**Difficulty engaging in goal-directed behavior is associated with alcohol-related problems**

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Background: According to the 2018 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 54.9 percent of college students drank alcohol in the past month, and 36.9 percent engaged in heavy episodic drinking. With over half of college students drinking alcohol, research understanding alcohol-related problems in this population is vital. Previous research suggests that emotion regulation may be associated with alcohol use and related problems. The present study expanded upon this line of work and examined facets of emotion regulation difficulties in relation to alcohol-related problems.

Method: Participants were 382 college students (79% female, 76% Caucasian, mean age = 19.45 years, *SD* = 3.03) who completed online measures that assessed emotion regulation difficulties, alcohol use frequency, and alcohol- related problems. Emotion regulation difficulties were measured using the validated Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS) which is made up of six subscales.

Results: In a linear regression model, a significant effect was found between the six DERS subscales, level of drinking, and alcohol-related problems, (F(6, 343) = 25.73, p < .000, R2 = .31). The individual predictors were examined further and indicated that only one subscale, difficulty engaging in goal-directed behavior (t = 3.52, p < .000) was a significant predictor.

Discussion: These results underscore the importance of emotion regulation, specifically the ability to engage in goal-directed behavior, in the context of understanding alcohol-related problems. Intervention and prevention efforts aimed at enhancing goal-directed behavior may reduce alcohol-related problems in college students.