

Alcoholism: Abstinence Versus Controlled Drinking Encyclopedia Article

Alcoholism: Abstinence Versus Controlled Drinking

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What should be the goal for an alcoholic? Should it be complete and total **abstinence** from alcohol, or can an alcoholic learn to use alcohol in moderate, controlled ways? The Alcoholics Anonymous □ organization states that the goal of treatment for those who are dependent on alcohol must be total, complete, and permanent abstinence from alcohol. Most therapists who treat alcoholism in the United States agree. They reject controlled drinking—drinking moderate but never excessive amounts—as a goal of treatment, believing that such a goal is harmful to the alcoholic. An alcoholic, in this view, cannot control his or her drinking. Controlled-drinking therapy is widely available in Europe, however, and some in the United States argue that controlled drinking is in fact a reasonable and realistic goal.

See Also

Alcohol Treatment: Behavioral Approaches; Alcoholics Anonymous (Aa).