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Craving Alcohol

James Peter Murphy

Technological University Dublin, james.p.murphy@tudublin.ie

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Craving Alcohol

Introduction

Individuals involved in the treatment of alcoholism for decades have argued that men and women crave alcohol essentially because they enjoy the effect it offers. This effect is so mysterious that, while adults will confess that these cravings are potential dangerous to their health and well being, during consumption their reasoning and belief of these facts will alternate between the true and the false. In essence these individuals alcohol cravings life actually seems to them the only normal life. Some will demonstrate conditions of discontentment, irritability and restlessness, until they can regain the experience and ease obtained by consuming a couple of drinks.

The harmful use of alcohol is a global problem comprised of both individual and social development, it results in 2.5 million deaths annually (WHO, 2014), an alcoholics body can only deal with alcohol at about one-third the rate of a non alcoholic. This slower process triggers a craving that does not happen for the non alcoholic. Essentially, once the alcoholic takes that first drink, they no longer have a choice on the other drinks, this is the phenomenon of craving and this phenomenon will never change unless one can experience a complete psychic change (Silkworth cited in Alcoholics Anonymous, 1939). Faced with these challenges International Governments in the past have therefore sought to control alcohol's availability and consumption rates over many decades without much success and unfortunately hard lessons have been learnt.

This paper investigates the phenomenon of alcohol craving which requires both a medical response to stabilize the condition and moral psychological response to produce as Silkworth (1937) proposed a 'psychic change'. The paper will also explore how internationally governments have tried to ban alcohol completely through prohibitions and the lessons learned from the failed National Prohibition (Volstead Act) which ran for thirteen years in the United States. This prohibition created more problems than solutions which resulted in widespread organized crime control of the distribution of alcohol and the proliferation of thousands of un-licensed and illegal establishments (speak-easies and blind pigs) which flourished during this period.

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1. The Phenomenon of Alcohol Craving

Modell et al cited in (Betty Ford Centre, 2014) argues that the majority of symptoms of alcohol craving in the dependent individual are similar to the thought patterns and behaviours of persons with obsessive-compulsive disorder. These symptoms include recurrent and persistent thoughts about alcohol and the inability of the individual to resist these thoughts and a compulsive drive to consume alcohol and loss of control over that drive. The National Institute of Drug Abuse in the United States used PET scans to demonstrate how an area in the left frontal lobe of the brain 'lights up' when a sober alcoholic is shown drinking scenes. This Brain activity is accompanied by intense craving (Fowler, Volkow, Kassed & Chang, 2007). William Duncan Silkworth M. D (1873-1951) who played a crucial role and impact on the origin and development of Alcoholics Anonymous maintained in his paper entitled 'The Allergy Theory' that "all the different classifications of alcoholics have one clear symptom in common, that is they cannot start drinking without developing the phenomenon of craving (Silkworth, 1937) .

This phenomenon may be the manifestation of an allergy which differentiates these people, and sets them apart as a distinct entity. Dr. Silkworth had spent nine years specializing in the treatment of alcoholic and drug addicts in the late 1930's, he called it a 'phenomenon of craving' because at that time there was no way to study metabolism (Silkworth, 1937). He went on to suggest that alcohol's use was under the 'mental control' of the patient, therefore the treatment of alcoholism would require both a medical response 'to stabilize the patient and restore him to physical health, and a 'moral psychological' approach that would produce an 'essential psychic change' (Silkworth, 1937).

Dr. Silkworth treated nearly 40,000 alcoholics in his career believing that these people do not want to do the things they do, drinking compulsively against their will; this was pathological craving, a disease. His work with these alcoholics also highlighted that;

'craving **at once became paramount to all**; they took a drink a day or so prior to the date, and then the phenomenon of craving at once became paramount to all other interests so that the important appointment was not met'.

'**craving beyond their mental control**, these men were not drinking to escape; they were drinking to overcome a craving beyond their mental control'.

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‘craving develops, they pass through the well-known, After they have succumbed to the desire again, as so many do, and the phenomenon of craving develops, they pass through the well-known stages of a spree, emerging remorseful, with a firm resolution not to drink again’.

