Alcohol and Anxiety

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The Link Between Alcohol and Anxiety

Anxiety is a normal part of our lives, and it usually appears when we go through significant changes of lifestyle or status.

In most of the cases we deal with anxiety naturally, or don't pay any attention as we accept it as a normal part of life that soon will be gone.

However, people who suffer from an anxiety disorder can become hostages of their fears. Fear is the greatest force behind anxiety and anxiety disorders.

In most cases, people who struggle with anxiety experience fear and anxious thoughts in situations where these feelings are perfectly normal. But they tend to overthink these situations and imagine that the worst will happen.

This can dramatically change your lifestyle, and we often say that people who suffer from anxiety live with the constant thought of, "What will happen if…"

These thoughts often evolve into different, almost impossible scenarios of terrible things happening, which causes more and more fear.

How Does Alcohol Fit In?

The relationship between alcohol and anxiety is deeper than you may imagine. Often people who struggle with anxiety do not realize what the real problem is and think that these feelings will go away.

In many cases people decide to reduce stress with alcohol. And here comes the problem, because the alcohol is if not the worst, one of the worst ways to deal with stress and anxiety.

You will notice at first that alcohol is helping your stress and anxiety – it helps distract you from your obsessive thoughts, it can reduce your fears and boost your confidence.

In other words you may find that alcohol can help you to unwind and relax. And though drinking a glass of wine or beer once in a while shouldn't be a problem, people with anxiety often can't stop there.

If you struggle with anxiety you are very likely to abuse alcohol, which will only worsen the problem, as alcohol affects not only your brain, but also your nervous system and overall mood.

How Does Alcohol Worsen Anxiety?

There are several basic ways in which alcohol and anxiety can have a negative interaction:

- **It affects your nervous system** – Intake of alcohol leads to reduction of the levels of vitamin B in your body. B vitamins are important for your nervous system and your brain function. The deficiency of those vitamins is often linked to depression, anxiety and mood swings.
- **It lowers the quality of your sleep** – A couple of drinks at night before going to sleep has an impact on your sleep stages, usually causing you to fall immediately into a deep sleep and miss other important stages of sleep. As a result you are more likely to wake up more exhausted than relaxed.
- **It dehydrates you** – It is well known fact that alcohol leads to dehydration, which can cause dizziness, nausea and fatigue. This only increases the feeling of being ill and levels of anxiety.
- **It causes hangovers** – Drinking heavily can lead to severe hangovers. And if a healthy person struggles with a bad hangover, a person who suffers from anxiety will experience a dramatic impact. In most cases people with anxiety suffer from extremely severe hangovers.

The exhaustion, dehydration and fatigue caused by drinking often leads to anxiety attacks. Often the anxiety experienced after heavy drinking can last for hours or even the whole day. In many cases this anxiety can last for few days as the person feels depressed and weak and experiences frequent anxiety attacks.

Conclusion

Even though that alcohol is known for its sedative effect, it is one of the worst ways to cope with anxiety. Due to its many negative effects, it is actually preferable to avoid alcohol if you are struggling with anxiety. You can still enjoy a glass of wine once in a while with your dinner, but heavy drinking will for sure worsen your anxiety symptoms.