

Why do some people drink until they black out? Twitter offers clues

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Blackout drinking is never a wise idea, but new research pinpoints why

people sometimes imbibe to the point where they pass out.

Celebrations and coping with stress are the top reasons for blackout drinking, the study found.

Drinking too much too fast can cause a blackout, where a person remains conscious but later can't remember what happened. Blackout drinking can put people at risk for accidents and [risky behaviors](#), and may do long-term damage to the brain.

Despite the risks, it is common in the United States—particularly among [young adults](#)—and some people drink with the goal of blacking out.

In order to learn more, researchers examined hundreds of Twitter tweets posted over four days in April 2018 about people's plans to drink until they black out.

Nearly a third of the tweets included specific motives. The most common were celebrations such as birthdays, school or work accomplishments, sports wins or holidays.

Another common reason was to cope with stress, negative emotions or loss. Examples included: "I'm so stressed I need to get blackout drunk tonight," and "I want to get blackout drunk to forget all about this horrible year."

Such public expressions may normalize and encourage risky behavior in others, according to researchers Benjamin Riordan from the University of Sydney in Australia; Jennifer Merrill from Brown University in Rhode Island, and Rose Marie Ward from Miami University in Ohio.

The study was recently published in the journal *Alcoholism: Clinical & Experimental Research*.

The authors said their findings improve understanding of attitudes and behaviors associated with blackout drinking, and will guide a future investigation of links between drinkers' intentions and their actual behavior.

In a journal news release, they said the two main reasons for blackout drinking—celebration and coping—identified in the study suggest possible interventions. For example, education about [blackout](#) drinking could be included in prevention campaigns by schools, universities and [community groups](#) to reduce celebratory drinking.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on [alcohol](#).

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