‘craving for liquor, and this often requires, of course an alcoholic ought to be freed from his physical craving for liquor, and this often requires a definite hospital procedure, before psychological measures can be of maximum benefit’.

‘craving is limited to this class and, we believe, and so suggested a few years ago, that the action of alcohol on these chronic alcoholics is a manifestation of an allergy; that the phenomenon of craving is limited to this class and never occurs in the average temperate drinker’.

Silkworth cited in Alcoholics Anonymous (1939)

Silkworth (1937) also highlighted the ‘astounding’ economic and social costs of alcoholism and the growing trend for women to be affected because of their new acceptance in bars. Unfortunately alcohol was conceptualised as a vice, not a disease many people wanted to drink and prohibition showed this. So if we accept these suggestions that alcoholism is a disease, then we should consider the argument that the cause of alcoholism is not alcohol. Moss (2011) contends that no one, specific cause has yet been determined for alcoholism, he proposes that there are several factors which include;

age: young people are at great risk of developing alcoholism, especially if they start drinking by age sixteen or sooner. The probability drops dramatically if one doesn’t drink until the age of twenty one.

emotional make-up: alcohol is used as a coping device, and certain stress hormones may contribute to the disease’s progression.

frequency of drinking: over time, people who drink regularly may be at risk of developing physical dependence on alcohol. The probability is that one in nine will develop the disease.

gender: men are more likely to develop the disease than women.

generic predisposition: if your parents or grandparents were addicted to alcohol, the chances are strong that you will be vulnerable to the disease

psychological: people suffering from depression or low-self-esteem are more likely to try to ‘fit in’ with their friends, who ‘enable’ the problem to continue

social: alcohol is both readily available and legal, and drinking is socially acceptable, there is often peer pressure to drink, to be part of the crowd

(Moss, 2011).

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2. The Drive to Ban Alcohol Internationally - Prohibition

2.1 The seeds of prohibition

In the past some international governments and rulers had sought to prevent the availability and social consumption of alcohol through legal means or 'prohibition'. Some attempts at prohibition were made in the Aztec society and feudal Japan. Rong (2014) contends that 'the earliest records of prohibition of alcohol in ancient China date back to the Xia Dynasty (ca. 2070 BC–ca. 1600 BC). Yu the Great, the first ruler of the Xia Dynasty, prohibited alcohol throughout the kingdom, however during the reign of his son Qi alcohol was legalized again.

In America when the evils of intemperance began to attract the attention of the Ministry, Cherrington (1920) maintains that John Wesley 'denounced the sin of distilling and declared for its Prohibition in 1773'. Lee (1963) states that Massachusetts went so far as to prohibit the drinking of health's in 1638, but this early prohibition law was soon abandoned for reasons obvious, albeit unrecorded. He argued that the 'liquor laws could do more than control consumption: they could provide a source of revenue'. Therefore by the turn of the 18th century in the U.S the regulatory impulse was concentrated on fines, excise taxes and license fees. Krout (1967) indicated that these fines were imposed for 'drunken behaviour, unlawful sales to a drunken tippler or to Indians, and for selling without a license'; court records indicate that these laws were enforced with reasonable regularity. Brownlee (2002) adds that in the United Kingdom in 1859 a prototype prohibition bill was overwhelmingly defeated in the House of Commons. In the early 1900s, much of the increased activity for the prohibition movement in the Scandinavian countries (with strong temperance movement since the 1800s) and North America came from 'moralistic convictions of pietistic Protestants' (Jensen, 1971).

2.2 The rise of the temperance movement - taking the pledge

Furnas (1965) contends that this new temper of the movement was typified by the travels of Father Theobald Matthew of Ireland who toured the America from 1849 to 1851, 'administering the pledge of total abstinence to some 600,000 persons in 25 states'.

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Temperance was popular again, and Furnas (1965) maintained that it actually drifted into a new phase, with its enthusiastic spokesman U.S Congressman Gerrit Smith, crying that;

‘I would that no person were able to drink intoxicating liquors without immediately becoming a drunkard. For, who then would drink the poison that always kills, or jump into the fire that always burns?’ (p.15).

