

Study proposes new treatment method for alcohol problems

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(Medical Xpress)—A study published by the University at Buffalo Research Institute on Addictions (RIA) suggests a new approach to help certain people stop drinking.

Provided by University at Buffalo

"For people who report problem [drinking](#) in negative [emotional situations](#), such as depression, anxiety or stress, we have developed a promising [treatment](#) approach that shows greater reductions in alcohol use when compared to standard treatment," says study director Paul Stasiewicz, senior research scientist at RIA.

Many alcohol treatment programs use cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) to help people with alcohol use disorders. CBT helps people identify their high-risk drinking situations and teaches skills to help manage those situations without drinking.

Stasiewicz's study developed and tested a new treatment he calls "affect regulation training" (ART). ART was developed to supplement the standard CBT program for those people whose drinking is strongly tied to [negative emotions](#).

"The clinical techniques used in ART help patients cope more effectively with their emotions by helping people experience and deal with negative feelings in an environment that does not involve drinking," Stasiewicz says. "Patients learn to better tolerate and accept the uncomfortable experience without engaging in substance use."

The initial study showed that people who received ART in addition to CBT had greater reductions in alcohol use compared to people who received a health and wellness component with CBT.

"The results show promise and should be of interest to treatment providers who are seeking additional strategies to help those who drink in negative emotional situations," Stasiewicz says.

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