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Drug and alcohol abuse are highly comorbid with anxiety and depression. In keeping with this, a large body of work from multiple laboratories points to the critical role of aversive brain systems in driving behavioral pathologies associated with addiction. The broad focus of my laboratory is to identify how discrete circuits in the brain can drive aversive behavior, and understand mechanistically how alcohol and drugs of abuse can dysregulate these circuits. Our goal is to identify novel circuit based approaches to treat addiction. Here I will discuss recent work that highlights the role of discrete circuits in the brain, centered on the extended amygdala, in driving aversive behavior. Specifically, I will discuss how signaling in a discrete population of neurons that express corticotrophin releasing factor in the extended amygdala can regulate both alcohol related behaviors and anxiety and fear.