

## MindBeacon Therapist Guided Program Managing Alcohol Use

### WHAT IS MANAGING ALCOHOL USE ABOUT?

Alcohol is a legal depressant drug. Similar to most other countries, Canada publishes its own drinking guidelines under the Canada Low-Risk Alcohol Drinking (LRAD) guideline to inform the public about the limits at which people can keep their drinking at the safest possible levels.

Gaining control over drinking habits leads to improved health, reduced depression, and anxiety as well as a boost of confidence and self-esteem. It may also help people get back to living the life they want to have. Unfortunately, many people who have alcohol use problems never seek treatment.

### ALCOHOL USE IN CANADA AND THE WORKPLACE

According to the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction (CCSA)<sup>1</sup>, at least 20% of Canadian drinkers consume alcohol above the levels recommended by the LRAD guidelines. The pandemic has further exacerbated this with Canadians consuming more alcohol, as evidenced by retail alcohol sales data. According to Statistics Canada<sup>2</sup>, "if this trend continues, sales for the year ending March 2021—the first full year of alcohol sales that reflect pandemic-related purchasing habits—will have increased significantly from the year before."



There currently aren't any provisions in the Canada Labour Code addressing the use of alcohol at workplaces. However, employers are required to develop Hazard Prevention Programs which may include policies related to alcohol use.<sup>3</sup> As a legal drug, alcohol is usually consumed at events at workplaces including after work drinks, happy hours, birthdays, promotions, and others.

### ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The Managing Alcohol Use program is based on principles of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). The program provides 12 weeks access to our platform and includes exercises, information and reading materials, and worksheets, as well as an alcohol consumption tracker. The entire program is completed under the guidance of a therapist who helps to tailor the material to individual clients so that they are empowered with a toolkit of skills to carry into the future.

<sup>1</sup> Canadian Centre of Substance Abuse and Addiction. (2017). *Canada Low Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines*. <https://www.ccsa.ca/sites/default/files/2020-07/2012-Canada-Low-Risk-Alcohol-Drinking-Guidelines-Brochure-en-0.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Government of Canada, S. C. (n.d.). *Control and sale of alcoholic beverages, year ending March 31, 2020. The Daily* - . <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/210421/dq210421b-eng.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> Canada, E. and S. D. (2019, June 20). *Government of Canada. Canada.ca*. <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/health-safety/cannabis-workplace/questions-answers.html>.



## WHO SHOULD ENROLL?

This program is for individuals looking to change their relationship with alcohol. This includes individuals who regularly consume alcohol above the amounts recommended by the LRAD guidelines.

This program is not for individuals where the use of alcohol interferes with daily activities or there is a physical dependency which will require the support of a physician or other medical expert.



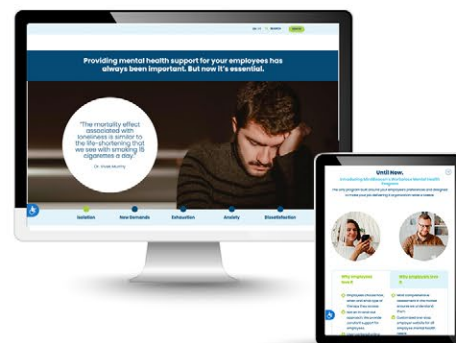
## MANAGING ALCOHOL USE PROGRAM TOOLKIT & MODULES

Topics covered in the Managing Alcohol Use program include:

- ✔ Understanding alcohol
- ✔ Assessing readiness for change and understanding vulnerabilities and triggers
- ✔ Setting individual goals
- ✔ Redirecting attention and strategies for coping with cravings
- ✔ Breaking cycles of thinking and behaviours that perpetuate alcohol use

## RESEARCH BEHIND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROGRAM

MindBeacon is committed to evidence-based care. Our programs are developed by clinical psychologists with expertise in CBT, research evidence, and the issues we address in therapy. Developed in consultation with experts at The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), this program uses the principles of CBT and a harm reduction approach to manage alcohol consumption and develop strategies to cope with cravings. The managing alcohol use program is a new offering developed using best practices in treatment for alcohol use.



## ALCOHOL FAQs – YOUR MOST COMMON QUESTIONS ANSWERED

### Is there a safe level of drinking?

While consuming alcohol is never particularly “safe”, governments establish guidelines around “safe drinking.” These are guidelines for consuming alcohol at the safest possible levels which include minimizing the risks of consumption. Canada publishes this under the “Canada’s Low-Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines.”

### What are the current Low-Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines (LRAD)?

Currently, women are advised to keep to fewer than 10 drinks per week with no more than 2 drinks per day on most occasions. Men, on the other hand, are advised to keep to fewer than 15 drinks per week with no more than 3 drinks per day on most occasions. There is also a warning included mentioning that non-drinking days should be planned to avoid developing a habit.<sup>4</sup>

### What are the regulations around alcohol in the workplace?

There currently aren’t any provisions in the Canada Labour Code addressing the use of alcohol at workplaces. However, workplace Hazard Prevention Programs may include policies around alcohol use.

### How do I know if I have an alcohol culture at my workplace?

Alcohol is a socially accepted drug in many circles. This can be associated with social pressure to consume alcohol at casual or formal workplace functions, normalizing drinking as a coping mechanism, and minimizing alcohol-related harms. In addition, if you have a culture of long work hours that are associated with stress and anxiety, encourage alcohol consumption at workplace events, or haven’t established alcohol consumption policies (whether for work onsite or from home), you may be contributing to an alcohol culture at your workplace.

### Does alcohol affect everyone the same way?

The way alcohol affects a person can vary greatly depending on:

- ✔ age, sex and body weight
- ✔ sensitivity to alcohol
- ✔ type and amount of food consumed prior to drinking
- ✔ alcohol consumption frequency and habits
- ✔ history of alcohol use
- ✔ the environment around the person
- ✔ expectations around the effects of alcohol
- ✔ use of other drugs in tandem with the consumption of alcohol (illegal, prescription, over-the-counter or herbal).

### How does alcohol affect stress, anxiety and depression?

Alcohol may be consumed as a coping mechanism for stress, anxiety, or depression. While it may provide a sense of relief in the short term, it can make things more difficult in the long run. Increased alcohol consumption leads to greater tolerance, which means that over time it takes more alcohol to achieve the same effect. And alcohol is a depressant, which means that increased use tends to make anxiety and depression worse over time.

### What happens if there is a relapse?

Changing a person’s relationship with alcohol can take time and hard work. For many, particularly during the first year of reducing alcohol consumption, challenges can arise that lead to a lapse (temporary setback) or a relapse (full return to previous drinking patterns). In either case, it is important to recognize triggers, cope with the emotional impact, and plan to get back on track. The skills taught in MindBeacon’s Managing Alcohol Use program can be used in cases of lapses and relapses.

<sup>4</sup> Canadian Centre of Substance Abuse and Addiction. (2017). Canada Low Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines. <https://www.ccsa.ca/sites/default/files/2020-07/2012-Canada-Low-Risk-Alcohol-Drinking-Guidelines-Brochure-en-0.pdf>.