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How the Juggle Can Drive Us To Drink

It is pretty obvious that drowning your sorrows in alcohol isn't a great way to cope.

Nevertheless, a lot of people do it, scholarly research shows—especially when work interferes with the ability to take care of your family the way you want and plan to do.

Workers are significantly more likely to drink alcohol if they feel work is interfering with their family life, based on a study in the latest issue of the [Journal of Applied Psychology](#). Those whose jobs kept them from spending as much time as they wanted with their families were more likely to drink, to reduce tension, according to the study by researchers at the University of Maryland and Peking University.



Everett Collection

Cocktails and work go hand in hand on TVs 'Mad Men'

Alcohol use wasn't higher among workers who complained that the conflicts ran the other way – that their family lives interfered with their jobs or careers. Although the study was based on interviews with 57 full-time Chinese workers, it echoes past findings in studies of U.S. workers.

A random sample of 473 employed adults in the U.S. in the 1990s also linked work-family conflict to a significant increase in alcohol abuse. Work-family conflict was defined as interference between one's job and one's time with children, cooking, cleaning, yard work and paying the bills, based on the study at the [Research Institute on Addictions](#), Buffalo, N.Y., and the State University of New York, Buffalo. This and other studies showed work-family conflict is even more likely to trigger drinking than on-the-job stress – perhaps because people draw more of their sense of identity and self-image from taking good care of their families.

The research makes sense to me. The most miserable times in my juggle – and the ones when I was most tempted to join those gulping beer or mixed drinks on the commuter train home – were the times when I felt my job was crowding out the time and attention I wanted to give to my kids. Falling short of my own plans for myself as a mother spawned a sadness that threatened to undermine my usual coping methods.

Readers, does alcohol help you smooth out after-work stress from your juggle? What is your usual practice regarding having a drink after work to relax? Are there certain kinds of tensions that are more likely to make you want to imbibe?

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