](mailto:media@moderation.org)

#### VISIT OUR WEBSITE

<http://www.moderation.org>

## Wisdom From The Trenches

### *Keepers and Testimonials: Selections from the MM Public Forum*

For those of us who have kids, it's just a simple fact that they need parents, teachers, and mentors to teach them even the most fundamental of things. How to avoid danger (plugs, hot stoves, sharp objects), how to read, write, and better understand the world by studying subjects such as history, English, math, music, art, and science and learning compassion, love, and respect. They learn how to act appropriately with other kids, adults, and pets. We accept that this learning is a critical part of creating healthy, happy, informed, and compassionate human beings. Learning what doesn't work is as important, if not more important sometimes, than learning what worked perfectly.

As an adult, I've seen in myself and other people that we aren't always the most gracious of learners. We come to the party with preconceived notions and opinions and ancient emotions, which can get in the way of the open mind and heart that are helpful if not critical to real learning. Feeling the rightness or wrongness in your bones. Sensing a key turning in your head when a series of things connect and a new concept resonates with you.

The forums and the email Listserv at Moderation Management are filled with vulnerability, candor, and wisdom. Stories of epic failures, hard won successes built one baby step at a time, and humor to keep your spirits high during hard times. We've decided to include what we call "Keepers and Testimonials" in these newsletters so that everyone can learn from people who are facing their particular demons in very different ways. These stories walk you through experiences with both moderation and abstinence, or as a recent MM member calls abstinence, "zero-days".

Keepers: <http://forum.moderation.org/forumdisplay.php?19-Keepers>

Testimonials: <http://forum.moderation.org/forumdisplay.php?18-Testimonials>

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*"I did not drink last night. Not because I couldn't, but because I didn't want to. This was a big accomplishment..."*

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#### **Keepers: The Benefits of Abstaining**

<http://tinyurl.com/q77qjrm>

I am going to post to both lists because I hope that someone can relate to my struggles (on the main list) with moderation and it might (?????) help them and I truly in my heart want to be perm abs - I am still really working towards this and I need the support of the MM Absers.

I did not drink last night. Not because I couldn't, but because I didn't want to. This was a big accomplishment - I think the first time in 20 years to do so without a glass of wine in my hand. Just another occasion to drink in the past. I made a couple of interesting observations.

1. We put up our Christmas tree and I did not get in a fight with my dear husband (dh) - that is a first!
  2. He thought the tree was crooked so we took it back and got a different one - that would have pissed me off if I would have been drinking - who cares - it is fine - if we leave, I have to take a break from my wine! (I would have thought that one to myself - probably on a subconscious level)
  3. While we were getting a new one - I saw 4 people I knew - I wasn't trying to avoid them because they might smell the alcohol or I might act stupid. I don't even think they had been drinking! Hmmm - I thought everyone drank on Saturdays.
  4. We decided we needed more lights at 7:00. Dear daughter (dd) and I went to get more. That would have pissed me off in the past - It's fine - who cares
- a. Why do I always have to do it! - I shouldn't be driving anyway! (I would think that one to myself - probably on a subconscious level)

5. We stopped right in the middle - ate dinner and watched a movie - that wouldn't have happened in the past. I get a little hell bent on getting things finished when drinking. Let's just get it done even though dh wanted to watch a movie.

6. I did not wake up this morning to a sink full of dirty dishes - I actually did them before I went to bed.

Interesting...

**ksusier**

#### **Testimonials: Elle's Story**

<http://tinyurl.com/omzc2ss>

I joined Moderation Management in November 2008, so I have been a member for just short of 2 years. In that time, the progress that I've made has been incredible. I credit MM as an organization, individual members of MM for their particular contributions to my recovery, and, of course, in true MM fashion, I credit myself.

I joined MM after a Thanksgiving blackout, but it was a long time coming. My entire adult life had been marked by bad decisions and embarrassments due to overdrinking and, by this time, it had become my main coping strategy. My relationship of 10 years was in jeopardy and my drinking was a big part of that, so when I woke up the next morning to my partner's disappointment, I knew that something had to change. I immediately went to AA. I had gone to several meetings in years past, but it never stuck. While many MMers are put off by the religious tenor of the group, the emphasis on powerlessness, or the severity of many AA members' drinking problems (and I don't disagree with any of these MMers' sentiments), I was mostly turned off by its invasiveness. Their



enthusiastic welcome made me uncomfortable, a feeling worsened by the sponsorship model. I wanted a place that I could come to, but that wouldn't follow me. Though I would never come back to AA, the reaction that I had to it is telling: I brought that reticence to MM, which explains why my first month and a half was not entirely successful.

