

Young Children's Personality Traits Linked to Teen Alcohol Use



A child's personality traits before age 5 may help predict whether they will use alcohol in adolescence, a new study suggests.

The researchers followed about 12,600 children from the time they were born. Parents were asked about their children's personalities in the first five years of life; after that, the researchers interviewed both the children and their parents, Fox News reports. By age 15 ½, 4,600 teens were still participating. The researchers were able to statistically extrapolate results from the teens who had dropped out of the study.

They found the personality traits in toddlers most closely associated with teen alcohol use fell into two categories: emotional instability and relatively low sociability, and high sociability, which may lead to "sensation seeking" later in life. The findings appear in the journal *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*.

"This underscores the fact that drinking during adolescence is largely a social phenomenon," study co-author Danielle Dick of Virginia Commonwealth University said in a journal news release. "However, this doesn't mean it's less problematic; we know from other studies that most adolescent drinking is high risk — for example, binge drinking — and can lead to numerous negative consequences."

She added, "People don't enter adolescence as blank slates; they have a history of life experiences that they bring with them, dating back to early childhood. This is one of the most comprehensive attempts to understand very early childhood predictors of adolescent alcohol use in a large epidemiological cohort." She noted the study indicates that troubled children are not the only ones who start to use alcohol. "It's also the highly sociable kids as well. Parents should be aware of this."

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