

Heal TODAY



CHEERS TO SOBER OCTOBER!

BY INDUWARA ATHAPATTU

Sober October, lesser known among people, is still followed by several thousands around the globe. The concept of Sober October was first generated in UK, as a fund-raising project for a cancer treatment centre. Nevertheless, presently a wider community has embraced the idea, and people individually follow Sober October.

What is Sober October? Simply, it is a challenge period of 31 days, during which, the participants must abstain from consuming any alcohol related product. Originally, the money raised by the official challenge was donated to Macmillan Cancer Support. Whether you participate to the official challenge or not, Sober October is a good wellness ritual to observe even as smaller groups of friends or why not alone? It is in fact, a great way to support your body to reset and provide you some space to re-evaluate the personal connection with alcohol.

So much for 30 days

"There are many improved health effects that happen as a result of giving up alcohol for a month," notes Co-founder and Chief People Officer of Lionrock Recovery, Ashley Loeb Blessingame. "While some are person-specific, many are universal, such as greatly improved sleep,

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improved memory, better immune function, and reduced risk of cancer." Also, it is said that some people have experienced cardiovascular improvements along with subtle weight loss.

Chief Medical Officer for American Addiction Centres, Dr. Lawrence Weinstein, further explained the process of improved health during the Sober October. "In general, after four weeks, an improved immune system and memory, mood changes, weight loss, clearer skin, a lack of impulsivity and behavioural changes are some of the advantages of eliminating alcohol for a short period of time. There are also neurological benefits of abstaining from alcohol. Some can be seen within a week of alcohol cessation, but are much more noticeable after a month's time."

Breaking the cycles

Synonymously, the researchers and medical officers state that Sober October is a unique opportunity for everyone to assess the relationships and connections with whatever the drug that they are used to. They emphasize that, it can have a dramatic impact on the day-to-day lifestyle of a person once they go sober, abstaining from alcohol for a month. Most importantly, the studies depict that a month of sober can help break the cycles of addiction, since it allows an individual to ponder over their authentic emotions, without masking them with unhealthy coping method.

"Many people decide that abstinence is working for them and want to continue on and see what other benefits might come as a result of their

experiment," states Loeb Blessingame. "This leads some people to full-on sobriety and others to longer periods of sober exploration." As she further notes, the significant factor is that the break in the addictive cycle has to be long enough to disestablish the old neural pathways and re-construct new ones.

"The value is in breaking the cycle and creating an extended experience of abstinence that demonstrates to the brain that the idea is viable. Additionally, it gives people enough time to re-examine their relationship with alcohol and attempt to have better boundaries around it when they choose to return," she shares. "What we do know is that people who are unable to commit and sustain a period of 30 days abstinence are likely working on a more significant problem with substance use."

Speaking further, Dr. Lawrence Weinstein says, "In terms of alcohol, it's important for individuals to honestly assess the role that alcohol consumption plays in their lives. Remain aware of when alcohol is consumed and why. Is a drink needed after work, or does consumption increase over the weekend? Being mindful of these things can help identify a pattern in behaviour that can shed light on a potentially problematic relationship that may require treatment."

Younger the soberer

However, in relation to Sober October discussion, the doctors mention that the contemporary studies have found out that the younger generation is rather not into alcohol when compared to the older generation.

"Younger generations have not bought into the idea that they must consume alcohol in order to be seen as cool," shares Loeb Blessingame. "The willingness to conform to the millennial-drinking culture has shifted and abstaining from alcohol is more and more normal."

It is elucidated that Sober October is not just another fad but a meaningful wellness ritual. So, since it is already October, why not give it a try!



Cargills commences community meals programme

The Cargills Foundation commenced its Community Meals programme in collaboration with the Lasallian Community Education Services (LCES). We aim to provide a nutritious meal to underprivileged communities in urban areas every week from Monday to Friday. The meals are prepared at the LCES premises.

At a time when many people, particularly in urban areas, struggle to feed their families due to the high cost of food and children suffer from malnutrition, Cargills remains committed to supporting communities in need by leveraging the Group's resources.

The project commenced with 275 daily lunch packs and will eventually scale up to 1,000 lunch packs a day.



National combined mechanism for food security and nutrition

The first meeting of the National Combined Mechanism for Food Security and Nutrition of the Presidential Secretariat was held on 6 October 2022 at the BMICH under the Chairmanship of Secretary to the

President Saman Ekanayake. Former President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga participated as the Senior Advisor to the Committee. Representatives of all Foreign Funding Agencies for Food

Security Projects as well as Secretary to the Prime Minister, Anura Dissanayake and Secretaries of relevant ministries too attended. Advisor to the President of the Food Security Division at the Presidential

Secretariat, Dr. B M S Batagoda welcomed the participants. Former President Kumaratunga highlighted the urgency to address the problem of malnutrition in the country, especially among the

children. She stated that Sri Lanka is presently among the 10 countries with the worst malnutrition rates among 200 countries and that over 20 per cent of the children under five years are severely malnourished.

At the conclusion of the discussions, it was decided to provide immediate food relief to children ensuring proper delivery of food and cash handouts, accelerate action plans to increase milk, eggs and vegetable production, to setup monitoring mechanisms of the projects implemented by civil society for food relief and involve more extensively the role of civil society organisations who are currently engaged in providing food relief to school children.

Former President Kumaratunga stated that she agreed to function as Senior Advisor to the Committee as it was a subject of urgent national importance and not as part of the government administration.



Pictured above is the Secretary to the President Mr. Saman Ekanayake Chairing the meeting. Alongside is former President Chandrika Kumaratunga and Secretary to the Prime Minister Mr. Anura Dissanayake at the head table



Country Directors / Representatives of the World Bank, ADB, USAID, WFP, UNDP, UNICEF, WHO, FAO and Chief of Defense Staff at the discussion