Before I ever went to a face-to-face meeting, I spent time on the list and was comforted and inspired. I found a great variety of people at different stages on their moderation journey. After lurking for a while, I dipped my toe in the water and posted regularly and signed up for Abstar. I loved the feeling of support that I got and the support that I was able to offer others in the same boat. In my first month and a half, my drinking decreased and I managed to get through a number of difficult occasions drinking moderately, even over the holidays.

However, during this period, I never completely acknowledged to myself that fixing my drinking problem had to become a priority in my life. Finding MM made me feel that I could simply nudge my life into healthier territory, but my problem required much more than a nudge. I figured this out in January 2009. My partner out of town, I woke up with little memory of the previous night, and a note in my bed from a dear friend, explaining that she had gotten me home. I was overcome by shame and fear.

My first night off of my 30, I was terrified. Though part of me looked forward to drinking, a larger part of me worried that I was playing with fire. I drank two glasses of good wine that evening and immediately embarked on another 30. That 30 was motivated by this fear, but also by a truth: I hadn't finished the work I needed to do yet. I continued to focus a lot of energy on my drinking problem and absed for another 45 days. When I began drinking again, I did so incredibly carefully and put a great deal of thought into each and every occasion. It worked for me. I drank moderately for over a year. And I got my self-esteem back. My dignity had been decimated by years overdrinking and each day that I absed or drank moderately, a little bit of it returned, and this built momentum.

But, by the summer of 2010, I felt very confident. So confident in fact, that I allowed myself to slip several times. These slips were precipitated by more frequent drinking. I stopped being vigilant about using my tools and would drink quickly, racing toward the effect. I began to remember the shame and misery that overdrinking brought me. I would like to say that a single slip woke me up, but it didn't. I was tired of caring and watching and I wanted to lose myself in alcohol again. After each slip, I would try to work up the desire to recommit, but this desire didn't gain traction.

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*"The effort that I must expend to stay moderate—as much as I sometimes resent it—is worth it to me at this point in my life."*

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I immediately went to my computer to pour out my misery and was met by incredible support. Though most MMs caution not to embark on a 30-day abs period in this state, I had reached a crucible: if I couldn't be consistently moderate, I couldn't drink anymore. Period.

That first 30 was one of the most important experiences of my adult life. During this period, I prioritized fixing my drinking problem. I spent time on the MM list everyday, I went to several chats each week (book chat in particular was extremely helpful), and I attended face-to-face meetings. I read Responsible Drinking very carefully and also, on the recommendation of a veteran MMer who is a practicing Buddhist and permanently abstinent from alcohol, I read Kevin Griffin's *One Breath at a Time*. I listened to AA podcasts during my commutes. I stocked up on NA beer and supplements like GABA and 5-HTP to calm me down and help me sleep. A lifelong calorie counter, I allowed myself to eat whatever I wanted if it helped me with my alcohol cravings. I let myself lie and make excuses in social situations. But I faced things that alcohol had kept me from acknowledging for years. It hurt so much it made me sick. With the help of MM, I got through those feelings each and every night without drinking. And I learned that I could survive without drinking. I felt none of the euphoria that other MMs record during the 30—entirely the opposite—but I learned that I could feel truly horrible and not die.

Until it did. I am not exactly sure why, but I have been back to slip-free moderation now for two and a half months. I still think that I could cut down, but I am generally happy with my current situation. What's more, I can honestly say that drinking has brought me more pleasure over the past two years than it has brought me pain. Even including my summer of slips, I believe that I am actually better off than if I had given up drinking entirely. I've enjoyed wonderful wines and precious social moments. And I managed to get a measure of self-esteem by (mostly) controlling my relationship with alcohol.

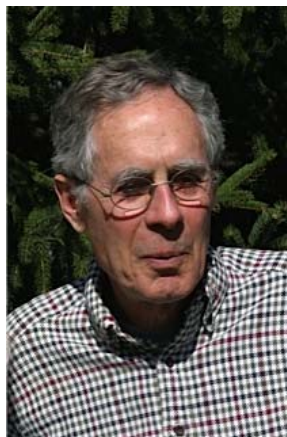
The effort that I must expend to stay moderate—as much as I sometimes resent it—is worth it to me at this point in my life. I truly enjoy drinking and am willing to work to retain the privilege. I believe that this attitude—that drinking is a privilege that I earn by staying moderate—has been helpful to me. Though there will certainly be challenges to come, I am sure that I can confront and overcome them with the help of MM.