At the start of the 1900s, the temperance campaign had penetrated the American school system. Sinclair (1962) informs us that ‘Arizona was the only state without compulsory education’; he reminds us also that temperance literature was packed with huge amounts of misleading information about alcohol, for example;

‘alcohol sometimes causes the coats of the blood vessels to grow thin. They are then liable at any time to cause death by bursting.’ (p.43).

In the west the prohibition process also coincided with the advent of women's suffrage, with newly empowered women as part of the political process strongly supporting policies that curbed alcohol consumption (Benjamin, 1991; Heath, 1995). Timberlake (1963) maintains that there was scientific support in this period to ‘declare alcohol as a poison’, this support eventually led to ‘whiskey and brandy being removed from the list of recognised medicinal drugs contained in the United States Pharmacopoeia’.

2.3 Prohibitionists

Numerous techniques were taken on to encourage sobriety Timberlake (1963) states that these included ‘lectures, literature and job preferences for teetotallers’, he adds that businessmen expressed the opinion that ‘sobriety expanded productivity, increased bank deposits and stimulated the retail trade’. Supporters of prohibition (prohibitionists) filled with anger had identified the saloon and its products with the urban, immigrant working class. Gusfield (1963) contends that ‘the saloon appeared as the symbol of a culture which was alien to the ascetic character of American values’ therefore Americanism became a principle act in the temperance movement.

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This fear is best captured in the words of one temperance spokesperson cited by Timerlake (1963);

‘the influx of foreigners into our urban centres, many of whom have liquor habits, is a menace to good government. The foreign born population is largely under the social and political control of the saloon. If the cities keep up their rapid growth they will soon have the balance of political power in the nation and become storm centres of political life’

(p.118).

World War I actually brought American prohibitionists new ammunition; literature depicted brewers and licensed retailers as treacherously stabbing American soldiers in the back. Wheeler cited in Odegard (1928) argued that liquor was a menace to patriotism because ‘it puts beer before country’.

2.4 Prohibition spreads globally

In the first half of the 1900s alcohol prohibition was introduced across the following countries;

- 1907 - 1948 in Prince Edward Island, and for shorter periods in other provinces in Canada (Heath, 1995)
- 1907 - 1992 in Faroe Islands; limited private imports from Denmark were allowed from 1928
- 1914 - 1925 in Russia and the Soviet Union, a limited version of a Dry Law was introduced which continued through the turmoil of the Revolution and Civil War into the period of Soviet Russia and the Soviet Union (Vvedensky, 1915)
- 1914 - 1955 Sweden adopted a rationing system, referred to as the Bratt System (liquor ration books); a referendum in 1922 rejected an attempt to introduce a total ban.
- 1915 - 1933 in Iceland, ban on wine and spirits was lifted in 1935 but beer was actually still prohibited until March 1989 (New York Times, 1988)
- 1916 - 1927 in Norway (fortified wine and beer also prohibited from 1917 to 1923)
- 1919 - Hungary (in the Hungarian Soviet Republic, March 21 to August 1; called szesztilalom)
- 1919 - 1932 in Finland (called kieltolaki, "ban law") due to smuggling, increased violence, crimes rates increasing and turned public opinion against prohibition it was ended in 1932 (Sariola, 1954; Wuorinen, 1932)

In Mexico the sale and purchase of alcohol is prohibited on and the night before certain national holidays, such as Natalicio de Benito Juárez (birth date of Benito Juárez) and Día de la Revolución, which are meant to be dry nationally (Leyton, 2003).

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Prohibition generally came to an end across North America and Europe in the late 1920s or early 1930s, although a few locations continued prohibition for many more years (IBN Live, 2009). National alcohol prohibition today is still maintained across most of Asia, where alcohol is strictly prohibited due to most Asian countries' proscription in the Islamic (Muslim) faith. These countries include Bangladesh, Brunei, India, Maldives, Pakistan, Philippines, West Asia (IBN Live, 2009; The Age, 2003; U.S. Passports & International Travel, 2014).

