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CAN YOU BLAME YOUR PARTNER FOR YOUR DRINKING?

by JEN KIRSCH

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You already know that the key to surviving things like office [holiday parties](#) and meeting the parents is a strict, two drink limit. Among other things, it guarantees a sense of control as well as a lack of regret come morning. But when your significant other's downing one drink after another, it turns out you're more likely to follow suit. According to a [new study](#) conducted by researchers at Dalhousie University, your romantic partner can have a powerful influence on how much you binge drink.

The researchers studied 208 non-married, heterosexual couples in their early 20's. Each couple had to be dating for at least 3 months, have face-to-face contact at least

5 days a week, and one had to be a college student. On average, couples were dating for close to 2 years. Over a 28-day period, the researchers were able to predict one partner's binge drinking based on the other person's excessive drinking.

Surprise! They figured out that binge drinking in college students occurs in both men and women—but neither is more or less responsible than the other. "Studies with married couples show that men have more of an influence on women, but in our study, we found both young women and young men influence their partner's binge drinking," researcher Aislin Mushquash said in a statement.

It sounds like a clear case of a "but everyone's doing it" kind of mentality, but there's also a sense of comfort when partnered with someone you know so well. "In some respect this is a cautionary piece of research: pick your friends and lovers carefully because they influence you more than you think," says Dr. Simon Sherry, assistant professor in the Department of Psychology. In other words, birds of a feather need not flock together—careful who you take to your holiday parties this week!

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