

Women's interpersonal experiences during alcohol change: A reflexive thematic analysis of Daybreak blog posts

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Introduction / Issues: Women have unique social and cultural dynamics that shape both their alcohol use patterns and their ability to change. There is limited understanding of the interpersonal benefits and challenges that women experience when reducing their alcohol consumption, particularly in real world peer support contexts.

Methods: Daybreak is an anonymous peer support digital application hosted by the Australian not-for-profit organisation, Hello Sunday Morning. Daybreak was developed to provide an alcohol-focused online community to support people to take a break, cut back, or cease using alcohol. Reflexive thematic analysis was applied to a random selection of anonymous blog posts (N=3,553) written by women on the Daybreak app

Results: Six key themes were identified, capturing both the relational challenges and benefits women experienced when changing their alcohol use. These themes included: i) connection to others, ii) disconnection from others, iii) interpersonal challenges, iv) navigating social settings, v) shame, and vi) relationship with self.

Discussions and Conclusions: Women described social disconnection, conflict, difficulty navigating social settings and shame as being key challenges when reducing alcohol use. At the same time, women described important benefits of reducing alcohol, including improved relationships and sense of connectedness, successes in being able to navigate social settings, and an improved relationship with oneself. These findings suggest that social context is not peripheral but central to behaviour change for women.

Implications on communities, practice, policy and/or First Nations communities:

These themes point to the need for gender responsive approaches that explicitly address the unique social and cultural contexts women experience. Digital peer support models, like Daybreak, play a critical role bridging the gap between health promotion and treatment by providing accessible, socially informed support. Embedding these approaches into public health, policy and clinical settings may support women to begin to make, and to sustain, changes to their alcohol use.

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