3. The Effects of Prohibition in the United States

3.1 18th Amendment to the U.S Constitution - National Prohibition Act

The Anti-Saloon League, founded in 1893, led the U.S state prohibition drives of 1906–13, during World War I a temporary Wartime Prohibition Act was passed to save grain for use as food (Odegard, 1928). In 1917 the resolution for submission of the Prohibition Amendment to the states received the necessary two-thirds vote in the Congress; Lee (1963) informs us that Nebraska was 'the last of the 36 states to ratify the new Amendment'. The National Prohibition Act, popularly known as the Volstead Act (after its promoter, Congressman Andrew J. Volstead), was enacted on October 28th 1919 and came into effect on January 17th 1920 (McGrew, n.d.). Hu (1950) maintained that this new act sought would be legislation to turn the U.S into 'enforced teetotallers', to 'end all the evils associated with drinking' and to eradicate the habits and customs of people through 'outlawing the business that ministered to its satisfaction.

3.2 Prohibition Enforcement

The initial impact of the Prohibition epoch gave the U.S government a sense of what was to come. Sinclair (1962) informs us that 'in the three months before the 18th Amendment became effective spirits 'worth half a million dollars was stolen from Government warehouses' and before the middle of the summer of 1920, Federal Courts in Chicago were overwhelmed with some '600 pending liquor violation trials'. He also maintained that sadly within three years of the prohibition adoption '30 prohibition agents were killed in service'. The legislation was evaded by several means during prohibition. The practice of obtaining a medical prescription for illegal substances was also abused; McGrew (n.d) argues 'that doctors earned \$40 million in 1928 by writing prescriptions for whiskey'.

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Illegal manufacture and sales of liquor went on in the United States on a huge scale; the internal revenue figures offer us an insight into the figures for seizures and arrests during the prohibition era;

1921: 95,933 illicit distilleries, stills, still works and fomenters' seized and 34,175 persons arrested (p. 95).

1925: 172,537 illicit distilleries, stills, still works and fomenters' seized and 62,747 persons arrested (p. 6).

1928: 75,307 persons arrested

1930: 282,122 illicit distilleries, stills, still works and fomenters' seized (p. 73).

Internal Revenue, Service (1921, 1966, 1970).

Federal government support of enforcement of Prohibition varied considerably during the 1920s, in the U.S western and southern rural areas support was strong and remains so to this day. Dobyns (1940) however maintains that the legal system was 'evasive' in the 1920s he contends that the courts only convicted about 'seven percent of those charged with liquor violations'. Prohibition in common seemed to be enforced wherever the inhabitants supported it, the National Commission on Law Observance and Enforcement (1931) highlighted that prohibition enforcement 'failed in large cities where the law was flagrantly defied' and 'in the smaller towns, populated by miners and industrial workers, where the law was simply ignored'.

3.3 Criminality and the Rise of Speakeasies and Blind Pigs

Prohibition brought into being a new kind of criminal, the bootlegging gangster and a population who craved for alcohol in an exciting environment. Smuggling was widespread; rum-runners frequently smuggled liquor from Canada, Sinclair (1962) contends that the Department of Commerce estimated in 1924 'liquor valued at approximately \$40 million was entering the United States annually'. The career of gangster Al Capone was a particular example of the development of bootlegging on a large scale; his annual earnings were estimated at \$60 million from alcohol sales alone (History & Learning, 2014). In this period however legislators could not quell the never ending demand for alcoholic products, Lee (1963) argues that this demand lead to an illicit traffic development 'from the point of manufacture to consumption', he states that 'the institution of the speakeasy replaced the institution of the saloon'.

