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Know! To Examine YOUR COVID-19 Coping Skills

The world as we knew it has changed due to COVID-19. Even as governors talk about ending some social distancing protections, people's physical, mental, and emotional health remain at risk. As a nation, we've been checking in, reaching out, and helping our families, friends, and complete strangers. The question is, have you checked in with YOURSELF? How are you feeling, and what coping strategies are you using to deal with this newfound or added anxiety, stress, and uncertainty for the future?

Some People are Coping with Alcohol

If you're unlocking the liquor cabinet as a way to de-stress during these challenging times, you're not alone. According to research conducted by Nielsen, alcohol sales have skyrocketed. In comparison to last year, in the week ending March 21, 2020:

- U.S. alcohol sales increased 55%
- Beer sales increased 42%
- Wine sales increased 66%

- Spirits sales such as tequila, gin, and pre-mixed cocktails increased 75%
- Online alcohol sales increased 243%

Alcohol has unfortunately become the go-to coping strategy for far too many, and it's being further normalized through social media. If you've been online lately, you've no doubt seen many friends and celebrities alike raising a glass to drinking their way through these times. Or how about all the folks gathering virtually on Zoom or Google Hangout to share a drink?

There is nothing wrong with enjoying an occasional glass of wine or a mixed drink at home (so long as you are of age and are cleared to do so by your doctor). However, when you're pouring a drink to deal with stress it increases the potential to experience problematic drinking.

Alcohol is an Unhealthy Coping Mechanism

According to the Mayo Clinic, drinking too much alcohol on a single occasion or over a period of time can cause significant health problems, including a weakened immune system. In turn, this makes it harder for your body to resist disease, and increases your risk of various illnesses, especially pneumonia. Weakening our immune system goes against everything we are trying to accomplish during this time. And when it comes to relieving stress and anxiety, drinking can actually worsen the situation, as alcohol alters levels of serotonin (which regulates mood and happiness), along with other neurotransmitters in the brain.

How much is too much? The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) says there are three levels of drinking, two of which are problematic:

Moderate Drinking: 1 drink per day for women of legal drinking age and up to 2 drinks per day for men of legal drinking age.

Binge Drinking: 4 or more drinks for women and 5 or more drinks for men - consumed within about 2 hours; or a pattern of drinking that brings blood alcohol concentration (BAC) to 0.08 percent or higher.

Heavy Alcohol Use: 4 drinks or more on any day for men or more than 3 drinks for women.

Binge drinking and heavy alcohol use are absolutely problematic. If you find yourself or your loved ones to be drinking this much, **[seek help from a professional at findtreatment.gov](#)**. Even with moderate drinking however, one should take caution that alcohol is not being used to cope with stress, anxiety, or boredom.

While gyms are closed and we cannot socialize in-person, we can still take walks, breathe in the fresh air, meditate, reach out to friends, and be there for our families.

Lastly, you should be aware of how your coping skills and the choices you're making now are impacting your children. The example you set today will impact and influence your children and how they deal with stress and anxiety during this crisis and future crises.

Sources

- [Associated Press: U.S. online alcohol sales jump 243% during coronavirus pandemic. April 2, 2020.](#)
- [Mayo Clinic: Alcohol Use Disorder.](#)
- [National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism: Rethinking Drinking - What are the different drinking levels.](#)

About Know! Parent Tips

Everyone has a role in prevention. By reading and sharing this Know! Parent Tip today, you're doing your part to prevent substance misuse and create a healthier world for all.

We created these free parent tips to empower parents like you. Know! helps you promote health and wellness and protect the young person in your life from unhealthy behaviors, including alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use. However, we rely on donations from people like you to provide these tips. If you found this tip interesting or helpful, **please consider donating at preventionactionalliance.org/donate.**

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