## Remembering Rudy: *Reflections on the life of Mr. Rudy Hoeltzel*

Rudy Hoeltzel  
1934-2014

### Member Emeritus, Moderation Management Board of Directors



Every one of us leaves our own mark on this world, a legacy born of the personality and skills and talents we possess that are unique to us. It was not so long ago that the stigma of any degree of alcohol abuse was so strong that people who experienced it hid it and suffered in silence with little or no support. There were few support groups who were often stretched so thin that people had to travel long distances for a meeting. Thankfully times have changed and there are groups of all shapes and sizes that help people with just about every affliction we might experience because we're imperfect and complex human beings.

Rudy Hoeltzel's legacy has helped, and will continue to help, countless people find healthier relationships with alcohol. As most of us know, a person's relationship with alcohol is never just about alcohol, and his work has led people to unpack, examine, forgive, and make better choices about their drinking which in most cases led to better choices in life.

Moderation Management extends our grateful appreciation for the life and work of Mr. Rudy Hoeltzel. Rudy Hoeltzel was one of Moderation Management's strongest lay members. Although he came to MM later in life, he proved to be both a powerful supporter and advocate for the program. After founding the Morristown New Jersey MM Meeting (which ran for over 10 years), Rudy helped co-author the Moderation Management workbook *Responsible Drinking* as the only

non-professional voice. Rudy spoke for the "rest of us", the person who arrives at Moderation Management not as a career choice but out of an internal desire to improve their relationship with life. He was a long-time and founding member of the Moderation Management Board of Directors.

Rudy's life work continued with a gentle guide to our Membership: His popular *Steps of Change* document describing the process of Moderation Management to new participants. It is through the strength, persistence, and wisdom of people like Rudy Hoeltzel that our programs can expand and grow while maintaining the vital connection to those that come to us for help.

[http://www.moderation.org/about\\_mm/steps\\_of\\_change.shtml](http://www.moderation.org/about_mm/steps_of_change.shtml)

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*"His vision for MM played a central role in the evolution of MM, helping it become what it is today."*

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### Public Obituary

Rudolph Lloyd Hoeltzel of Stockbridge, MA died peacefully on October 24, 2014 of complications from cancer. He passed away at Berkshire Medical Center surrounded by his immediate family. He was born in 1934 in Washington, DC to Lloyd Claus Hoeltzel, a government worker, and Frederika Critchett Hoeltzel, a researcher at American University. He graduated from Scarsdale High School in Scarsdale, NY, Princeton University, and the Harvard Business School.

### Personal Memories of Rudy

I was honored to have known and worked beside Rudy for many years as a fellow MM executive board member. He was a long time leader of the most successful MM meeting, in part because of his fountain of kindness, intelligence, generosity, and wisdom, gained through personal experience, that he brought to MM. His commitment to MM inspired others, me included, in our work. His meeting leadership helped many in his home community achieve self-management, balance, and moderation in their lives. His vision for MM played a central role in the evolution of MM, helping it become what it is today. He is deeply missed, and he leaves a valuable legacy to MM that will never be forgotten. Thank you, Rudy, for the gifts you gave us.

**Andrew Tatarsky, PhD,**  
MM Board Member  
Director of the Center for Optimal Living, NYC

I first met Rudy Hoeltzel in 1996 when MM's Founder, Audrey Kishline, came to New Jersey to appear on Good Morning America. Rudy had just started and was the leader of the Morristown MM Group for at least 10 years. He was also the driving force behind the creation of our book with Marc Kern, *Responsible Drinking*. The book and the format of including helpful tips and advice from active MMs were both Rudy's ideas, and although he refused to be first author, he really should have been! The fact that he insisted the "professionals" take first and second authorship was typical of the modest but extremely helpful approach that Rudy took toward MM and the people who were our members. Every year Rudy would welcome a round of local professionals to his meeting in Morristown, usually as a way to boost attendance. He worked tirelessly to promote the Morristown meeting and served on the MM Board for many years. Above all, Rudy was a warm, caring man who dedicated a significant part of his time and energy to bringing MM and moderate drinking approaches into the mainstream of options available to people concerned about their drinking in the US. Without his work, MM would not be what it is today. He will be sorely missed.