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Speakeasies, also referred to as blind pigs or blind tigers were numerous and popular during the Prohibition years, Lee (1963) suggest that the numbers ranged from '200,000 to 500,000' across the United States. Ceyana & Jen (2013) state that they were 'places designed to be hidden from law enforcement, and were usually run by gangsters, shop owners, and common people'. Speakeasies were usually hidden behind the following businesses;

- local stores
- shut down Bars
- salons

Most speakeasies went unknown in their early stages, but grew rapidly over the months. Even though police and agents of the Bureau of Prohibition would often raid them and arrest their owners and patrons, Ceyana & Jen (2013) state that 'they were so profitable that they continued to flourish'. MacRae (1870) suggests that the term speakeasy is reported to have originated around the late 1800s with saloon owner Kate Hester who ran an unlicensed bar in the McKeesport neighbourhood on the outskirts of Pittsburg. Cheney (1889) adds that, 'unlicensed saloons in Pennsylvania were also known as 'speak-easies', Harper (2012) reminds us that they were 'so called because of the practice of speaking quietly about the place in public, or when inside it, so as not to alert the police or neighbours'. Speakeasies had many defences to protect their business, which included;

- Doormen
- Multiple locking doors
- Guards

(Ceyana & Jen, 2013)

Most defences however were there to defend against raiding police, but were occasionally for the common drunk person. Blind pigs or blind tigers applied to lower-class establishments that sold alcoholic beverages illegally. The operator of an establishment (such as a saloon or bar) would charge customers to see an attraction (such as an animal – pigs or other curious animals) and then serve a 'complimentary drink – such as a gin cocktail' alcoholic beverage, thus circumventing the law (Shay, 1934). Grimes (2009) informs us that although blind tigers were a mysterious place, they also distributed for consumption 'the very bad whiskey for which Prohibition is indirectly responsible'.

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In many rural towns, small speakeasies and blind pigs were operated by local business owners. These family secrets were often kept even after Prohibition ended. Major supporters of the prohibition became gradually disillusioned with the Volstead Act by these developments and often cited the increase in criminal liquor production and sale plus the development of the speakeasy as their primary reason for supporting the repeal of prohibition (McGrew, n. d).

Speakeasies largely disappeared after the Prohibition era ended; the term is now used to describe retro style bars. Diamond (2012) contends that the name 'speakeasy' was revived in the late 2000s in the United States, to refer to a legal, prohibition-themed cocktail bar, generally serving only classic cocktails. The term has now expanded, to include all retro bars, and to non-Prohibition countries such as Australia and the United Kingdom by 2012 (Sweeny, 2007)

3.4 Repeal of Prohibition

In spite of the apparent weak enforcement of the U. S National Prohibition Act, Gusfield (1963) believes that 'the depression and the need for tax revenues and increased employment' killed the act. In contrast Sinclair (1962) believes that prohibition was 'a by-product of the stress and excess of war' and 'could not have survived in peacetime'. Dobyms (1940) however contends that selfishly motivated U.S businessmen brought about the 'same pressure and tactics which were cleverly adopted by the temperance movement in the previous decades'.

Despite these mixed motivations, the repeal movement was financed and driven by the Association against the prohibition amendment (hereafter A.A.P.A) and in 1932 the Democratic Party adopted a platform calling for repeal, and the Democratic victory in the presidential election of 1932 sounded the death knell of the Eighteenth Amendment. In February 1933 Congress adopted a resolution proposing the Twenty-first Amendment to the Constitution to repeal the Eighteenth.

3.5 Lesson's learned from the U.S National Prohibition

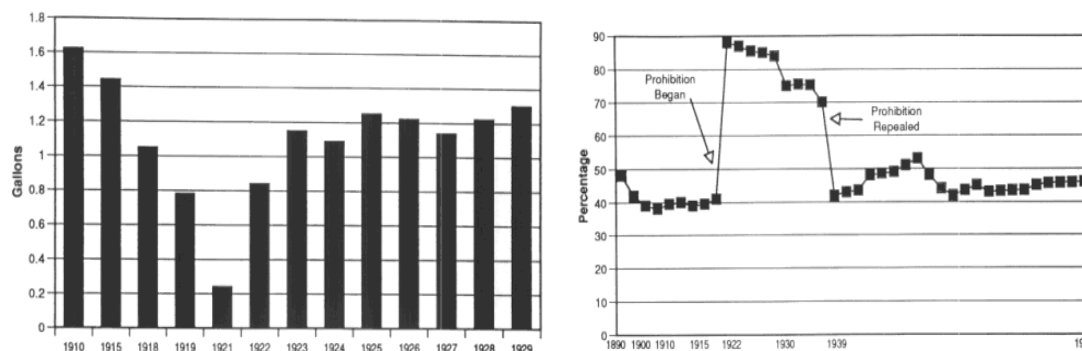
So much has been written about the American prohibition and its thirteen year duration, can however lessons be learnt from the ban of alcohol in the U.S, Hu (1950) argues that prohibition failed because it sought to 'destroy the manufacturing and distributive agencies through which the demand for liquor had been legally supplied, but the demand remained'.

