Think about what things happen when you drink. We call these things consequences. Some consequences are good, others are bad. Most of the time, the good consequences happen right as you are drinking. The bad consequences come later.

There are reasons why you drink. These come from the good things that happen, even if the good things only happen sometimes. Your mind and body remember these things.

The bad consequences can come right when you are drinking (like getting sick or having a fight) or can come later (like not being able to get up the next morning or having your children upset with you).

It will be easier to quit if you have a list of the bad things about drinking. The more you remember the bad things, the easier it is to say no when you have an urge to drink.

Also think about what will be good and bad about quitting drinking. Some people don’t think ahead when they make a change in their life. You will be more successful if you look ahead to see the good and bad about making a change. Thinking about what you lost and what you get makes it easier to stay motivated.

Take a moment and start writing down the things that happen to you when you drink. Write down the things that happen right away and the things that happen later. Some kinds of consequences are:

- Physical things: body sensations or effects like getting sick
- Negative feelings
- Depressing thoughts
- Things that happen with other people, such as family or friends
- Money or legal trouble
- Work problems

On the Decisional Matrix sheet, write down the good and bad things that happen right away (immediate consequences) when you drink. Also write down the good and bad things that happen later (delayed consequences) after drinking. Write these in the section marked “Continued Alcohol Use.”

Do the same thing for quitting drinking. Write down the good and bad things that will happen right away when you stop drinking. Then, write down the good and bad things that will come later. Write these in the section marked “Abstinence.”

Be realistic! It is important to be honest. The more we understand the reasons why you drink, the easier it will be to find a solution. When we are done, we want to have more good reasons for stopping drinking than for keeping things the way they are.