**Fred Rotgers, PsyD, ABPP, LCADC**  
MM Board Member  
Psychologist

## Spotlight:

### Moderation Management's Board of Directors

We feel incredibly lucky to have such supportive, knowledgeable, and compassionate board members. It's a gift, really, to have a group of scientifically educated experts who never lose sight of the human face of addiction. In the Fall 2014 newsletter we introduced you to Tom Horvath Ph.D., ABPP, the President of Practical Recovery, Michael Benibgul, Ph.D, a clinical psychologist, and Andrew Tatarsky, Ph.D, the Director of the Center for Optimal Living. Their educational pedigrees use more letters than a set of kindergarten alphabet flash cards, but it's how they use those letters in the service of people and communities that's most impressive. In our winter newsletter, we are proud to introduce you to Reid Hester, Ph.D. and Frederick Rotgers, PsyD, ABPP, LCADC.

#### Reid Hester, Ph.D.

##### Partner, Behavior Therapy Associates LLC

Reid Hester, Ph.D. received his B.S. from the University of Washington and his M.S. and Ph.D. in clinical psychology from Washington State University. He has been a partner at Behavior Therapy Associates LLC since 1983 and the Director of its Research Division since 1996. He is a Fellow in the Addictions Division of the American Psychological Association, has written 62 publications and is the senior editor of the three editions of the Handbook of Alcoholism Treatment Approaches: Effective Alternatives (<http://behaviortherapy.com/ResearchDiv/whatworks.aspx>). His research focus is the development, evaluation, and dissemination of software and more recently, web applications for people with alcohol and drug problems (<http://behaviortherapy.com/ResearchDiv/whatworks.aspx>).



"Moderation Management is the mutual help group that reaches out to heavy drinkers, offering many a realistic alternative to abstinence. As this is the vast majority of heavy drinkers, I have long been a supporter of MM. I've been on its Board of Directors since 2005 and have been donating funds from our evidence-based web app, <http://www.moderatedrinking.com>, since it went live in 2011. Since then I've donated over \$40,000 to help support MM."

#### Request for Participants in a New Study: Text Messaging for Alcohol Moderation

The **Adaptive Alcohol Intervention Messaging System (AAIMS)** is a research study conducted by the North Shore Health System and the Feinstein Institute for Medical Research that is designed to test whether different types of text messages can help people cut down on their drinking. We are currently recruiting participants to receive text messages via their mobile phone and complete three web-based assessments over a total of 12 weeks. Participants can be located anywhere in the United States and must have access to mobile text messaging services and the web. Participants receive a **\$40 Amazon gift card** for completing the study.

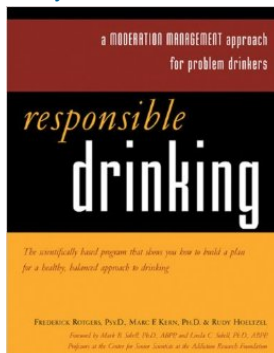
For more information please go to our website:  
<http://www.caspirnyc.org/aaims>

#### Fred Rotgers, PsyD, ABPP, LCADC Psychologist

Frederick Rotgers, PsyD, ABPP, LCADC is a licensed psychologist in New Jersey who has been at the forefront of promoting moderation and harm reduction approaches since the mid-1990s. One of the original members of the MM Board of Directors and its former Chairman, Fred is the first author, with current MM Board Chairman Marc Kern, and the late MM pioneer Rudy Hoeltzel, of *Responsible Drinking: A Moderation Management Approach for Problem Drinkers*. Fred is a Fellow of the American Psychological Association, and is Board Certified in two specialties by the American Board of Professional Psychology. He is Past-President of the Society of Addiction Psychology (APA Division 50). Author of numerous books and articles on the treatment of substance use disorders, and particularly on the incorporation of moderation approaches into existing treatments, Fred has taught and lectured worldwide on harm reduction and moderation approaches. He is currently a Visiting Faculty member of the Rutgers Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology, from which he also graduated.



"To me MM is an essential component of an effective health-care system designed to bring scientifically based treatments and interventions to problem drinkers, regardless of the severity of their drinking-related problems. As a harm reduction approach which meets people where they are and supports them through the critical process of defining for themselves their desired relationship to alcohol and other drugs, MM is consistent with the best scientific research on what is most effective in helping people overcome problems related to alcohol and other substance use. As a clinician, researcher, and teacher of professionals, I believe every behavioral health professional should be familiar with MM, and that it should be even more widely available than it already is."



#### "The Book"

*Responsible Drinking: A Moderation Management Approach for Problem Drinkers*  
by Rotgers, Frederick; Kern, Marc F.; Hoeltzel, Rudy  
(September 2002).

<http://amzn.to/1s4g7Yk>

## Moderation-Friendly Therapists

For the benefit of our participants we maintain a listing of moderation-friendly therapists available in most states in the US, Canada, Australia, and the UK.