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The Wickersham Commission as cited by Hu (1950) concluded that ‘the country had prohibition in law but not in fact’. Data to support a favourable outcome for the U.S prohibition is scarce perhaps Figures 1 and 2 listed below will help explain why.

Figure 1: Per Capita Consumption of Alcoholic Beverages (Gallons of Pure Alcohol) 1910-1929.

Figure 2: Total Expenditure on Distilled Spirits as a Percentage of Total Alcohol Sales (1890-1960).



(History of the Alcohol and Tobacco Division, n.d)

The data in the chart ‘Figure 1’ above appears promising in the early years of prohibition as alcohol consumption figures begin to slope downwards, while the individual U.S states begin to enact prohibition legislation, spiking in a major decline when National Prohibition was passed. Unfortunately in 1922 alcohol consumption has doubled and continued to increase through the main thirteen years. Tillitt (1932) reported that the ‘per capita rate for the prohibition years when computed amount to 1.63 proof gallons’, this he claims was ‘11.64 percent higher than the pre-prohibition rate’. The data in the chart ‘Figure 2’ which highlights the total amount for alcohol Sales from 1890 to 1960 also demonstrates how sales raised significantly to their highest point during the prohibition and decreased after it ended.

Brown (1932) indicates that people were actually drinking at a younger age during the prohibition (1919-26), he adds that ‘several state mental hospitals reported large group of high school patients admitted for alcoholic psychoses. Malzburg (1949) also points to the increase in mental disorders and deaths from alcoholism in the wider population during prohibition. Dobyns (1940) highlights that one of the great ironies of the prohibition noted by the Wickersham Commission was that ‘women happily took to drink during the experimental decade, and did so in public’.

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Figure 3: During Prohibition, a woman adds alcohol to her drink, poured from a hollow walking stick.

Figure 4: Ladies concealing alcohol during the prohibition era.



4. Conclusion

Pathological alcohol cravings are not limited to any particular demographic group or class and can lead to alcoholism which is a serious, often under-recognised, international disease. Individuals should learn to recognise the signs and symptoms of these cravings which can be beyond their mental control, it's also crucial that they receive both a medical response plus the appropriate moral psychological support before it is too late. The drive to ban alcohol globally dates back to the Aztec society and feudal Japan and in the majority of modern societies it hasn't been universally accepted and followed with the exception of (Muslim) Islamic communities.

The emergence of movements and organisation in the past like the 'temperance movement' in the United States to moderate and control consumption through abstinence, the pledge and health scare tactics like declaring alcohol as a poison only served to produce extreme fundamental changes in the political, economic and social conditions.

Preventing the availability and social consumption of alcohol through legislative methods or 'prohibition' for social and economic reasons failed to deliver because it aimed to enslave people to become obedient teetotallers and to stamp out their established customs. Enforcing national prohibitions to ban alcohol is a dangerous endeavour and can be difficult to police and control, adversely as witnessed in the effects of prohibition in the United States it can create opportunities for widespread smuggling and criminality. The great U.S prohibition experiment although noble in its intentions was unfortunately a great mistake. Senator Arthur Capper's words of the 1930's as cited in (Peterson, 1949) best captured the futility of prohibition he claimed that 'we can repeal prohibition, but we cannot repeal the liquor problem'.

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Finally moderate and responsible alcohol consumption however can help to prevent intoxication and also has shown to have positive medical social benefits. Alcohol can be used to enhance casual and formal social activities with friends, family and business colleagues, it is possible to use alcohol safely and enjoy the positive benefits of the substance.

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