

# Alcohol and Anxiety in Young Adults: The Growing Problem of Self-Medication

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## DESCRIPTION

The use of alcohol as a means to cope with anxiety has become a significant issue among young adults in today's society. This age group, often navigating the pressures of education, career aspirations and social relationships, may turn to alcohol to manage the stress and anxiety that come with these life challenges. While alcohol might offer temporary relief, its long-term effects can be detrimental to mental health, often exacerbating anxiety rather than alleviating it. Over viewing the relationship between alcohol use and anxiety in young adults is important for addressing this growing problem and finding healthier coping mechanisms. Anxiety is a common mental health issue that affects a significant portion of the young adult population. According to studies, approximately 31% of adolescents aged 13 to 18 experiences an anxiety disorder, with many of these issues continuing into adulthood. The pressures associated with academic success, social expectations, career choices and the transition to independence can trigger feelings of stress and uncertainty, which often manifest as anxiety. For some young adults, this anxiety can feel heavy and difficult to manage, leading them to seek ways to self-medicate. Alcohol is widely available and socially accepted, which makes it an appealing option for young adults looking for a quick fix for their anxiety. Drinking alcohol, particularly in social settings, is often seen as a way to unwind or to reduce feelings of tension. In fact, alcohol can temporarily produce a feeling of relaxation and ease, as it depresses the central nervous system, leading to a reduction in anxiety symptoms in the short term. However, this relief is short-lived and the consequences of using alcohol as a coping mechanism can be severe. For many young adults, alcohol becomes a support to manage not just social anxiety, but also other forms of generalized anxiety or even depression. It becomes a way to escape from heavy thoughts and emotions. Unfortunately, alcohol is not a solution to the underlying causes of anxiety; in fact, it can worsen the symptoms in the long run. Alcohol disrupts sleep patterns, impairs cognitive function and alters brain chemistry, all of which can contribute to the escalation of anxiety and other mental health issues. Furthermore, regular use of alcohol to cope with anxiety can lead to a vicious cycle, where the individual continues to drink to

alleviate anxiety, only to find that it increases the problem over time. In some cases, the use of alcohol to self-medicate anxiety can lead to the development of Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD), which is characterized by a strong craving for alcohol, increased consumption and an inability to control drinking. This condition is prevalent among young adults and a study suggests that individuals with anxiety disorders are more likely to develop AUD. The relationship between alcohol and anxiety is cyclical: Alcohol initially numbs feelings of anxiety, but over time, it disrupts the body's natural ability to regulate emotions, leading to an increase in both anxiety and alcohol consumption. This can create a dangerous feedback loop that is difficult to break without intervention. The long-term effects of using alcohol as a way to manage anxiety can be debilitating.

## CONCLUSION

The use of alcohol to self-medicate anxiety in young adults is a growing concern that requires immediate attention. While alcohol may offer short-term relief from anxiety, it ultimately worsens the condition and can lead to the development of alcohol use disorder. Addressing this issue requires a multi-faceted approach, focusing on education, early intervention and the promotion of healthier coping mechanisms. By over viewing the connection between alcohol and anxiety and providing the necessary support, we can help young adults break free from this harmful cycle and improve their mental health and well-being. Support groups, counseling and medication may also be necessary to help individuals reduce alcohol consumption and manage their anxiety in a healthier way.

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**Received:** 25-Nov-2024, Manuscript No. JALDD-24-36526; **Editor assigned:** 27-Nov-2024, PreQC No. JALDD-24-36526 (PQ); **Reviewed:** 11-Dec-2024, QC No. JALDD-24-36526; **Revised:** 18-Dec-2024, Manuscript No. JALDD-24-36526 (R); **Published:** 26-Dec-2024, DOI: 10.35248/2329-6488.24.12.433

**Citation:** Inoue S (2024). Alcohol and Anxiety in Young Adults: The Growing Problem of Self-Medication. *J Alcohol Drug Depend.* 12:433.

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