(<http://tinyurl.com/4u6em>)

If you have found therapy beneficial in the past or have considered partnering with someone for a coaching experience, our moderation-friendly listing may be a good place to start.

Each therapist must be approved by Moderation Management in a vetting process before they are listed.

If you believe your therapist is moderation-friendly, and they would like to be listed, please send a request to:

[therapists@moderation.org](mailto:therapists@moderation.org)

**Visit our Therapist Finder page:**

[http://www.moderation.org/therapist\\_finder.shtml](http://www.moderation.org/therapist_finder.shtml)

<http://tinyurl.com/4u6em>



## Holidays. Oh, My.

*"Unfortunately life doesn't come with pages that you can read ahead. The challenge of being a creative, inspired person isn't always to resolve what is unsettled, but to learn how to be present with not knowing and resting in this place without having answers. At least for now."*

**Jennifer Hofmann** December 2014 Newsletter - Inspired Home Office

When **WebMD** has an entire webpage dedicated to *"What Causes Holiday Stress?"* (<http://tinyurl.com/mcuz3no>), you know you're not alone in the paradox: being excited by the idea of the holidays and the joy and gratitude and beauty they're supposed to bring and dreading the stress that precedes the frantic stuffing of your quirky possessions into the hall closet so your home looks like something out of Architectural Digest, finding and buying the perfect gifts that will make you a hero to everyone in your family, making the most delicious meal in the history of meals, and showing everyone just how fabulous and evolved and successful you are when your family seems to want to revisit 1972 and relive your most embarrassing moments.

*"Unhappy memories. Toxic relatives. What's changed? What's stayed the same? Lowered defenses."* These are the WebMD categories for the issues contributing to holiday stress. Even **FlyLady** (<http://www.flylady.net>), a woman I absolutely adore for her unconditionally loving ways of helping people eliminate chaos in their lives one shiny sink at a time, published a pre-Thanksgiving Morning Musing on Holiday Anxiety. Perfectionist Family Members, who in my opinion should have their own acronym as they're so ubiquitous, play a starring role in holiday anxiety. All the stewing we do about the father who still thinks you're a disappointment for attending the Rhode Island School of Design instead of Oxford or the mother who walks around your house rearranging everything she can reach is what FlyLady calls *"Stinkin' Thinkin'"*, which is equal parts disempowering because these actions really hurt and empowering because stinkin' thinkin' is something you can actually control.

This Thanksgiving I did wonder what sadistic person chose the lineup of menu items on a day that's supposed to be about gratitude, peace, love, and family. Who in their right mind has you prepare not one, but what feels like twenty thousand different dishes, all of which must be prepared in what is usually a single oven, all at different, skin blistering temperatures, and all requiring the timing of a Swiss watch to prevent a desiccated, gloppy, and cold disaster. Seriously?

Needless to say, I do a lot of inspirational reading from all kinds of sources during this time of year. **Jennifer Loudon** (<http://jenniferloudon.com>), **Brené Brown** (<http://brenebrown.com>), **Jennifer Hofmann** (<http://inspiredhomeoffice.com>), **Michael Zipursky** (<http://tinyurl.com/pqmjmkw>), and the **Non-Violent Communication** (<http://www.cnvc.org/>) folks just to name a few. And just like in Jiu Jitsu, a martial art I practice when I can, I've realized that, just like when someone has you in mount position where they're sitting on top of you, you actually don't have to move them at all, an action that will physically exhaust someone of my petite stature in less than a minute. You just have to be able to move yourself, even if it's only two inches. If you can



create even a small amount of wiggle room, you can escape or get yourself into a more advantageous position. Same thing with the holidays - if you can give yourself even two minutes of breathing space, you can see and choose something more nourishing and healthy instead of shrinking into a marginalized version of yourself that's largely dictated by other people's stuff.

### So, what's a person to do?

- ♦ FlyLady studied Saint Therese who was a little sidetracked as a person, was concerned about what people would think of her, and was absolutely surrounded by perfectionists. In a fascinating twist of fate, the perfectionists were the ones who gave her the road to sainthood. She practiced *The Little Way*. Since all she could do was change the way she reacted to people, she chose to love them in a number of little ways: with loving gestures of service, with thanks and gratitude, with kindness. If you're stuck, you could go for a walk, put on their favorite music, put on your favorite music for that matter, imagine a bubble surrounding you or a mirror between you and whoever is driving you nuts that reflects all that unpleasantness right on back, or spend the bulk of your time with the brother or cousin or friend who actually adores you no matter how your gravy turns out.

