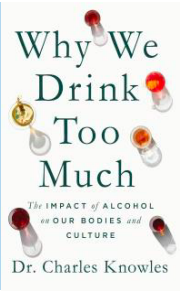
Discussion Guide



Why We Drink Too Much
Charles Knowles MD

Celadon Books
2026
304 pages
ISBN: 978-1250392923

Alcohol Use Disorder

Summary

Why We Drink Too Much explains the science behind drinking and invites us to examine our relationship with alcohol. Pairing scientific expertise with his personal experiences, Dr. Charles Knowles offers a window into what really happens in our brains and bodies when we drink and why we do it. The pleasure people derive from alcohol varies greatly, both physically and mentally. Our response is influenced by the genes we were born with and the environment in which we grew up. For some of us, alcohol is greatly enhancing; for others, it is not much fun at all.

Questions

1. The author, Dr. Charles Knowles, is a leading surgeon and a recovering alcoholic. How does the combination of clinical insight and personal vulnerability affect the book's credibility and impact?
2. The book argues that the truth about drinking is rooted in ancient biology and brain chemistry, not just willpower or moral weakness. How does this perspective change how you view alcoholism and addiction?
3. The book suggests that our physical and mental responses to alcohol are partly genetic. Did learning about the genetic component change your perspective on alcoholism as a "moral failing" versus a medical condition?
4. What are the key long-term health risks of even moderate alcohol consumption that the book highlighted? Did any of the facts about the impact on organs (liver, heart, brain, etc.) surprise you?
5. Knowles discusses the concept of "learning to drink." How do environmental factors, separate from genetics, contribute to the development of drinking habits according to the book?
6. Dr. Knowles addresses the economic cost of alcohol misuse (healthcare, crime, lost productivity). How might society better balance the economic benefits (tax revenue, industry jobs) with these profound social costs?
7. The author examines the historical and cultural role of alcohol. What is one historical anecdote or cultural tradition related to drinking that you found most interesting or revealing?
8. The book's review quotes mention it being for the "sober curious." For readers who do not identify as having a drinking problem, what is the most valuable takeaway from the book?
9. How do you feel about the author's candid sharing of his recovery journey? Does it offer a satisfying resolution?
10. The book offers an "invaluable blueprint for change". What specific strategies or tools for change did you find most practical or insightful?

This discussion guide has been funded in whole or in part with Federal funds from the National Library of Medicine (NLM), National Institutes of Health (NIH). The content was created by the NNLM Reading Club for educational use and is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not represent the official views of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). January 2026

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