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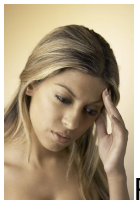
Feeling Shame About Past Alcohol Abuse Linked With Increased Risk of Relapse



Recovering alcoholics who feel shame about past alcohol abuse may have an increased risk of a relapse, a new study suggests.

The study included newly recovering alcoholics. To gauge participants' feelings of shame, the researchers asked them to describe the last time they drank and felt badly about it, and also took their body language into account. They considered a narrowed chest and slumped shoulders to be "shame-related behaviors," Live Science reports.

Four months later, participants were asked whether they were still sober. Those who had displayed more shame-related behaviors in the first session were more likely to start drinking again. Participants' own assessment of whether they felt shame about drinking did not predict whether they relapsed, the researchers report in the journal Clinical Psychological Science.

"How much shame participants displayed strongly predicted not only whether they relapsed, but how bad that relapse was — that is, how many drinks they had if they did relapse," study authors Jessica Tracy and Daniel Randles of the University of British Columbia said in a journal news release. They added, "Our research suggests that shaming people for difficult-to-curb behaviors may be exactly the wrong approach to take. Rather than prevent future occurrences of such behaviors, shaming may lead to an increase in these behaviors."

Long-term recovery from alcoholism and drug addiction opens a world of possibilities. It is real, it is happening every day and we estimate that as many as 20 million individuals and family members are living life in recovery! Click here to learn more.