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*"It's never too late - in fiction or in life - to revise."*

*Nancy Thayer*

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- ♦ WebMD suggests actions like: *"Don't do the same old thing. Don't expect miracles. Don't overdo it. Don't worry about how things should be."* (<http://tinyurl.com/mcuz3no>)
- ♦ Jennifer Loudon is one of my favorite people and author of a whole passel of books including *The Life Organizer*. When I lose my normal sense of self, I flip to the well-marked "Mood Shifter" section on page 60, or I turn to page 15 and use five steps that aren't holiday oriented but are helpful for me: **Connect** with myself in way that underscores the fact that I mean something. I matter. Then **Feel** by focusing on my heart and remembering a moment in my life when I felt exactly how I want to feel in the present moment. I **Inquire** by asking myself even the simplest of questions: What do I want? What don't I want? How can I be gentle with myself in this situation? Then I **Allow** myself (or try really hard) to trust the answers that come back. I do my best to lean into the question and be open to everything that's bigger and wiser than me, and listen in a way that works for my non-religious self. Finally, I try to **Apply** what I receive as soon as possible, even if the action is as small as the two inches you need in Jiu Jitsu so you can escape your opponent. FlyLady calls them "Baby Steps". They're awesome.
- ♦ If it gets terrible, I'll watch Brene Brown's **TED** talk on shame and vulnerability. (<http://tinyurl.com/kxl3vzt>) Then I'll go to kickboxing class. Endorphins trump shame and guilt pretty effectively most of the time.

This year, I've been thinking a lot about Olivia Pope, the lead character in *Scandal*, my personal TV obsession. "I always have options," is one of the simplest yet most awesome things she's said, and to her insanely evil father no less. She also talks about "controlling the narrative", and I find this concept immensely helpful when I'm surrounded by my own family, several of whom are flagrant and vocal perfectionists and one who must have a double black belt in narcissism by now. I don't have to agree with their opinions of me or my table layout or my potatoes gratin Dauphinois. I can create and own a different narrative that actually serves me. I always have options.

I drove by a gas station recently, and on the board where all the gas prices are listed was this odd quote: *"Empty? This would be a good place to turn in."* It made me realize that there are and always will be places to find solace, even in the worst of times. Whether you join the MMLIST Listserv or the MM Forum and vent with wild abandon knowing you'll receive support, humor, and a whole range of possible solutions or go to a SMART or AA or any other kind of meeting, or hug your dog, cat, or iguana, you are not alone. And if you remember not to abandon yourself, to stay on your own side, you never will be alone. Ever.

Heidi McCloskey, Editor "Day Thirty-One"

## Research: CDC Finds 90% Excessive Drinkers Are Not Dependent

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), both operating out of the United States, collaborated on the 2009-2011 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) and produced a study entitled "Prevalence of Alcohol Dependence Among US Adult Drinkers, 2009-2011". The objective of this study was to update prior estimates of the prevalence of alcohol dependence among US adult drinkers and see whether there were correlations between excessive drinkers and alcohol dependence. [1]. Data were analyzed from 138,100 subjects, ages 12 and older, across all 50 states. Researchers used computer-assisted interviews and audio self-interviewing in an effort to maximize privacy and, thus, minimize under-reporting, so these results are based on self-reports rather than clinical diagnoses.

*"Researchers concluded that most excessive drinkers are unlikely to need addiction treatment."*

### Excessive drinking was defined as:

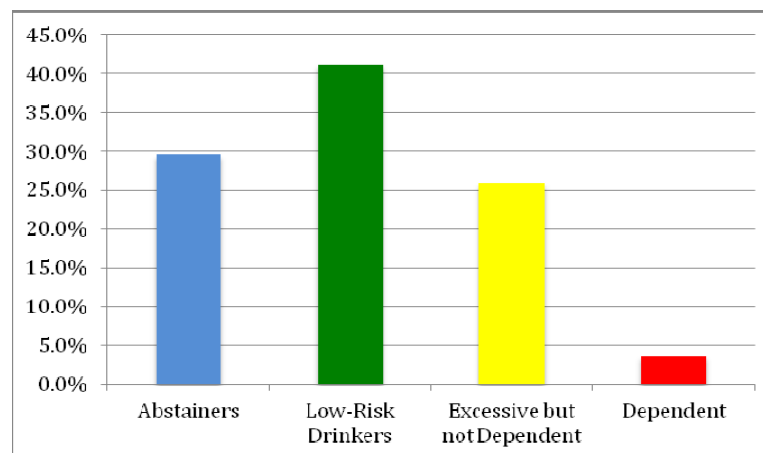
- Binge drinking (women: =4 drinks/occasion; men: =5 drinks/occasion); or
- Heavy drinking (women =8 drinks/week within the past 30 days; men =15 drinks/week within the past 30 days); or
- Any drinking in the past 30-days by participants aged 18-20 (under the minimum legal drinking age) if not already included in another drinking category; or
- Any alcohol consumption by pregnant women within the past 30 days

