

## Attachment and Alcohol Use Disorders



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**SUMMARY:** Attachment is a permanent emotional bond that develops in early childhood. It is based on the quality of care provided by the main relational figure and is characterised by the need to seek and maintain proximity to a person, especially under stress. Four basic types of attachment are distinguished in adults (secure, anxious-preoccupied, dismissive-avoidant, and fearful-avoidant). Harmful substance use is often associated with insecure attachment. The present case study describes four years of psychotherapeutic work with a man with an alcohol use disorder. The client shows a pattern of fearful-avoidant attachment, which, combined with the dominant defence mechanism of devaluation and idealisation, refers to a narcissistic personality structure.

The psychotherapeutic process focused on three main thematic levels: excessive alcohol use, intimate relationships, and the professional area. Alcohol use helped the client to cope with his feelings of loneliness, to be less inhibited in personal relationships, and to regulate his unpleasant emotional states. The client found it very hard to establish a good intimate relationship because of his fear of being hurt, but on the other hand he suffered from feelings of loneliness. Similar dynamics were observed in the occupational area. The main therapeutic interventions included the acceptance and support expressed within the therapeutic relationship, which were supplemented by systematic confrontation approaches, especially in relation to his defence mechanisms of idealisation and devaluation.

**KEY WORDS:** ALCOHOL DISORDER – ATTACHMENT – ALCOHOL – ADDICTIVE BEHAVIOUR

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