



## DIRECTORATE OF PREVENTION, RESILIENCE AND READINESS

### **The Impact of Alcohol on Emotional Readiness and How the Army Substance Abuse Program Can Help**

By Rachel Rachfal, Directorate of Prevention, Resilience and Readiness

While consuming alcohol can initially seem to enhance feelings of uninhibited confidence and euphoria, continued consumption leads to impaired judgment, distorted perception and amplified emotions, often leading to impulsive behavior and flawed decision-making. “One of the key points of alcohol is that alcohol is a mood potentiator. For example, if a person is sad or depressed prior to drinking, alcohol will likely increase their feelings of sadness. This can lead to negative coping skills or a dependency on alcohol to numb feelings,” says Polly J. Guthrie, M.Ed., LADC, CEAP, SAP, MAC, ICAADC, Army Substance Abuse Program (ASAP) manager. This emotional volatility hinders the ability to maintain emotional stability and respond appropriately to challenging situations, potentially jeopardizing personal relationships, professional performance and overall readiness. Seeking help and addressing alcohol misuse can lead to improved cognitive functioning, better decision-making and increased productivity in daily life.

Emotional readiness is vital in the Army, as it influences decision-making, problem-solving and interpersonal dynamics. By being aware of how alcohol affects emotional well-being, soldiers can make informed choices that prioritize their emotional readiness, fostering healthier relationships, effective communication and overall mission success.

ASAP plays a crucial role in addressing substance abuse issues, including alcohol misuse, within the force. ASAP conducts education and prevention programs to raise awareness about the impact of alcohol on emotional health. By providing information and resources, ASAP empowers service members to make informed decisions, equipping them with the knowledge needed to prioritize their emotional well-being and maintain readiness.

Often, alcohol use is a symptom of deeper emotional or psychological issues. Relying on alcohol to cope with emotions or stressors can exacerbate emotional dysregulation and hinder emotional growth. Assistance is available to help Soldiers address these underlying issues and work toward resolving them in a more constructive and sustainable way through developing healthier emotional regulation skills, enhancing their overall well-being.

Alcohol misuse can have severe physical and mental health consequences as well as create a cycle of dependency. By seeking help, individuals can receive the necessary support to address their alcohol use and protect their overall well-being by providing alternative healthier coping strategies to manage emotions and stressors effectively.

Strained relationships with family, friends and colleagues can result from alcohol misuse. Reaching out for assistance provides access to a support system of professionals who can offer guidance, validation and coping

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tools. Seeking help demonstrates a commitment to personal growth and can contribute to rebuilding and strengthening these relationships.

Overconsumption can have serious consequences, such as legal issues, accidents and damage to one's personal and professional life. Early intervention can prevent these consequences from escalating and negatively impacting various aspects of life.

Remember, asking for help is a sign of strength, self-awareness and commitment to personal well-being as well as a courageous and empowering step. It allows individuals to take control of their lives, build resilience and develop healthier ways of managing emotions and stressors.

If you or someone you know is struggling with alcohol-related emotional health concerns, seeking support is essential to cultivate healthier coping strategies. While the ASAP program provides valuable support, it's ultimately the responsibility of individuals to actively engage in the program and take steps to recognize and address their alcohol misuse and emotional dysregulation.

"Emotional readiness means feeling your feelings, experiencing life, the good and the bad. Don't allow alcohol to numb your thoughts and feelings which could also lead to health issues, legal consequences to including possibly losing your career or life," says Guthrie. By acknowledging the impact of alcohol on emotional readiness and utilizing the resources available, we can proactively support our service members' emotional well-being. Together, we can foster an environment that encourages open dialogue, empathy and resilience, ensuring that we are ready to face the challenges ahead.

Stay emotionally ready and resilient! Learn more by visiting

<https://www.armyresilience.army.mil/ASAP/index.html>.