### Results:

- 70.5% reported consuming at least one drink in the past year
- 29.3% reported past-month excessive drinking
- 27.4% reported past-month binge drinking
- 3.5% met the DSM-IV criteria for alcohol dependence
- Of the 29.3% who drank excessively, noting that some people who are alcohol dependent are also bingers and a percentage of bingers may also be alcohol dependent:
  - o 10.2% were alcohol dependent
  - o 90% reported binge drinking
- Prevalence of alcohol dependence increased with the frequency of binge drinking.

Excessive drinking, binge drinking, and alcohol dependence are most common among men aged 18 to 24 and those who are unemployed. Binge drinking most commonly occurs among those with annual family incomes of more than \$75,000, while dependence was most common among those with annual family incomes of less than \$25,000.

Researchers concluded that most excessive drinkers are unlikely to need addiction treatment. Studies show that binge drinking decreases under certain regulatory pressures (e.g., alcohol tax increase). The researchers also recommended evidence-based policy strategies and clinical preventive services (e.g., alcohol screening and brief counseling in primary care settings). The CDC study dovetails with earlier NIAAA findings that led to a public health approach targeting drinkers with mild disorder to prevent problems before they progress [2].



### Chart notes:

Abstainers = 100% (total) - 70.5% (non-abstainers)

Low-risk drinkers = 70.5% (non-abstainers) - 29.3% (excessive drinkers)

Excessive but not dependent = 29.3 (excessive) - 3.5 (dependents)

The NIAAA's National Epidemiological Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions (NESARC) is a longitudinal study that has followed over 43,000 subjects from 1991-2005. Recently, the Washington Post's Christopher Ingraham blogged about Philip J. Cook's book *Paying the Tab* and its chart breaking alcohol consumption into "deciles" (ten groups of 10% each) [3], which used NESARC data. The chart says the top (heaviest drinking) decile drinks, on average, 73.85 drinks/week. After readers voiced doubts, Ingraham posted a clarification [4], in which Cook explained how outliers at the heaviest drinking end of the curve could skew the mean. (For example, ten drinkers with consumptions of 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35 would have a mean of 16.5, though most of the drinkers consume less than that number.) I reformatted Cook's data to more closely match the CDC study's findings:

- Abstainers represent the bottom three deciles or 30%, which is nearly identical to CDC's 29.5%.

Drinking alcohol is a very sticky topic indeed, filled with physical, emotional, and legal consequences. It's encouraging to see how many nonprofits, government, private, and public institutions are exploring it so thoroughly and trying to determine what causes one set of behaviors in a certain gender, economic bracket, life circumstance, or race might cause something completely different with another combination. It's also tremendously encouraging how public these reports are and how open these organizations are with their results. Although many people continue to hide their drinking and there are still stigmas attached to not being able to manage alcohol consumption (or food or gambling or online shopping for that matter), there are now places you can go to get help or find likeminded people who really get your struggles and can support you in your efforts to find a right relationship with alcohol. Moderation Management is one of those resources that stands ready to welcome any and all who need a place to go. There's hope, always hope.

*"Drinking alcohol is a very sticky topic indeed, filled with physical, emotional, and legal consequences."*

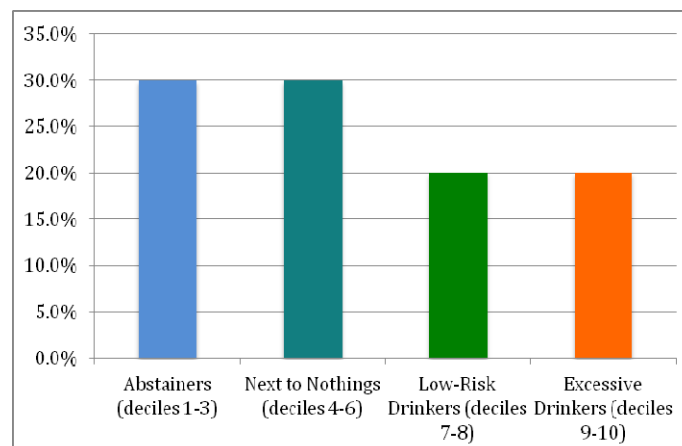
- The next three deciles drink less than one drink per week. We have combined them into a "Next to Nothings" bin and have colored them blue to green, to indicate they are between abstainers and low-risk drinkers.
- Deciles 7-8 drink mostly below the CDC excessive threshold. These have been combined into a "Low-Risk Drinkers" bin.
- Deciles 9-10 mostly exceed the CDC excessive threshold, so they have been combined into the orange "Excessive Drinkers" bin, since it contains a mix of excessive but not dependent (yellow in the CDC chart) and dependent (red in the CDC chart).

