

Psychologist Geri Lynn Utter says she has seen an uptick in alcohol misuse and abuse since the pandemic started. She knows all too well the issues with substance addiction as she shares in [Mainlining Philly: Survival, Hope and Resisting Drug Addiction](#) based on her parents' struggles with drugs and alcohol. She says it's an issue with many people but especially women.

- From a societal/cultural perspective, alcohol is constantly around us, for instance, when we celebrate (weddings, birthdays, graduations, births, promotions, etc.) and when we grieve (funerals, loss, etc.). It is easily accessible and legal - and because of this we tend to lean on it for comfort and coping during stressful times.
- When life throws us lemons - "we" make Long Island Iced Teas to cope. And, in 2020 (and so far 2021) intense levels of stress due to grief (i.e. grieving the life we had pre-COVID, grieving the actual loss of a loved one, grieving good health if an individual is experiencing post-covid syndrome, etc), financial strain, and isolation (both alone and being hunkered down with your family) have created high-levels of anxiety and depression which have been inappropriately managed with alcohol.
- An increase in alcohol use has been prevalent for males, females, old and young; however, as a female I have observed women, inadvertently, increase their alcohol intake. And, as a woman myself I can empathize. Women always try to do it all under normal circumstances, however, due to COVID we have had to up the ante even more by expanding our role within the family system. On any given day, I go from career woman, to teacher, to chef, to therapist (easing my children's worries related to the pandemic - with blinded confidence), to maid, to soccer coach, to wife. etc. Being pulled in a million directions and feeling that you cannot give 100% to any one of them is distressing. So, what do folks do? Drink to numb out the internal "guilt trip" dialogue and drink to manage the stress.

Here are 8 tips to dial back pandemic drinking:

1. Establish a realistic goal - and take baby steps to get there.
2. Commit to a dry period.
3. Find support through helpful resources.
4. Try out non-alcoholic beverage options.
5. Up your H2O intake.
6. Set a booze budget.
7. Learn to refuse.
8. Identify other meaningful activities to occupy your time.

Let me know if you'd like to hear more from Geri Lynn. Thanks!

GERI LYNN UTTER, Psy.D.
Clinical Psychologist



Gerri Lynn Utter, PsyD. is a Clinical Psychologist who specializes in working with individuals diagnosed with both substance use disorders and severe mental illness. Throughout her career, she has conducted psychological evaluations for the Courts on incarcerated individuals in an effort to ensure they receive the appropriate mental health and drug and alcohol treatment during and post release from prison. Currently, Dr. Utter works on the Medical Affairs team at Orexo Pharmaceuticals, a specialty pharmaceutical company dedicated to developing and manufacturing medication designed to help individuals with opioid dependence. Over the past year, Orexo has expanded its' portfolio into the Digital Therapeutics space with digital technologies designed to support individuals with depression, problematic drinking and opioid use disorder. Dr. Utter is passionate about working with individuals and families who have been impacted by drug and alcohol addiction as both her mother and father have struggled with addiction throughout their lives. In April of 2020, she released her first book, *Mainlining Philly: Survival, Hope and Resisting Drug Addiction* which came from her desire to share her story and instill hope. The book is based largely on experiences and challenges that she faced in life due to her parents' struggles with drugs and alcohol abuse and also encompasses a short Addiction Handbook designed to offer psychoeducation about addiction and mental illness. In an effort to overcome the stigma associated with addiction and other mental health issues, Dr. Utter continues to provide education and spread awareness.

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