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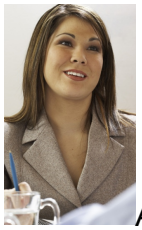
Half of Addiction Counselors Say It’s OK for Some Patients to Drink Occasionally



A survey of addiction counselors finds almost half say it is acceptable for at least some of their patients to drink from time to time. The survey included 913 members of the National Association of Alcoholism and Drug Addiction Counselors.

About half of the counselors said they would not object if some of their clients who abuse alcohol wanted to limit their drinking, but not totally abstain, PsychCentral.com reports. That is double the number of counselors in a 1994 survey who said moderate drinking was acceptable for some clients.

The new survey found about half of counselors said moderate drug use was acceptable as an intermediate goal, while one-third said it was adequate as a final goal.

"Individuals with alcohol and drug problems who avoid treatment because they are ambivalent about abstinence should know that — depending on the severity of their condition, the finality of their outcome goal, and their drug of choice — their interest in moderating their consumption will be acceptable to many addiction professionals working in outpatient and independent practice settings," the researchers from Bowling Green State University noted in a press release.

Counselors were less accepting of occasional substance use for clients diagnosed with alcohol or drug dependence, which is considered more severe than alcohol or drug abuse. At least three-fourths of the counselors said they would not approve of limited or moderate consumption for these clients.

"In light of this study, we suggest that clients ask about their counselor's openness to limited or moderate consumption as an outcome goal, and that agencies acknowledge their policy regarding negotiation of outcome goals as part of informed consent," said researcher Harold Rosenberg, PhD.

The study was published in *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*.

If you are wondering if you have a problem with alcohol or are worried about how a family member, friend, and/or co-worker might be abusing alcohol, then click here to learn more about Signs and Symptoms of Alcohol Abuse.