Formatted this way, the charts look more similar. It's much messier in reality: For example, some women drinking above Decile 8 exceed the CDC threshold, and some men drinking below the Decile 9 mean are below it. But we predict the CDC and NESARC data will converge more than they diverge, e.g., 2001-2002 NESARC data put DSM-IV alcohol dependence at 3.81% [5], not far from CDC's 3.5%. Future research may shed light on the next to nothings (e.g., were some dependent and quit but now indulge on rare occasions?).

#### References:

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3. Ingraham, Christopher "Think you drink a lot? This chart will tell you." <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2014/09/25/think-you-drink-a-lot-this-chart-will-tell-you/> <http://tinyurl.com/mahlase>
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5. Grant, B.F.; Dawson, D.A.; Stinson, F.S.; Chou, S.P.; Dufour, M.C.; and Pickering, R.P. *The 12-month prevalence and trends in DSM-IV alcohol abuse and dependence: United States, 1991–1992 and 2001–2002*. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, 74(3):223–34, 2004, <http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/aeds/aodprevalence/abusdep2.htm> <http://tinyurl.com/q9goa6b>

By Donna Dierker, Moderation Management Director of R.A.P.



## Read on the List

Mindfulness and meditation have been trending topics on the Listserv over the past two months. Learning how to center and listen to yourself and make thoughtful, intentional choices from that peaceful place seems to be the perfect antidote for many MMer's holiday stress. Mindfulness means being squarely in the present, and for many moderators, it helps them drink more slowly, which can make a significant impact in their total drinking in an evening, a week, or even a month. Luckily, there are not only books available on both topics but apps for iPhone and Android.

### What's on the hot list?

#### Books

*Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life* by Jon Kabat-Zinn

*The Miracle of Mindfulness: An Introduction to the Practice of Meditation* by Thich Nhat Hanh

*Living The Mindful Way: 85 Everyday Mindfulness Practices For Finding Inner Peace* by Sharon Horstead

*Mindfulness in Plain English: Revised and Expanded Edition* by Bhante Gunaratana

*8 Minute Meditation: Quiet Your Mind. Change Your Life* by Victor Davich

*Turning The Mind Into An Ally* by Sakyong Mipham, Pema Chodron

*Real Happiness: The Power of Meditation* by Sharon Salzberg

#### Apps

As for apps, according to Healthline, the best meditation and mindfulness apps of 2014 for iPhone and Android include Find Your Calm, Then Carry on; The Mindfulness App; Get Some Head Space; and Omvana, but these are just the tip of the mellow iceberg. More information can be found at

<http://tinyurl.com/lg24xf>.

One MM staffer is particularly fond of the Stop, Breathe & Think app and the way it recommends specific meditations based on how you answer a simple set of questions.

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*Welcome from our Executive Director, Continued from Cover Page*

not aware of a destructive pattern in our life, it will no doubt grow and end with often-disastrous results. The day to start is today.

MM does recommend a 30-day period of abstinence as a good step in the moderation process. Abstinence does not teach us how to moderate, but it serves an important purpose: to remind us that life was good before we made alcohol central to our lifestyle. Another important benefit is the cleansing of our bodies and/or minds of alcohol's residual presence in our lives. In MM we do have stated and written "steps", but we strongly believe in "guidelines"; that is to say that every step is not mandatory. Many have achieved moderate drinking without doing a "30", but it is highly recommended.

Just as vital as a 30 or a toolbox is to come up with a plan if you wish to return to drinking. We recommend taking frequent drink-free days and avoiding consistent daily drinking. This helps us stay healthier and lessens our tolerance to alcohol as well.

I wish you well in your moderation journey!

Warm Regards,

**Jim Mergens**

*Executive Director, Moderation Management*

**"Excess in all things is the undoing of men." - Aristotle**

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